

STORMWATER FACT SHEET

What is the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Program?

Mandated by Congress under the Clean Water Act, the NPDES Stormwater Program is a comprehensive two-phased national program for addressing the non-agricultural sources of stormwater discharges which adversely affect the quality of our nation's waters. The program uses the NPDES permitting mechanism to require the implementation of controls designed to prevent harmful pollutants from being washed by stormwater runoff into local water bodies.

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater runoff occurs when precipitation from rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from naturally soaking into the ground. Stormwater can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants and flow into a storm sewer system or directly to a lake, stream, river, or wetland. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water.

How do NPDES permits protect water?

An NPDES permit will generally specify an acceptable level of a pollutant or pollutant parameter in a discharge (for example, a certain level of bacteria). The permittee may choose which technologies to use to achieve that level. Some permits, however, do contain certain generic 'best management practices' (such as installing a screen over the pipe to keep debris out of the waterway). NPDES permits make sure that a state's mandatory standards for clean water and the federal minimums are being met.

Why does Townsend need a NPDES Permit?

In 2003, the Town of Townsend was required by the EPA to apply for an NPDES Phase II permit. This permit was received and must be renewed every five years by the Town. The Phase II permit requires municipalities and operators of construction sites to prevent sediment and other pollutants from washing into nearby streams, rivers, and lakes. In order to protect and monitor Townsend's water resources, one of the requirements of the permit is that we implement two new stormwater bylaws.

What are the requirements of the EPA Phase II NPDES Permit?

The Phase II Rule requires a storm water management program comprising six elements that, when implemented in concert, are expected to result in significant reductions of pollutants discharged into receiving waterbodies.

1. *Public Education and Outreach*

Distributing educational materials and performing outreach to inform citizens about the impacts polluted storm water runoff discharges can have on water quality.

2. *Public Participation/Involvement*

Providing opportunities for citizens to participate in program development and implementation, including effectively publicizing public hearings and/or encouraging citizen representatives on a storm water management panel.

3. ***Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination***

Developing and implementing a plan to detect and eliminate illicit discharges to the storm sewer system (includes developing a system map and informing the community about hazards associated with illegal discharges and improper disposal of waste).

4. ***Construction Site Runoff Control***

Developing, implementing, and enforcing an erosion and sediment control program for construction activities that disturb 1 or more acres of land (controls could include silt fences and temporary storm water detention ponds).

5. ***Post-Construction Runoff Control***

Developing, implementing, and enforcing a program to address discharges of post-construction storm water runoff from new development and redevelopment areas. Applicable controls could include preventative actions such as protecting sensitive areas (e.g., wetlands) or the use of structural BMPs such as grassed swales or porous pavement.

6. ***Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping***

Developing and implementing a program with the goal of preventing or reducing pollutant runoff from municipal operations. The program must include municipal staff training on pollution prevention measures and techniques (e.g., regular street sweeping, reduction in the use of pesticides or street salt, or frequent catch-basin cleaning).

Why do construction sites need to be regulated?

Erosion controls that aren't maintained can cause excessive amounts of sediment and debris to be carried into the stormwater system. Construction vehicles can leak fuel, oil, and other harmful fluids that can be picked up by stormwater and deposited into local waterbodies.

What is a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4)?

The regulatory definition of an MS4 (40 CFR 122.26(b)(8)) is "a conveyance or system of conveyances including roads with drainage systems, municipal streets, catch basins, curbs, gutters, ditches, man-made channels, or storm drains.

What is an Illicit Connection?

Any discharge to a municipal separate storm sewer that is not composed entirely of stormwater and is not authorized by an NPDES permit or the Highway Department.

What is an Illicit Discharge?

Discharges of non-stormwater to the storm drainage system. Examples are discharges from internal floor drains, appliances, industrial processes, sinks, and toilets that are connected to the nearby storm drainage system. These discharges should be going to the sanitary sewer system, a holding tank, an on-site process water treatment system, or a septic system.

How will these bylaws affect homeowners?

The Stormwater Bylaw is meant to protect and enhance public health, safety, environment, and general welfare by establishing requirements and procedures to control stormwater runoff. To be affected by the Bylaw, a person or entity must be proposing to disturb at least one acre of land for a construction project. This applies to residential as well as commercial and industrial sites. Most existing single family homes do not fall under this category.