

Potential Stormwater Pollution that affect our Water Quality



[311](#) – The County’s main mechanism for reporting problems, has a reporting category for reporting ***Suspected Stormwater Pollution Locations***.

The photos above provide examples of wet weather flows. Under the State’s MS4 Permit (see below), the County is required to identify stormwater outfalls to our waters, including the openings at the end of a storm drain system, that have flowing liquids when it has not rained within the last 48 hours. These flows are called dry-weather flows and can indicate a potential “illicit discharge”. Once located, discharges to the stormwater system can be evaluated or tested to identify the source.

During dry weather, any liquid entries into the storm water ditches, culverts, and drains are most likely NOT stormwater and could constitute a pollutant. But whenever you may see possible pollutants, there is a mechanism for letting us know, so we can investigate to determine the source.

We residents are most likely to notice and identify pollution to our stormwater systems. The County relies on our assistance in identifying these illicit discharges, dumping, or spills. Whether you’re a business owner or a resident, the appropriate actions need to be taken to cease the discharge and ensure proper clean up.

If you notice any spill or discharge of a suspect nature, please call 301-475-4200 and follow the prompts to our HOT LINE mailbox or use the 311 link on the County’s website to Report the Problem (in the upper corner of the page).

When you Initiate a report in [311](#), there is a category for “Potential Stormwater Pollution Locations”. Please provide a brief description of the location such as “at the storm drain near 23431 ABC Avenue” or “Wolf Rd just past ABC St”. As with any reporting issue, if you’d like feedback on the County’s determination or action, please leave some form of contact information for that follow up.

The HOT LINE mailbox is monitored by the DPW&T staff charged with MS4 Permit activities. If you prefer, just leave a message. The mail box will take messages for both

problems with existing stormwater ponds or practices and information on suspected stormwater pollution, illicit discharges, illegal dumping or spills.

A Few Definitions:

MS4 is short form for the State's General Permit for **Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems**. The stormwater system itself includes all ditches, culverts, swales, and storm drains that ultimately convey stormwater towards waters that feed into our streams, rivers and bay.

An **Illicit Discharge** is defined in Federal regulations as ...any discharge to an MS4 that is not composed entirely of stormwater... with some exceptions. These exceptions include discharges from NPDES-permitted industrial sources and discharges from fire-fighting activities. Illicit discharges are considered illicit because MS4s are not designed to accept, process, or discharge such non-stormwater wastes into our receiving waters.

Recognizing Potential Illicit Discharges, Connections, or Dumping

The following are indicators of potential illicit discharges into the storm drain systems. If you should notice any of the following, please report the problem.

- Unusual color or cloudiness
- Strong pungent or musty odor
- Floating debris
- Surface scum or foam
- Oil sheen
- Algae
- Dead vegetation or inhibited growth
- Dead animals
- Stains on channel bottom or sides
- Pipe corrosion
- Presence of dry weather flows

Additional Information on Water Pollution will be added to this page. Some information can be found on-line at various sites, including:

https://wwf.panda.org/knowledge_hub/teacher_resources/webfieldtrips/water_pollution/

Paint, dumpster discharges, septic overflows, uncontrolled vehicle and equipment washes, and oil and chemical dumping are high on the list of illicit discharge occurrences.

Some pictorial examples of pollution were shown at the beginning of this page and below:

