I Am Stormwater Pollution

By: Bryce Jones

I am Stormwater. I am rain and melting snow that does not soak into the ground. I flow over impervious surfaces like roads and roofs. I begin my life clean and pure, but as I flow, I pick up pollutants like trash, harmful chemicals like pesticides, fertilizers and other waste that is discarded where I will go. I take this with me on my journey to your rivers, lakes and surrounding watersheds. You have changed me. I am now Stormwater Pollution.

I do not mean to cause harm, but when you throw down your trash, salt, oil, and fertilizers, I cannot help but to take it to where I flow. Storm drains do not clean me of my pollution. These drains make it so I cannot saturate the ground where I have fallen, making the ground dry. This makes the land less usable. Storm drains put me into your water sources without proper filtration. I then cause harm to the organisms in them. Not meaning to, I create things like algal blooms that suffocate aquatic life. All the trash you throw down and I carry with me may get eaten by animals. This can cause them to choke or have other harmful issues. Polluted with all the insecticides, metals, and pesticides you use, I create poisons and diseases that kill wildlife. Lakes and rivers should be beautiful parts of your community, not dirty from trash and poisons.

I am Stormwater Pollution. I cannot help what I do, but you can. You can help clean me up and cleanse me of pollution. You can do this in many ways, one of which is to preserve natural features like floodplains with natural vegetation buffers. Those buffers filter polluted runoff. Encourage builders and planners to use permeable concrete and paving so I can soak back into the ground before I become polluted. The simplest solution, however, is for you to be more careful and thoughtful about what you throw on the ground.

You could simply throw it away properly or, even better, recycle and reuse things. You could put down less pesticides and fertilizers and try not to put them down at all before it rains or snows. Washing your car less could also stop soap and other chemicals from getting into me. Picking up your pet’s waste also helps to stop stormwater pollution. These are all great ways to help you and your environment stay healthy. This cannot be done without you. I cannot stop being myself, but I could be clean again. I could be prevented. I am Stormwater Pollution, and with your help, I can be Stormwater again.