

## What does water quality have to do with washing your car?

Water quality is an important issue to the residents of southeast Michigan. Every step we do to help keep our waters clean is one step closer to improving that quality. Here are some tips on how to be environmentally responsible when washing your car so that you can participate in preventing stormwater pollution.

There is no problem with washing your car. It is just where and how you do it. Many people do not realize that the waste water from washing cars that enter storm drains are not treated at plants before being discharged into local waters.

Lots of pollutants can be found in the waste water from washing your car, and lots can be picked up as it travels on the pavement (driveway, street or parking lot) from your car to the storm drain:

- oil
- grease
- metals (e.g. benzene, lead, chromium, zinc, arsenic)
- detergents
- phosphorous (harmful to fish and other aquatic life)

The storm drain water ends up in our lakes, rivers and streams! This toxic load then adds to the overall burden from other sources of homeowner water pollution such as improper disposal of excessive yard waste, winter road salt and sand, inorganic fertilizers, poor lawn mowing practices, lack of rain gardens and more.

Believe it or not, it's more economical, more environmentally responsible, and quicker to wash your car at a commercial car wash!

Commercial car washes often either recycle their water waste or send it to the sanitary sewer to be treated for removal of pollutants.

If you do prefer to wash your car at home here are some watershed friendly tips to keep in mind:

- Choose a biodegradable and phosphate-free soap and use it sparingly. Most stores carry at least one phosphate-free and biodegradable car wash product.
- Wash your car on gravel or other pervious surface that can soak up wash water. Washing cars on grass is an option, but runs the danger of compacting soil and damaging tree roots.
- Use a hose nozzle with a trigger to save water.
- Pour your bucket of wash water onto the lawn or down the sink when you're done, not on the driveway or street.

Every measure that you can take, especially when it comes to urban stormwater pollution prevention, helps to protect water quality of our lakes, rivers and streams. Visit: <http://www.crowc.org/stormwater-protection/> for more information.