



Stormwater Report

Spring 2009

Earth Day a Huge Success!

The DPW and Agawam Go Green Committee teamed up to create Agawam's First Annual Earth Day Event on Saturday, April 18th at the new School Street Park. Thanks to over 20 vendors, the event was a huge success!

Attendees could have the pH of their soil tested, check out the "grease car", exchange their compact fluorescent bulbs for a flower bulb or pick up a water conservation kit. There was wide variety of environmental topics represented this year and it is expected to be bigger and better next April in honor of Earth Days 40th Year Celebration.

To all those who attended as a vendor or as a guest, thank you for supporting Agawam's local efforts in becoming a well rounded environmentally responsible community.



There Are No "Butts" About It!

According to the litter prevention group Keep America Beautiful, cigarette butts are the most littered item in America, accounting for 30 percent of litter on the streets.

Cigarette butts are most often seen in "transition points", areas where smokers must extinguish their cigarette before entering a building. Outside office buildings, schools, banks, or retail stores, chances are there

will be an unsightly scattering of butts. These butts are easily carried in stormwater runoff through drainage systems and eventually to our local streams, rivers and waterways.

Most cigarette filters are composed of cellulose acetate, a plastic that does not decompose easily or quickly. These filters were designed to trap the toxic chemicals from the cigarette. Now

floating in our waterways, these toxins are leaking out into the aquatic ecosystems, threatening the quality of the water and aquatic life. Cigarette butts may seem small, but with several trillion butts littered every year, the toxic chemicals add up!

Help keep our waters blue...put your butt in the trash.

Pet Waste and Water Quality

Pet waste is among the many common stormwater pollutants that can degrade water quality. If pet waste is not picked up, it can be washed into our storm drains and end up in a lake, stream, wetland or river. When pet wastes decompose, they demand a high level of oxygen from water. This demand can kill fish and plant life by reducing the amount of oxygen available to them. In addition, pet waste contains nitrogen

and phosphorus nutrients that accelerate growth of damaging algae and aquatic weeds. Children who play in yards or parks where pets defecate are most at risk for infection from disease-causing bacteria and parasites found in pet waste. Fortunately, as a pet owner there are three simple things you can do to help keep our children healthy, public parks clean and water safe for swimming, fishing and other recreational uses.

1. Take a plastic bag or pooper scooper along with you on your next walk.
2. Scoop up and seal pet waste in a plastic bag.
3. Dispose of it properly in the garbage.

Being a responsible pet owner not only keeps the areas you walk clean for everyone, but also reduces contaminants in stormwater runoff.



Household Hazardous Waste Day—save the date!

HHW Day is scheduled for Saturday, August 22nd, 9am—noon at the DPW. The drop off of HHW is by appointment only. Agawam Residents may make an appointment by calling the DPW at 821-0624 beginning Monday, July 27th.

Engineers Map Storm Drainage System

The DPW Engineering Department is currently creating a detailed map of Agawam's Storm Drainage System. Methods used in the mapping include GPS (Global Positioning System) field surveys. Data collected include pipe sizes, inlet and discharge points, condition of structures and evidence of pollution. The resulting GIS (Geographic Information System) map and data associated with each structure will be used to prioritize maintenance and capital improvement projects. The map will also be useful both during the review of new projects to ensure that the existing system can handle the water from new development and for quick reference during emergency spill situations.

As a part of Town's stormwater regulations, the EPA and DEP require that the town develop this comprehensive map of outfalls from the towns storm drainage system. The Department of Public Works is required to assess each outfall for pollutant discharges as well as the potential for pollutant discharges. The comprehensive map that is currently being developed will satisfy this regulatory requirement while providing an invaluable tool to protect and improve water quality within our community.



Illicit Discharge Outfall Inspections

Direct or indirect dumping of pollutants into a storm drain is considered an illicit discharge. Sources of illicit discharges include, but are not limited to, improperly disposed motor oil, gasoline, or other automotive fluids, pet waste, cigarette butts, excess fertilizers, herbicides, and insecticides, litter, laundry wastewater, soapy untreated car wash water, and failing septic systems.

Illicit discharges that enter a stormdrain eventually flow to an outfall, the place or structure where water exits a stormdrain system and enters into a river, stream, pond, or other water body. The Department of Public Works is currently conducting outfall inspections. Outfall inspections are one of the most commonly used methods for identifying illicit discharges. The disadvantage of outfall inspections is that illicit discharges occur periodically and can be hard to find unless you are at the right place at the right time. This is why the DPW is asking for your help. If you suspect an illicit discharge in your neighborhood, please contact the DPW at 821-0600.

Consider a Rain Garden in your Landscape

A rain garden is a garden which takes advantage of rainfall and stormwater runoff in its design. Although it may look like an ordinary garden, a rain garden collects rainwater from downspouts, driveways, or other drainage systems in your yard to provide water to the garden rather than sending it to the stormdrain.

Benefits of creating a rain garden include:

- Reduce runoff from your property
- Reduce runoff of fertilizers
- Reduce garden maintenance
- Conserve and use rainwater
- Filter pollutants from stormwater
- Improve water quality
- Increase garden enjoyment

For more information on creating a Rain Garden in your landscape, visit www.greenscapes.org or the town website at www.agwam.ma.us under Department of Public Works.

National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Requirements

In the face of meeting new federal mandates requiring municipalities to value and maintain storm water infrastructures within their community, the Department of Public Works is reviewing the option of a Stormwater Utility. A stormwater utility is responsible for funding the operation, construction and maintenance of stormwater management devices, for stormwater system planning, and management. A stormwater utility generates its revenue through user fees and the revenues from the stormwater charges will go into a separate fund that may only be used for stormwater services. The average residence's share in meeting state mandate requirements would be 24% less under a stormwater utility.