

Water Quality Solutions

The water quality of the Rouge River plays an important role in a healthy watershed and you can be the solution, not the pollution! Having clean water is imperative for not just humans, but also wildlife, trees, and plants. Clean water provides communities with drinking water, makes recreation like boating and fishing safe for the residents of Michigan and supports a healthy ecosystem for plants and wildlife.

Knowing how watersheds work is important because it allows us to understand that our actions have an impact on water quality. When rain and snow/ice melt travel across the land (watershed) and into storm drains, it is called stormwater or runoff. As this runoff travels, it picks up various types of pollution along the way until it discharges into the nearest waterbody which has a negative effect on water quality. Common types of pollution in stormwater runoff include sediment, nutrients, chemicals, bacteria, and illicit discharges. In addition to stormwater runoff, water velocity can decrease water quality.

Sediment can be eroded soil from unprotected construction sites, eroding streambanks and shorelines and runoff from agricultural lands. Adding vegetative buffers along agricultural land or at the water's edge of your waterfront property can help slow runoff.

Chemicals can come from pesticides used on residential and agricultural lands, leaking vehicle fluids, road salt and the improper disposal of household chemicals. Consider changing to a chemical alternative for cleaning, like peroxide, and disposing of cleaning supplies, paints, and aerosol cans at a household hazardous waste collection event.



Illicit discharges are any discharge to a storm drain or waterbody that contains polluting material, such as sediment, nutrients, oil, and bacteria. If you see someone dumping anything in the river or lake, on the side of the road or even down the storm drain on your street, report it to your community's pollution hotline or 800-292-4706.

Nutrients include natural sources (organic debris), fertilizers, animal waste (pets, wildlife, and livestock) and sewage sources coming from failing septic systems or illegal discharges of sewage. When fertilizing your yard, use slow-release fertilizer and sweep excess particles off paved surfaces back onto the lawn.

Bacteria is another source of pollution in stormwater which comes from animal waste or human sewage sources. Always pick up after your pet, even in the winter, to prevent the bacteria from washing into drainage ditches and storm drains which go straight to the river.

Water velocity is too much water, too quickly, which scours the streambed and banks adding to the sediment and recirculating the bacteria and chemicals in the river reducing water quality. Planting trees provides a natural filter to reduce stormwater runoff, flooding, and erosion.

To get more information on how you can protect water quality in the Rouge River watershed visit <https://www.allianceofrougecommunities.com/steward.html>.