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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY
PART OF THE BUSINESS AND FINANCIAL AFFAIRS DIVISION

EHS Report

Bellingham is no stranger to stormwater runoff

The Western community knows that Bellingham is no stranger to rain. Rain is an essential part of our ecosystem, but stormwater runoff may have unwanted results. While it might look pristine on the surface, Bellingham Bay and Puget Sound have unhealthy levels of many different toxic chemicals.

Signs that we are killing wildlife, aquatic organisms and vegetation are becoming harder and harder to ignore. To protect Bellingham Bay and Puget Sound, we must ensure that local stormwater runoff is kept free of contaminants to the maximum extent possible. It starts with you!

What is stormwater runoff? Stormwater runoff comes from rain hitting impervious surfaces that don't absorb water, like paved parking lots, streets and sidewalks. It can also come from snowmelt in the mountains and hillsides. When rain water flows over these surfaces, it can pick up contaminants like oil from cars, litter, dog waste, and other debris ending up in our precious waterways.

What are some of the ways you can help keep Bellingham Bay and Puget Sound clean?

At Home and More

- **Use less hazardous cleaning solutions** - Even though most home cleaning products are processed through sewage treatment plants or septic systems, many of the harmful chemicals they contain still end up in our waterways. Whenever possible, use natural cleaning products to tidy up your home. This includes detergents for dish and clothes washing that do not contain phosphorus. For toxic-free tips on household cleaning products, [click here](#).
- **Rainwater Infiltration** - Rainfall that hits hard surfaces – streets, sidewalks, parking lots, patios, driveways and rooftops – is much more likely to pick up contaminants and then pollute stormwater. By using pavers, bricks or wood chips instead of concrete, more rain can soak into the ground. One way to help rainwater infiltration on your property is to build a rain garden.
- **Septic System Maintenance** - Septic systems that fail can expose people to disease-causing pathogens and viruses. Sewage can also contaminate ground and surface water possibly polluting wells, rivers, streams or lakes near your home. For more on septic system care and maintenance, [click here](#).

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Bellingham is no stranger to stormwater runoff 1&2
Holly Woll-Salkeld and Jonah Stinson join EHS 2



Stormwater...

With Your Car

- **Drip-free Cars** – Motor oil is a pollution problem in our streams, rivers and lakes. Oil doesn't dissolve in water, which means it sticks around for a long time. It's toxic to people, wildlife and plants. Contain oil leaks that you know about until you can get your car fixed.
- **Clean Cars** - Washing your car at home is a dirty business. Oils, brake pad and tire dust and other chemical residues build-up on cars and, along with soap, are washed straight down the storm drain and flow, untreated, into nearby streams, rivers and into our inland waters. If you must wash your car at home, wash it on the grass, gravel or other permeable surfaces and use biodegradable soaps.
- **Going to the car wash is ideal** - The water from commercial car washes flows into the sanitary sewer system and is treated by our wastewater treatment plants before it enters local waterways.

In Your Yard

- **Use Care** - It's okay to want green lawns and gorgeous flowers. But too much fertilizer or too many bug killers are not necessary. It doesn't take much of the right product to achieve the desired result. In fact, there are many non-chemical choices for preventing weeds and bugs. One choice is to try compost instead of a fertilizer or herbicide. For more green yard care tips, [click here](#).

Around Your Dog

- **Scoop the Poop!** - Pick up your dog waste, place it in the garbage and wash your hands. When it rains, bacteria in dog feces are carried by stormwater runoff to storm drains, ditches and streams that feed our rivers, lakes and Bellingham Bay. Dog waste contains disease-causing organism such as salmonella, roundworms and giardia. These bacteria can make water unsafe to drink or swim in. For more on pet care tips, [click here](#).

For more information, visit PugetSoundStartsHere.Org or contact Sue at x6582 or sue.sullivan@wwu.edu

Holly Woll-Salkeld and Jonah Stinson join EHS

Holly Woll-Salkeld was hired as an Emergency Management Program Specialist IV in February to join the team working on the Emergency Management Higher Education Grant awarded EHS in September 2010. Holly was a preschool teacher at Bellingham Cooperative School before deciding on a new career. She obtained her Certificate in Emergency Management from Western and then headed to Hughes County South Dakota to work for the Dept of Homeland Security as an Assistant Emergency Manager/Homeland Security Specialist. She has a Bachelor of Arts in biology-geology from Whitman College, and is currently working on a Master's in Disaster and Emergency Management from American Military University. Holly has been an Emergency Medical Technician and volunteer firefighter in Whatcom Co for many years. Holly can be reached at x6511 or holly.woll-salkeld@wwu.edu

Jonah Stinson was also hired in February as a part-time Emergency Management Program Specialist II. Jonah first joined the Western community 5 years ago as a graduate student, and now splits his time as a Research Associate and Adjunct Instructor within Huxley College. He received his Master's in Geography in 2009, and has executed a variety of hazard mitigation projects in partnership with Western's Resilience Institute. Jonah will be assisting the team in technical writing, emergency plan development and

preparedness training. Jonah can be reached at x6527 or jonah.stinson@wwu.edu

This publication is available in alternate formats upon request.

Contact Environmental Health & Safety at 650-3064.