

# Protect Natural Floodplains

A watershed is the area of land that water flows across or seeps into on its way to a river, lake or stream. Watersheds are separated from each other by high points such as the crest of a hill.

Everyone lives in a watershed and should be able to enjoy healthy streams and the opportunities they provide. Almost every human activity – from lawn care to recreation – affects the quantity and quality of water in the watershed. We share our watershed with wildlife that also depend on a healthy watershed for food shelter and water.

The health of a watershed and its inhabitants depends on clean water. Preventing pollution in streams and the creek avoids costly impacts to our health, our community and our economy.

Smart stormwater management is vital to protecting our watershed and reducing the chances of flooding.

Parking lots, driveways, streets and rooftops prevent rain and snow from falling directly on the ground and infiltrating, or soaking, in the soil. Rainfall on these surfaces becomes stormwater runoff. As it flows through ditches, culverts and street drains, stormwater accumulates pollutants such as fertilizer, yard waste and animal waste, oil, road salts, chemicals, solid particles and litter, and flows untreated into waterways.

Too much runoff quickly draining in to streams can cause local flooding – stormwater that is allowed to soak into the ground enters streams more slowly.

In Scituate, we have separated stormwater and sewer systems. Storm sewers carry rainwater to streams, sanitary sewers carry wastewater to the treatment facility.

*You are an important part of helping us to manage those systems.* You can control runoff in the following ways:

- Drain sump pumps into lawns instead of back into the sewer or road ditch.
- Replace driveways and walkways when needed to help smooth surfaces that help water flow directly into sewers.
- Disconnect downspouts from the sewer system – downspouts should drain into vegetated areas to reduce sewer overflows, stream flooding and basement flooding.
- Use a grass catcher when you mow to minimize the grass clippings that run into the storm sewer system.
- Manage pet waste. Don't allow it to be left on paved surfaces where it can wash into streams or storm drains.
- Never put anything in the storm sewer – no litter or chemicals. And, *please don't pour grease down your drains.*

Lastly, we all need to be good caretakers of our streams. Undisturbed land along the stream banks with native trees and shrubs that have roots help to stabilize the soil to prevent it from being washed away. Don't ever disturb the creek bank by placing fill or removing gravel or vegetation. And, never dump garbage into the creek or any other stream.

With everyone doing their part, we can preserve the natural floodplain functions in our community.