

Maintaining Saline County's Water Quality

A Guide for Environmentally Safe Car Washing

The accumulated impact of waste water from vehicle washing can pose a significant threat to the health of our waterways, if allowed to enter the stormwater system. Many of the ingredients in detergents and solvents (including those labeled as biodegradable) can be toxic to aquatic animal and plant life, can promote algae and weed growth and reduce the diversity of life in our creeks, streams, and lakes.

In addition, the dirt and grime removed from vehicle surfaces contains pollutants such as oil, grease, heavy metals (e.g., Lead, cadmium, chromium, copper, and zinc), rubber and sediment.

Sediment carries and transports the other pollutants through the stormwater system to downstream water bodies.

“Only Rain Down the Drain”

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Illegal Dumping of Wastewater Could Result in Fines from Local Municipalities, State, and / or the Environmental Protection Agency.

Phosphate Free and Biodegradable Detergents

Detergents labeled biodegradable are not safe to put down the stormwater drain. They can reduce the environmental impact of wash water, but only when they are diverted and discharged to the sanitary sewer system where the water is treated before entering the receiving waters.

In phosphate free detergents, the phosphate is replaced with other chemicals that may be more toxic. Some impact the breeding ability of some aquatic organisms.

What You Can Do...

- Take vehicles to an approved car wash facility. These facilities are designed to collect and reuse waste water until it is eventually drained to a sanitary sewer.
- Wash vehicles in an area that drains to a sanitary sewer. If a sanitary sewer is not available wash vehicles on a grassed or gravel area away from storm drains.
- Rinse vehicles with clean water and no detergents, but take care to sweep up any debris on the ground that may wash into the storm sewer.
- Use a "dry wash" method that generates no wastewater.
- Contain and collect wash water before it can enter the storm sewer. There are many commercially available devices similar to a child's inflatable swimming pool for this use.
- Block storm drains or open ditches with specialized plugs or simple plastic and sand-bag type devices. Once waste water pools use a wet vacuum to collect waste water then dispose of in a sanitary sewer drain.

Together we can keep Arkansas's creeks and rivers the most beautiful in the country!