

Clark County's CLEAN WATER PROGRAM

HOW WE GOT HERE - THE ISSUE



The Clean Water Program seeks to reverse decades of environmental degradation and prevent future generations from having to clean up our mess.

Creating storm runoff problems

A hundred and sixty years ago, most of Clark County was covered by forests and wetlands. These natural features acted as sponges and soaked up falling rain and melting snow. Water was absorbed by trees, soaked into the ground or evaporated. As little as 10 percent of rainfall actually flowed off the land.

As part of our county's steady march from its rural past to its suburban and agricultural present and future, forests were cleared and roads, parking lots and thousands of homes and businesses were built. Today, when rain falls, it often hits hard surfaces and immediately flows downhill, picking up sediment, oil, fertilizers from our lawns and fields, waste from pets and farm animals, and other pollutants and carrying them to our streams, rivers, lakes and wetlands.

Stormwater runoff is one of the biggest sources of water pollution in our area. In addition to carrying pollutants to our waterways, storm runoff can quickly flow into streams and cause them to rise and fall rapidly. This in turn erodes stream banks, increases sedimentation and causes the loss of vegetation that helps keep water cold for fish. It also can sweep away spawning gravel from stream bottoms that some fish species need to reproduce.

Solving the problems - continued on back



Impervious surfaces increase storm runoff



A healthy community needs clean water.

Solving the problems

The Clark County Clean Water Program was established to better manage stormwater pollution and reduce its harmful effect on our environment. The program also reduces flooding, promotes environmental recovery through tree planting and complies with legal requirements enforced by the state under the federal Clean Water Act.

Most importantly, the program seeks to reverse decades of environmental degradation and prevent future generations from having to clean up our mess.

The Clean Water Program has six action areas:

- 1 Studying our current stormwater system to determine what improvements are needed and where they should be built.
- 2 Building stormwater facilities to remove pollutants and prevent erosion.
- 3 Maintaining these facilities so they continue to reduce stormwater pollution.
- 4 Working with county residents so they understand how their actions affect stormwater pollution and what they can do to help, including maintaining privately owned stormwater facilities.
- 5 Working cooperatively with businesses to improve their practices and taking enforcement action against the worst polluters.
- 6 Planting trees and coordinating other environmental enhancement and restoration activities to compensate for decades of land clearing and development that happened before storm water rules were in place.

