

ACTION PROJECT: STORM DRAIN STENCILING

Storm drain stenciling is a relatively simple project for students to do. It has the potential of making a difference in reducing the amount of trash entering local waterways, along with raising awareness of the direct link from the storm drain to the Chesapeake Bay.

INTRODUCTION

Storm drains were designed to be the fastest and most efficient way of getting rainwater off streets and parking lots. Think about the way that water rushes into a storm drain in the middle of a parking lot, or alongside a street. Have you ever stopped to wonder where that water goes? Most storm drain systems empty directly into a local waterway. If you live in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, that local waterway eventually empties into the Chesapeake Bay. Unfortunately, the water that flows into your storm drain often carries trash, leaves, grass clippings and sediment from the street; nutrients in the form of fertilizers, toxins in the form of pesticides, household cleaners, gasoline and motor oil. Imagine all of these things rushing into your small stream, your local river, and into the Bay!

Stenciling storm drains in your community with the message "DON'T DUMP! CHESAPEAKE BAY DRAINAGE" or "ONLY RAIN DOWN THE STORM DRAIN" may encourage people to sweep their street gutters or use less pesticides and fertilizers on their lawns. Teaching people that storm drains are connected to our waterways helps them to remember that only clean water should enter the storm drains.

OBJECTIVE: To raise community awareness about the function of storm drains; their link to water quality, both locally and watershed-wide.

MATERIALS

Drop cloth, masking tape, paper towels or newspapers, trash bags, traffic cones, wire brushes and hand brooms, exterior latex paint in a spray can (easiest) or a regular can, paint brushes if using paint from a can, storm drain stencils, safety vests

PREPARATION

- Locate one or more storm drains that could use stenciling.
- Obtain permission from your local Department of Public Works. Contact them several weeks ahead of time in case you need a permit. They may need the exact addresses of the storm drains, the message you intend to stencil, the color paint, and the name of the group.
- Purchase or borrow supplies. Some of the materials needed for this project can probably be borrowed from home. Ask people in your community, local businesses, or organizations to donate supplies or money for supplies. This is your chance to get people in the community involved and educate them about the direct link from storm drains to the Chesapeake Bay. Storm drain stencils can be borrowed from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Visit this link for more details and forms to reserve stencils for your projects.

<http://dnr.maryland.gov/ccs/Pages/stormdrain.aspx>

- Publicize your event! Contact the news media (newspaper, internet) at least two weeks in advance.
 - Distribute flyers to residents who live in the neighborhood where you plan to conduct stenciling activities. Request them to park vehicles away from the drains you intend to stencil.
- The pavement must be dry for the paint to stick; and it won't adhere well to temperatures below 50 F. Plan a backup day in case of inclement weather.

ACTION

- Safety first! Since drivers may not see you standing or kneeling near parked cars, it will be very important to have an adult wearing a safety vest standing in the street. Placing bright traffic cones around your work area is also highly recommended.
- Clean up debris around storm drain using wire brushes to remove any rust and brooms for loose dirt and trash. Place any trash in the trash bag. Place a drop cloth in front of the storm drain to prevent your supplies from falling in!
- Center the "DON'T DUMP" or "ONLY RAIN" stencil on the horizontal (top) face of the drain, and the "CHESAPEAKE BAY DRAINAGE" or "DOWN THE STORM DRAIN" on the vertical face. Outline the stencils with masking tape to create a border edge for your base paint. Remove the stencils, leaving the taped borders.
- Paint inside the borders with white or beige paint. Wait until this paint is dry to continue. Remove the taped border.
- Center the storm drain stencils again, taping them down. Be sure to tape them securely enough that they lay flat against the surface. Paint the stencils with green (recommended) paint. If you are using paint from a can with brushes, don't overload brush or paint will drip, ruining the message.
- Carefully remove the stencils and tape. Clean the stencils using paper towels or newspapers and dispose in the trash bags.

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