



# RUSSIAN RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

300 Seminary Ave, Ukiah, CA 95482 • (707) 833-2553 • [www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)

## “Your Watershed” *by the Russian River Watershed Association*

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### Water Conservation and Water Quality Protection Go Hand-in-Hand

Now that's it's officially summer, it's a good time to remember that “only rain goes down the storm drain”. Although storm drain systems are designed to protect our communities from wintertime flooding, our local storm drains do not stay dry all summer long. Non-storm water runoff is made up of those flows that do not consist of rainwater. These discharges may originate from lawn watering overspray, hosing down sidewalks, personal car washing, pool and spa drainage, or even illegal dumping of waste water from construction activities. These dry weather flows can have high concentrations of water pollutants such as metals, bacteria, pesticides, fertilizers, and sediment.

Preventing non-storm water dry weather flows to the storm drain protects water quality while also conserving valuable water resources. Here are a few suggestions on how you can help:

- **Use efficient irrigation techniques in your yard.** To conserve water and minimize runoff, try implementing the following measures in your yard:
  - Use drip irrigation instead of spray irrigation wherever possible.
  - Plant drought-tolerant plants and minimize lawn areas. Native plants are often good choices because they are adapted to our climate.
  - Irrigate between midnight and 6:00 a.m. to reduce water loss from evaporation and wind.
  - Put your irrigation system on a timer. Most irrigation timers can be programmed for several short run times overnight, allowing more water to soak into the soil without runoff.
  - Use mulch around plants and shrubs, and on all bare soil areas. Mulch controls weeds, reduces soil erosion, and helps the soil retain moisture.
  - Minimize impervious surfaces. If you're thinking about extending your driveway, adding a patio, or paving a side yard, consider using permeable pavers or porous concrete instead of traditional concrete.
  - Limit the use of pesticides and fertilizers in your yard. These products can be harmful to aquatic life.
- **Use a broom, not a hose, to clean driveway, deck or patio.** Using water to wash these areas is wasteful and unnecessary, and in many communities a violation of water conservation regulations.



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- **Take your car to a carwash facility.** When you wash your car in your driveway, the soapy wash water can run down the driveway, into the gutter, down the storm drain, and into a local creek. Most carwash facilities treat and recycle their wash water, thereby protecting water quality and conserving water. In addition, car wash facilities discharge to the sanitary sewer, not to the storm drain. If your organization is considering holding a car wash as fundraiser, you must set up the site so the wash water does not drain to the storm drain. See <http://www.sonoma-county.org/prmd/sw/pp-home-carwash.htm> or call the Sonoma County Permit & Resource Management Division (Storm Water Section) at 565-2098 for further information.
- **Drain your pool or spa to the sanitary sewer or to landscaped areas on your property.** It is illegal to drain pools, spas and pool/spa filter backwash to the storm drain without proper authorization. Chlorinated water is deadly to fish and aquatic life, and should be drained onto the ground or into the sanitary sewer. See [http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/eh/pdf/stormwater\\_pools\\_smaller.pdf](http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/eh/pdf/stormwater_pools_smaller.pdf) for more information.
- **Control runoff during construction activities.** Water associated with de-watering/groundwater pumping and cleanup from concrete and mortar must not be allowed to enter the storm drain system or creeks. Using concrete washouts and pumping to a truck or contained vegetative area is generally required.

*The Russian River Watershed Association ([www.rrwatershed.org](http://www.rrwatershed.org)) is an association of nine cities, counties and special districts in the watershed that are working together on programs for clean water, fisheries restoration and watershed enhancement. This article was authored by Janice Gilligan, Sonoma County – Permit & Resource Management Division and Phoebe Grow, Russian River Watershed Association.*