

What is stormwater?

When rain flows over land or impervious surfaces it becomes stormwater. It may become polluted with debris, oil, sediment, or even harmful bacteria from pet waste or failing septic systems. Stormwater discharges are a significant contributor to local water quality impairments, possibly preventing recreational use or damaging habitat for fish, other aquatic organisms, and wildlife.

Where does our Stormwater go?

The answer depends on your street address. Stormwater runoff from the Town ultimately discharges into the May River, the New River, or the Okatie/Colleton River.

Is Stormwater runoff treated?

The simple answer is no, or at least not in the way you may think. Unlike drinking water or waste water, there is no treatment plant for stormwater runoff. Much of the runoff generated in the Town is ultimately discharged untreated into local waterways. However, some stormwater runoff may be routed through ponds or other features in your community to improve its quality through natural processes, like exposing it to sunlight. It does not get cleaned like drinking water or waste water!

The Town of Bluffton's MS4 Program is designed to reduce the discharge of pollutants in stormwater runoff to the "maximum extent practicable" to protect water quality & satisfy water quality requirements of the Clean Water Act.

Additional Resources

If you would like to learn more about the Town's MS4 program we encourage you to visit the websites below.



Neighbors for Clean Water
Our Rivers, Our Responsibility

Follow us on
Facebook & Twitter!

-  Neighbors for Clean Water Web Site
<http://www.neighborsforcleanwater.org>
-  Town of Bluffton's Web Site
<http://www.townofbluffton.sc.gov>
-  SC DHEC Stormwater Web Site
<http://www.scdhec.gov/Environment/WaterQuality/Stormwater/RegulatedMS4s/MS4overview>
-  EPA's Stormwater Web Site
<http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater>

To report a spill event please contact the County's Non-Emergency Number at (843) 524-2777

A Citizen's Guide to:

Bluffton's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program



Town of Bluffton
PO Box 386
Bluffton, SC 29910
(843) 706-4500

Photo by: Unique Perspective

Defining a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4)

What is an MS4?

Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System (MS4) refers to a system of conveyances (man-made channels & ditches, curbs, underground storm drains, etc.) owned by a municipality, county, or other public entity that is used to collect & discharge stormwater to the waters of the U.S., such as streams, rivers, & estuaries.

Why is Bluffton being designated an MS4?

In 1987, amendments to the Clean Water Act obligated the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to require urban areas to regulate stormwater. The Census defines where these urbanized areas are, and in 2010 the Census revealed that the Town's population met the urbanized area definition and thus fell within the purview of these requirements.

What does this mean?

The EPA and the South Carolina Department of Health & Environmental Control (SCDHEC) are responsible for oversight of all MS4 communities. The Town of Bluffton must comply with the regulations set forth by these federal and state agencies regarding stormwater discharges from their MS4. The Town must be granted approval for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit from SCDHEC for our MS4 Stormwater Management Program, which must include 6 minimum control measures.

A Stormwater Management Program shall include the following minimum measures.

1

Public Education and Outreach

An informed and knowledgeable community is crucial to the success of any stormwater management program. This is accomplished by distributing educational materials and performing outreach to inform citizens about the impacts polluted stormwater runoff discharges can have on water quality.

2

Public Involvement and Participation

An actively involved community that participates in the planning and implementation of the Stormwater Program increases its effectiveness. Some of the ways opportunities are made available to citizens are through public hearings, representation on stormwater committees, and involvement in clean-up events.

3

Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination

An illicit discharge is anything other than stormwater that enters the storm sewer system, except discharges allowed under a NPDES permit. Illicit discharges can come from an industrial facility, but it can also come from your home or business. Septic tank failures, oil, grease, wash waters, and chemicals are all considered illicit discharges. Illicit discharges are detected and eliminated by inspecting & mapping ditches, pipes, and other stormwater structures.

4

Construction Site Runoff Control

Runoff from construction activities that disturb land can carry sediment and other pollutants offsite when it rains. Developing, implementing & enforcing a program to ensure that proper erosion control measures are installed & maintained during construction will help to reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff from these construction sites.

5

Post-Construction Runoff Control

Stormwater features, such as lagoons, in your community not only provide flood control, but can also provide water quality benefits to stormwater runoff. These features must be continually maintained so that they function properly. Developing, implementing, & enforcing a program that monitors the long-term operation & maintenance of stormwater features will reduce pollutants in post-construction stormwater runoff.

6

Pollution Prevention/ Good Housekeeping

The Town, in our operations, must meet the same standards as the community. We must develop & implement a program with the goal of preventing or reducing pollutant runoff from our own Town municipal operations. This includes ongoing staff training on techniques to reduce pollution.