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Committee on
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Frequently Asked Questions ON STORMWATER RUNOFF

Q: *WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?*

A: Stormwater runoff is water from rain or melted snow that cannot be absorbed by the soil and instead washes off the land surface.

Q: *WHY IS UNTREATED STORMWATER RUNOFF A PROBLEM?*

A: Here are just a few problems associated with stormwater runoff:

- ◆ Causes beach closings
- ◆ Common source of pollutants in streams, lakes and reservoirs
- ◆ Contributes to and aggravates flooding problems
- ◆ Increases stream temperature

Q: *HOW DOES STORMWATER RUNOFF BECOME POLLUTED?*

A: As stormwater moves over the land and towards streams, rivers and lakes, it can be contaminated with a number of substances such as:

- ◆ **Sediment** - from construction sites and eroding stream-banks
- ◆ **Organic materials** - such as leaves and grass clippings
- ◆ **Oil and gasoline** - from automobiles and storage tanks
- ◆ **Nutrients** - such as phosphates and nitrates from fertilizer
- ◆ **Pesticides** - from lawns, gardens and golf courses
- ◆ **Pathogens** - such as bacteria and viruses from failing septic systems
- ◆ **Trash and street garbage** - such as plastics and paper



Q: *WHAT IS THE GOAL OF A STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PLAN?*



A: The goal of any stormwater management program should be to ensure that the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff from a specific development is not substantially altered from pre-development conditions.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PRACTICES?

- A: The following are some practices available for managing stormwater:
- ◆ **Vegetative practices** - naturally vegetated filter strips, grassed swales, constructed wetlands, tree plantings.
 - ◆ **Structural practices** - concrete grid and modular pavement, diversions, extended detention, retention and infiltration basins, porous pavement, water quality inlets (oil/grit separators).
 - ◆ **Maintenance practices** - fertilizer and pesticide application control, litter and leaf control, vehicle maintenance, street cleaning.

Q: WHAT ARE SOME BENEFITS OF A STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM?

- A: Here are a few of the numerous benefits of having a stormwater management plan:
- ◆ **Flood protection** - proper stormwater management practices retain runoff on the site and release it slowly, preventing flood damage on- and off-site.
 - ◆ **Groundwater recharge** - increases movement of water into the ground to recharge the water table.
 - ◆ **Erosion and sediment control** - reduces the volume of stormwater runoff from the site, keeping soil on the land and out of storm sewers, streets and waterbodies.
 - ◆ **Water quality protection** - prevents runoff carrying pollutants from washing off land and running into streams, lakes and coastal waters. This protects drinking water, recreation and wildlife habitat.
 - ◆ **Infrastructure protection** - stormwater management practices keep sediment out of highway ditches, culverts and waterways, reducing the costs for maintenance, dredging and replacement of public facilities.
 - ◆ **Lower flood insurance premiums** - under the Community Rating System (CRS) of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP), a community that implements an approved stormwater management program can achieve credit. This can reduce flood insurance premiums for residents.

Q: WHAT REGULATIONS EXIST TO CONTROL STORMWATER RUNOFF?

- A: There are local and state regulations for stormwater runoff control:
- ◆ **Local** - In New York State, local governments have the legal authority to enact regulations for stormwater management. This can be done by local law or by ordinance. The source of this authority is the *General Municipal Law and City, Town and Village Law*. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) publication, *Reducing the Impacts of Stormwater Runoff From New Development*, contains a model stormwater management ordinance.
 - ◆ **State** - Under the Federal Clean Water Act, developers of construction sites meeting certain thresholds must obtain a stormwater discharge permit from the state. In New York State the DEC has an approved program for issuing permits in accordance with federal stormwater regulations.

For more information, call the Westchester County Department of Planning at (914) 285-4422, or visit the web site at www.westchestergov.com/planning.

