



Storm Drain Stenciling

“Paint the Town with WAVes”

DESCRIPTION:

Educate your community about stormwater pollution by stenciling the message: “Dump no Waste – Drains to Stream” (or River or Lake) next to storm drains. You may choose to distribute or create fliers that educate the community about stormwater pollution.



YOU WILL NEED:

Items for 4 to 6 people:

- ◆ 1 or 2 stencils
- ◆ Door hanger cards/fliers
- ◆ A map of the stenciling area
- ◆ Parent/guardian permission slips
- ◆ A letter of authorization from the Department of Public Works for stenciling
- ◆ 2 cans of spray paint – preferably inverted-tip white traffic zone latex paint. (Note: 1 can paints approximately 10 drains.)
- ◆ A wire brush to clean the gutter before painting
- ◆ Whisk broom and dust pan
- ◆ 1 or 2 pairs of work gloves
- ◆ 1 or 2 bright orange safety vests, or wear brightly colored clothing
- ◆ 2 garbage bags – 1 for wet stencils and 1 for garbage such as tape used on the stencils and debris cleaned out of the gutter
- ◆ Paper towels or rags*
- ◆ Traffic cones or flags for use on busy streets*
- ◆ Duct tape and scissors*
- ◆ Cardboard box the size of stencil*

OBJECTIVES

By participating in this activity, your group will:

1. Learn about the sources of stormwater pollution.
2. Understand why stormwater pollution is a threat to the environment.
3. Stencil messages next to storm drains to encourage others to be more aware of stormwater pollution.

TIME

It will take approximately one hour for a team of four to six people to stencil 15 storm drains.

AGE

This is a good activity for volunteers ten years and older.

COST

You will need to purchase or borrow all of the required supplies, except for the stencils and door hanger cards. These are available free-of-charge from the Department of Natural Resources Madison office or University of Wisconsin Extension. Call 608-264-8948 to order.

* = optional



Everyone can contribute to a storm drain stenciling campaign. This student is from Ladysmith Elementary School in Ladysmith, WI.

BACKGROUND

Why should people be concerned about what enters a storm drain? Because anything that is flushed down a storm drain is not “treated” before it reaches a stream or river. This means that oil, antifreeze, paint, grass clippings, household waste, pet wastes, or any other waste on streets and sidewalks goes directly into a nearby stream, river, or lake.

The next time you wash your car on your driveway, consider where the water goes. The soapy, dirty water runs down the street into the storm sewer. This sewer carries the wash water to a waterbody. In the water, the soap acts like a fertilizer for aquatic plants and causes too much plant growth, which creates problems for fish.

You can help increase awareness of the storm drain connection. Educate your community about stormwater pollution by stenciling the street next to storm drains and distributing door hanger cards.

BEFORE YOU STENCIL

1. Obtain permission.

Get permission to stencil storm drains from the Department of Public Works in your city, village or town. Be sure to ask for a letter of authorization to provide you with proof if you are questioned by a road crew or police officer.

To stencil on private property, contact the landowner, whether the property is a home, business, or apartment complex.

2. Keep weather in mind.

Weather conditions are important for the success of this project. You should choose a day when

the pavement is dry and warm. Windy days are not good because the spray paint can drift onto nearby automobiles and debris can be blown onto the painted surface.

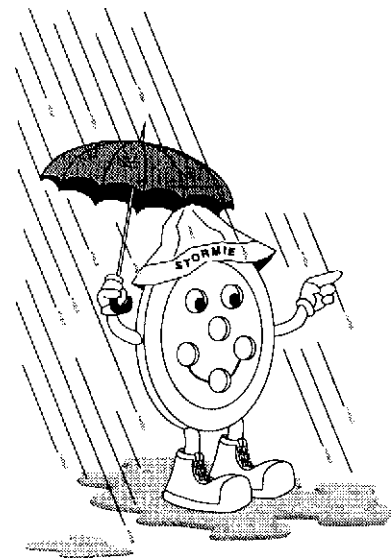
3. Divide up the area.

Using a neighborhood map, carefully consider the area your group will stencil. Divide the area into routes and assign a team to each route.

4. Notify the neighborhood.

A day or two before you plan to paint, distribute door hanger cards or fliers explaining the stenciling program. If you can't distribute the information ahead of time, have one or two team members distribute the cards and fliers while others paint.

Examples of a door hanger card and a flier are included with this unit (the flier can be photocopied). If your group is participating in a large storm drain stenciling project, you may want to make your own door hangers, fliers, or posters, using the opportunity to conduct an all-out education campaign.



HOW TO STENCIL

1. Scrub around the drain.

Scrub the street area surrounding the storm drain with the wire brush, and use the whisk broom to sweep dirt into the dust pan. Use your garbage bags to take debris away. Do not sweep dirt and debris into the drain.

2. Put the stencil in place.

Position the stencil in the gutter next to the storm drain inlet where the message will be most visible. Tape or hold the stencil in place. You might place a cardboard box with its bottom removed over the stencil to create a “wall” that contains drifting paint.

3. Paint away.

Spray paint the message, making sure paint doesn't get into the storm drain. Two light coats of paint will work better than one heavy coat. Allow the first coat of paint to dry before applying the second coat. The stenciled messages last for approximately two years on a paved surface.

4. Check for missed drains.

When you're done with the project, have one team member check that all storm drains in your area have been stenciled. It's easy to miss one.

5. Clean up.

Place the used stencils in a plastic bag for transportation. When

storing used stencils, allow the paint to dry *before* stacking the stencils. A stencil's lifespan is determined by use. Discard the stencil when the message is blurred by excess paint build-up (typically about ten separate events).

RESOURCES

**Down The Drain* (#645003)
Sunburst
101 Castleton St.
Pleasantville, NY 10570
1-800-321-7511
www.sunburst.com

This 30-minute 3-2-1 CONTACT video takes a close look at something that's easy to take for granted – water. It examines the effects of modern lifestyles on the water cycle, a key to understanding why and how we must preserve this precious resource.

Door hanger cards and stencils

Contact: Peggy Compton, Water Action Volunteers Coordinator, at (608) 342-1633.



The Water Action Volunteers program is a cooperative effort between the University of Wisconsin -Extension and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources. For more information about the WAV program, please contact Peggy Compton, Water Action Volunteers Coordinator

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