

Do you know where Invermere's stormwater goes?

If you guessed "Lake Windermere," you're *half* right . . .

Stormwater from downtown Invermere runs down curbs, into storm drains, catchments and a storm sewer, and finally out of a culvert into . . . Lake Windermere! Stormwater from elsewhere in Invermere is directed through ditches and curbs into drywells around town where the water seeps into the ground through perforated well walls. Eventually, it seeps back into the groundwater. In both cases, stormwater does not get treated before being released back into the environment.

So, what's the big deal?

The dirty truth about stormwater pollution

Stormwater picks up and carries **non-point source** pollution to its final destination, which is usually a waterway. Non-point source (NPS) pollution is hard to recognize as pollution because it's not released at one distinct point — it comes from a *number of points* that are spread out and difficult to identify.

NPS pollution occurs when water moves across or through affected ground, picking up contaminants and sediments and depositing them in lakes, rivers, wetlands and groundwater. These pollutants can then enter human drinking water sources. They can also affect water quality for all forms of life.

Examples of NPS pollutants

- Pesticides and fertilizers
- Oil, grease and toxic chemicals
- Sediment from eroding banks, ditches, improper land development and construction practices
- Salt and acid from mining and irrigation (golf courses)
- Bacteria and excessive fecal matter from livestock, pets and faulty human waste systems
- Garbage and litter

Stormwater cannot be treated

Although it sounds like a good idea, attempting to treat stormwater to remove pollutants could be disastrous for Invermere's Wastewater Treatment Plant. Stormwater appears in mass quantities at very irregular intervals. The treatment plant would be swamped every time stormwater arrived, compromising sufficient treatment of raw sewage coming from the sanitary sewer system. This could be worse for the environment than the current arrangement of storm and sanitary sewers.

What can be done?

Protect Lake Windermere and other local waterways from NPS pollution.

- Be cautious of *what* and *where* you **pour, dump, apply** or **spill** outside.
- *Read the label* on all products and *dispose of them* accordingly.
- *Clean up spills.*
- *Flush solutions* (like soapy water) down to the treatment plant.
- *Use non-toxic products* and methods to do the job.
- *Secure trash* so that it makes it to the dump.
- *Recycle.*

You can also tell a friend

Lots of people don't know what happens to stormwater and NPS pollution, or where it ends up. If more people know about it, less NPS pollution will end up in waterways like Lake Windermere. But people won't change practices until they see a reason to. Tell your friends and neighbours how their actions make a difference and help keep Lake Windermere beautiful.

For more information, contact the Lake Windermere Project at 250-341-6898.

You can also visit us in the old District of Invermere office beside the Invermere Community Centre.

The Lake Windermere Project is a long-term comprehensive stewardship program dedicated to safeguarding the health of our lake. The Lake Windermere Project is made possible by generous support from Wildsight, Environment Canada, Columbia Basin Trust, the Real Estate Foundation of B.C., and those community members who have donated through the Lake Windermere Stewards and Ambassadors program.