Stormwater Pollution Facts

Fact #1: Water from rain flows through storm drains and ditches directly to streams and rivers with little or no treatment. Storm drains and ditches are ***NOT CONNECTED*** to a treatment plant.

Fact #2: When you wash a car on paved surfaces, dirty water containing oil, soaps and detergents and residue from gasoline and car exhaust fumes runs into storm drains and then directly into our streams, rivers and lakes.

Fact #3: Many of the commonly used soaps contain phosphates, which remove oxygen from the water. This depletion of oxygen can have a negative effect on aquatic life and on the smell and taste of water.

Between the scum and oily grit from your car, and the soap used to clean it, a simple activity like a car wash can directly harm our precious natural resources.

If you have any questions, please contact the City's Engineering Division at 864-467-4400

Only Rain in the Drain

ENG2013

Think Green when planning a car wash fundraiser

city of greenville

Did you know that car washing can pollute our rivers and streams?

Outdoor car washing can result in large amount of nutrients, metals and oils polluting our water as the detergent-laden water used to wash grime from cars flows down the street and into the storm drain. Commercial car washes discharge their water to treatment plants; however residents, businesses and car wash fundraisers discharge their polluted wash water into the storm drain system, which carries the water directly to our rivers and streams.

What should you do?

All non-residential car wash activities must be permitted by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SCDHEC). Car washes that use less than 1,000 gallons of water per day are automatically covered by the SCDHEC National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System General Permit for Vehicle Wash Water Discharge (Permit No. SCR750000); however, to meet these permit requirements, you must use a biodegradable detergent. For more information, contact the City of Greenville's Environmental Bureau at (864) 467-4400.

If you're planning a car wash fundraiser, just follow these simple steps and you'll be able to raise money and protect the environment at the same time.

Before the car wash: 1

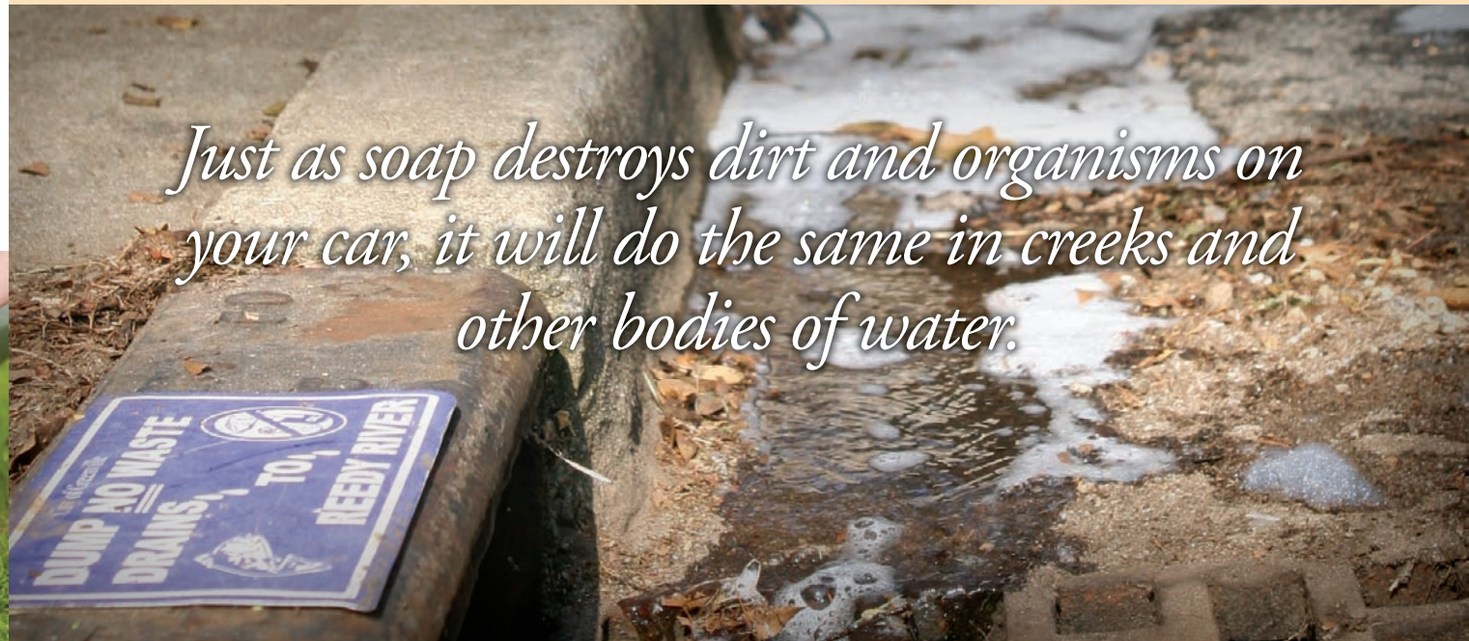
- Select a site where the wash water can soak into grass or gravel, or be diverted to nearby landscaping. This will allow the wash water to filter through the vegetation and/or soil instead of flowing directly into the storm drain. Designate and clearly mark the area to be used solely for vehicle washing.
- If your car wash site drains into a street, determine how you will divert the wash water to an area where the water can pool and evaporate throughout the day.
- Set up trash containers in the wash area to dispose of debris and used car wash rags.
- Be sure that your hoses have nozzles that automatically turn off when left unattended.
- Be sure that any soaps, cleaners or detergents that you'll be using are labeled "non-toxic," "phosphate free" or "biodegradable." The safest products for the environment are vegetable-based or citrus-based soaps.
- Be sure that you do not use acid-based wheel cleaners.

During the car wash: 2

- Shake car mats into a trash can or vacuum them. Don't shake dirt from car mats directly onto the pavement of street.
- Use a bucket of soapy water to re-soap rags or sponges throughout the wash rather than adding more soap directly to rags or sponges.
- Wring sponges and wash rags into buckets, not the ground.
- Do not wash vehicle engines or the undercarriage.

After the car wash: 3

- Dispose of leftover soapy water (in your bucket) into a toilet, sink or a grassy area nearby, but not on the driveway or street.
- Walk the perimeter of the site to pick up trash and debris and dispose of it properly.



Just as soap destroys dirt and organisms on your car, it will do the same in creeks and other bodies of water.