



## A STORM DRAIN PAINTING PROJECT

*Organized by*

The Sea Grant Program of the  
Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

### PURPOSE

Storm drains are located throughout Massachusetts' watersheds: in towns, cities, and neighborhoods. When it rains, the water that runs along the gutters on your street "disappears" down the storm drains.

Have you ever stopped to wonder where all the water goes? It does not go to a wastewater treatment plant; therefore, nothing is removed from the water. Anything that goes down your storm drain goes into the rivers, bays, ocean, Nantucket Sound, or groundwater.

Your neighborhood is directly linked to our coastal and groundwaters. You can help clean up these waters by stenciling the words "Don't Dump" on storm drains in your area. This message will remind members of your community that nothing but rainwater should enter the storm drains.

We are asking individuals and groups to help spread the word. Storm drains are not trash cans. Whatever is dumped into storm drains ends up in coastal or groundwaters.



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## ITEMS TYPICALLY PLACED IN STORM DRAINS

### **MOTOR OIL**

Problem: When poured down the gutter or storm drain, motor oil travels to your local stream, bay or harbor, where it can damage or kill underwater vegetation and aquatic life. One quart of oil can contaminate up to 2 million gallons of drinking water or create an 8-acre oil slick.

Solution: Put used motor oil in a sturdy container and take it to your local service station or household hazardous waste collection. Remember not to mix your oil with any other substance. Call your town for collection schedules.

### **ANTIFREEZE**

Problem: Antifreeze is a highly toxic chemical. It is poisonous to people, as well as to fish, birds, and pets. Animals that live in or drink from contaminated streams or gutters may become ill or even die.

Solution: Save old antifreeze for a household hazardous waste collection day.

### **PAINT**

Problem: Many paint products contain ingredients that may be harmful to people, animals, or the environment when improperly used or thrown out.

Solution: Donate unused paint (but not lead paint!) to community groups, schools, local theaters, or other interested organizations. For small quantities of unwanted latex or water-based paints, stuff the can loosely with newspaper, or remove the top, allow the paint to dry, reseal the carton, and discard in the trash. Save oil-based paints for a household hazardous waste collection day.

### **YARD WASTE**

Problem: When left in the gutter or dumped into storm drains, yard wastes travel directly to coastal waters. Once in the water, yard wastes decompose rapidly, adding excessive nutrients to the water body. Over time, consequences of excessive nutrients can lead to harmful algal blooms, and result in fish and shellfish kills. Yard wastes also clog storm drains, rendering them ineffective and causing localized flooding.

Solution: Instead of throwing your yard clippings away, compost them. Then use the compost to condition your soil. Check gardening books to learn how to compost or call your local Cooperative Extension or Sea Grant Program for further details.

### **PLASTICS**

Problem: Plastic and foam containers are lightweight and wash into storm drains and into coastal waters. They do not decompose and can take hundreds of years to break down. Plastics can kill wildlife and marine life in two ways — animals eat these materials or become entangled in them.

Solution: Minimize your use of plastic products and make sure that the plastics you use do not get put into the trash. If you see plastic litter, pick it up so that it does not get washed or blown into storm drains, gutters, or local streams.

### ***REUSE and RECYCLE!***