

**WHEN YOU'RE WASHING YOUR CAR IN THE DRIVEWAY,  
REMEMBER, YOU ARE NOT JUST WASHING YOUR CAR  
IN THE DRIVEWAY...**



All the soap, scum, and oily grit can run down your driveway, into the street, and the nearest storm drain inlet. From there, it will typically go directly to a stream, pond, or wetland. And, that causes pollution, which is unhealthy for the plant and animal life (including humans) which live in or frequent those areas. So, how do you avoid this mess? See page 2 for more information.

Concept idea for this brochure was taken from a brochure produced by the Water Quality Consortium of the Puget Sound area of Washington state.

### **What's the Problem with car washing?**

There is no problem with washing your car. In fact, keeping your car clean and well maintained is generally a benefit to the environment. It is just where and how you do it that matters. (See the Clean Water Tips to the right!) Most soaps contain phosphates and other chemicals that are harmful to the environment. In addition, all of the dirt, oily grit, salt, and other stuff that you do not want on your car and try to wash off are generally unwanted in the environment as well.

### **Where does my car wash water go?**

Underground drainage systems from streets, parking lots, and even drains in your yard or driveway typically drain directly to streams, ponds, or wetlands with little or no treatment. (When you use soaps in your house, they typically go into your sewer or septic system and are treated.) When you wash your car in your driveway, a parking lot, or on the street, the soaps, dirt, oily grit, salt, and stuff frequently get carried by the wash water into an underground drainage system – and hence directly to surface waters - untreated.

### **Is washing just one car a big deal?**

If you were the only one doing it, probably not. But, you are not the only one. If you have ever seen suds, an oily sheen, or cloudiness in a stream and assumed that it came from the discharge from a factory or business, you are likely wrong. More than 60% of the water pollution today comes from sources such as car washing and leaking car fluids, lawn, garden, and farm fertilizers, failing septic systems, pet and animal waste, roads, parking lots, and rainwater falling on or running across bare, unvegetated or unprotected ground. When hundreds of people in our town, and millions across the country, regularly wash their cars in their driveway, it adds up quickly.

### **Clean Water Tips to Washing Your Car:**

- ✓ The best practice is to take your car to a commercial car wash, where they typically reuse the wash water several times, pretreat the water before discharge, and send it to the sanitary sewer to be more rigorously treated before it enters the environment.
- ✓ If you are going to wash your car yourself, park your car on the grass or a gravel area where the wash and rinse water soaks into the ground, and does not run off to the street or a storm drain inlet.
- ✓ Use soap sparingly; and use a hose nozzle so you use less water and the water is not constantly running.
- ✓ Pour any excess soapy water down the drain in your house, so it goes to into the sewer system.

Brought to you by the Town of Bloomfield  
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