

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



All the soap, scum, and oily grit runs along the curb. Then into the storm drain and directly into our lakes, streams and into coastal waters including the Chesapeake Bay. And that causes pollution which is unhealthy for fish. So how do you avoid this whole mess? Easy. Wash your car on grass or gravel instead of the street. Or better yet, take it to a car wash where the water gets treated and recycled.

If you have questions regarding storm water, please contact your municipality or Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection's Regional Office. For general questions, you may also contact DEP's Bureau of Water Management at (717) 772-5661 or visit [www.dep.state.pa.us](http://www.dep.state.pa.us). Thanks to the Washington State Water Quality Consortium for permission to adapt and use this poster.



# CAR WASHING

**Don't feed soap to the storm drain.  
Wash your car right. Keep your waters clean.**

Clean water is important to all of us. It's up to all of us to make it happen. In recent years sources of water pollution like industrial wastes from factories have been greatly reduced. Now, most water pollution comes from things like cars leaking oil, fertilizers from farms and gardens, and failing septic tanks. All these sources add up to a big pollution problem. But each of us can do small things to help clean up our water too. And that adds up to a **POLLUTION SOLUTION!**

## Why do we need clean water?

Having clean water is of primary importance for our health and economy. Clean water provides recreation, commercial opportunities, fish habitat, drinking water, and adds beauty to our landscape. All of us benefit from clean water and all of us have a role in getting and keeping our lakes, rivers, and ground waters clean.

## What's the problem with car washing?

There's no problem with washing your car. It's just how and where you do it. Most soap contains phosphates and other chemicals that harm fish and water quality.

If you live in the city and you wash your car in the driveway, the soap, together with the dirt and oil washed from your car, flows into nearby storm drains which run directly into lakes and rivers. The phosphates from the soap can cause excess algae to grow. Algae look bad, smell bad, and harm water quality. As algae decay, the process uses up oxygen in the water that fish need.

## How will we change our ways?

The state recommends that cities and counties help educate people in urban areas about sensible ways to wash their cars and still keep soapy water from washing into storm drains. You can, indeed, wash your car and you can also keep our waters clean!

## What will you do to help?

- Use a commercial car wash, either self-serve or machine wash.
- Wash on lawns or other surfaces where water can seep into the ground.
- Divert water away from storm drain.



## Charity Car Washes~

- Sell commercial car wash coupons instead.
- Borrow a pump kit to send the soapy runoff to a sanitary sewer.
- Locate the car wash to divert wash water away from storm drains.
- Rent a "Bay for a Day" at a self-serve car wash that is hooked up to sanitary sewer.

**When you're washing your car in the driveway, remember  
you're not just washing your car in the driveway.**