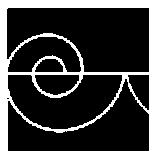


# Storm Water Pollution is Death By 1,000 Cuts

Forty years ago, in June of 1969, the Cuyahoga River burned, sparking the movement for stricter laws to protect our waterways. It wasn't the first time the Cuyahoga River burned – previous fires caused millions of dollars of damage. In comparison, the 1969 fire was small, causing only about \$100,000 worth of damage. This fire, however, was the catalyst for the formation of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the passing of the Clean Water Act in 1972. Seeing industry as the culprit, EPA began regulating *point source pollution* - pollution from a single identifiable source (industries, factories, etc.). Over the years, while our waterways were improving, they weren't improving at the rate predicted, even though industries, etc. were complying with the new laws. The EPA then began regulating *non-point source pollution* – pollution coming from many different sources. Non-point source pollution is caused by snowmelt or storm water runoff. As the runoff moves, it picks up and carries away natural and human-made pollutants, finally depositing them into lakes, rivers, and wetlands. **Essentially, storm water pollution is death by 1,000 cuts!** Just like a solitary cut on your leg is not life-threatening, no single one of these sources by itself leads to water quality problems, but their cumulative effects are more than enough to degrade our rivers and streams. Cities now have to report to EPA on their non-point source pollution prevention efforts.

## *How Can You Help?*

- 1. Educate Yourself.** Where are your local streams? How healthy are they? What are the main issues in your corner of the watershed?
- 2. Explore Your Local Rivers and Streams.** Aside from depending on it for drinking water or your livelihood, nothing builds appreciation for a river like getting up close and personal with it. Wade it. Fish it. Canoe it. Skip rocks in it. Picnic on its banks. Then share it with your friends and family, especially your kids. Just be sure not to trespass.
- 3. Implement Watershed-Friendly Practices around Your Home.** Each of us has an opportunity to apply our own personal “band-aid” to one of those thousand cuts by doing our part and making changes to how we manage our lawns and the storm water we generate. Testing our soil fertility to ensure that we don't over-fertilize our lawns and gardens; installing rain gardens and rain barrels to reduce the amount of storm water that flows off our rooftops, driveways and lawns when it rains; properly disposing of household hazardous wastes; picking up after our pets; and having our septic tanks pumped on a routine basis are all good places to start. Then multiply your efforts by spreading the word to your neighbors.
- 4. GET INVOLVED!** Join a watershed group or contact the Cuyahoga Soil and Water Conservation District for information on how you can be a part of the solution to storm water pollution.



Cuyahoga  
Soil and Water  
**Conservation**  
District