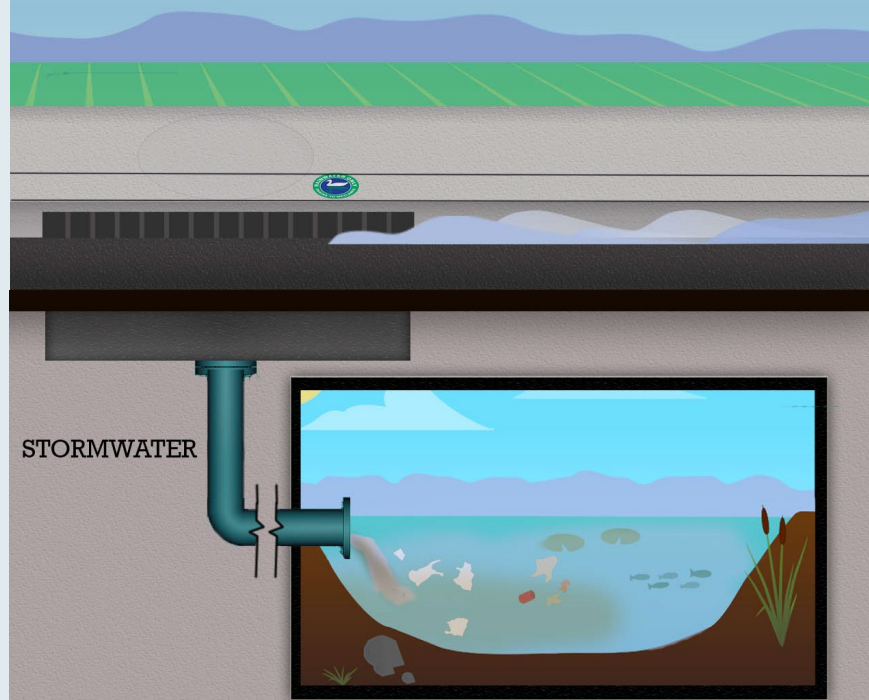


# Stormwater Pollution Prevention: Washing Cars

Our actions, including how and where we wash our cars, can contribute to urban runoff pollution. When water, litter or other items go into the gutter and down a storm drain inlet, they flow directly to local wetlands and waterways without being treated.

**Most people don't realize they are actually harming the environment when cars are washed on paved surfaces like driveways and parking lots.** Automotive frames, paint, brakes and exhaust contain heavy metals such as lead, zinc, iron oxide and asbestos. These materials can end up in the dirty wash water as cars are being cleaned. Soaps can contain phosphates, chlorine and other non-biodegradable ingredients that are toxic to fish and other aquatic life. **Although most people would never intentionally throw buckets of dirty, soapy water in a river, pond or stream, that's effectively what happens when cars are washed in driveways and parking lots.**

**Our actions can cause pollution when anything other than clean rainwater goes down a storm drain.**



## Keeping cars and waterways clean

**Follow the tips below to prevent pollution of local wetlands and waterways!**

- Consider washing your car at a licensed car wash facility. These facilities collect wash water and send it to the wastewater (sewer) system for treatment. Some facilities even recycle the water through on-site filtration for use as a pre-wash rinse.
- If car washing must occur outside of a licensed car wash facility, be sure to wash vehicles over mulched or vegetated areas and make sure wash water does not flow into the street. Use a hose with a shut-off nozzle and a bucket to minimize wasted water.
- Consider waterless car washing kits that can clean your car using a special detergent in a spray bottle and towels.



## Consider Water Conservation

Most car wash facilities save water by using high pressure nozzles and pumps. This equipment is designed to thoroughly clean a vehicle using minimal water. As a result, a fraction of the water is used compared to a garden hose.

If washing your car at home, save water by using waterless car wash kits or the two-bucket wash method (with one bucket with water and soap and the second with clean water to rinse).

