

# *What Is Stormwater & Why Should We Care?*

**S**tormwater, erosion and sedimentation are the primary causes of water quality use impairments nationwide. Stormwater is water that comes from rain, or melting snow. When stormwater comes into contact with impervious surfaces such as rooftops and pavement, the water is forced to flow over (runoff) the land rather than infiltrate into the soil. This action holds serious consequences. For starters, stormwater runoff collects a variety of pollutants along the way including soil, animal waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizers, oil, grease, and litter. Making matters worse is the input of household septic systems into storm sewers. Stormwater pollutants are conveyed into our streams and lakes where we fish, swim, sail and obtain drinking water. Different water quality use impairments are associated with each stormwater pollutant. Soil particles (sediment) from construction sites, agricultural fields and logging sites become detached by stormwater runoff. When that soil is deposited into streams, aquatic habitat is smothered and sediment laden channels become susceptible to flooding. In addition, soil particles also convey nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorous. Nutrients originate from fertilizers, and waste derived from human and animal sources. When nutrients are added to waterbodies,

*Submitted by: Highway Supt. Donald Sroka*

they instigate an invasion of aquatic weeds which deplete oxygen levels in streams and impair fish survival. Finally, stormwater containing sewage, oil, grease, and salt can render lakes unsafe for swimming and streams unfit for fishing. In coastal waters, shellfish beds are threatened or destroyed by stormwater pollutants. Federal and State regulations now exist to control stormwater runoff. Nationwide, communities are actively implementing measures to control the harmful effects of stormwater, erosion and sedimentation. Locally, communities are receiving assistance from the Soil and Water Conservation District, Regional Planning and the Department of Environmental Conservation. All of us have a responsibility to implement common sense land use plans and best management practices to conserve topsoil and reduce erosion. By working together we can protect our streams and lakes, our drinking water, our health and our homes.



— **Donald Sroka** —  
*Highway  
Superintendent*