

Storm Drain Stenciling

Few people would be so thoughtless as to pour soap suds or piles of leaves directly into a lake. Yet dumping any pollutant into the street is almost as harmful. Painting storm drain stencils alerts people to be careful because these pipes carry untreated runoff directly to the nearest waterbody.

ACTION STEPS

1. Pick a site and get permission

- ❑ Ask the city department of public works for a map of the storm drain system. This map will clearly show your sub-watershed!
- ❑ Identify the drains you wish to stencil. Six students and one adult can paint three to four stencils per hour (not including travel time).
 - Your city or watershed district (see inside back cover) may want to target certain streets.
 - Avoid busy streets.
 - ❑ Get (written) permission from public works to paint sites. Ask a few weeks in advance. Explain your liability coverage.
 - If they say “no,” ask why. It may pay to appeal.



**KEEP CARS
TUNED UP**

2. Get equipment

Public works, other agency partners or local businesses may give or loan equipment. (See inside back cover.)

For each team of four to six students and one adult, collect:

- ❑ Plastic stencil with appropriate message, “Do Not Dump Drains to Lake/River/etc.” Cut out in advance.
- Order from Earthwater Stencils, 4425 140th Ave. SW., Dept. V, Rochester, WA 98579 (360) 956-3774.



- Your Conservation District or city may pay for or have site-specific stencils (e.g. “Drains to Clear Lake”).
- ❑ White paint Ask public works to state a preference between:
 - Liquid latex paint [not oil-based], sponges/foam brushes/rollers BEWARE spills, drips, and smears (excess paint will seep under stencil). or
 - High quality spray paint (Rustoleum or equivalent). Highway paint lasts longest. One can will do about 20 stencils. BEWARE exposure to fumes. Do not use on windy day.
- Check county household hazardous waste program for used paint.
- ❑ Two or more neon orange traffic cones, three reflective vests, crossing guard flag, three pairs safety glasses, three pairs rubber gloves
- ❑ Stiff bristled broom, wire brush, two plastic trash bags
- ❑ Rags, masking tape, lots of newspaper
- ❑ 5-gallon bucket to carry kit into field

Watch for updates on permanent curb stickers as an alternative to paint and stencils. Call REPNET (800) 522-4343 for ordering info.

3. Organize teams

- ❑ Collect completed permission slips. (See sample, page 34.)
- ❑ Tell students to wear old clothes that are white or other visible colors.
- ❑ Recruit one or two adults/high school students for each team.

4. Make fliers

Agencies or your city can supply fliers. Youth will learn more, and fliers will get more attention, if students create them. (For details on how to make fliers, see “Public Education,” pages 8-11.) Fliers should:

- ❑ Identify the watershed and sub-watershed. (A sub-watershed is a distinct part of a watershed, such as the area draining to one bay of a lake.)
- ❑ Do reconnaissance of sub-watershed. (See pages 25-32.) Include observations in flier.
- ❑ Explain that runoff in storm sewers flows untreated to creek, lake, etc.
- ❑ List things people can *do* to prevent pollution from going into storm sewers.
- ❑ Identify your group and any partners.
- ❑ Make/copy enough fliers for each house on the block by each stencil.

5. Paint

- ❑ Safety first:
 - Wear visible clothes and reflective vests.
 - Cross streets with crossing guard.
 - Secure stenciling site with orange cones.
 - Painters should wear gloves and goggles.
 - A responsible person must watch for traffic and do nothing else.
- ❑ Weather must be above 50° F, dry, and – if spray painting – not windy.
- ❑ Practice painting stencil on a piece of newspaper; it takes a knack to avoid smears.
 - Two hold stencil while one paints.
 - Use too little paint rather than too much. (Sponge beats brush with liquid latex.)
 - Lift stencil carefully to avoid smearing.
 - Spray down wind of people.
- ❑ Follow instructions on paint can.
- ❑ Pick best orientation for stencil:
 - Place stencil down stream from opening. On curb or sidewalk will last longer.
 - If owner does not want you to stencil by their property, move to another site.
 - If needed, mask cars, signs, etc. with tape and newspaper.
 - Don't get paint on parked cars!
- ❑ Paint pavement, not dirt: sweep area, wire-brush stubborn spots.
- ❑ Don't spill paint down storm drain! Clean up site after you are done. (To clean dried stencils, freeze, then peel off paint.)
- ❑ Deliver fliers to houses. (For more on delivering fliers, see page 9.)

6. Reflect and celebrate

- ❑ Record on a map and date sites of drains painted.
 - ❑ Calculate area of sub-watershed and area served by drains stenciled. What percentage of watershed is contained in the area? Count number of houses.
 - ❑ Take photographs. Send to newspaper with student-written story.
 - ❑ From area reconnaissance, decide what other projects group could do.

Wash cars on grass not driveways. So soapy water can't run to the sewer as quickly, and picking up pollutants.

