



EPA's Stormwater Rule



What is stormwater?

Stormwater is the rain or snowmelt that does not initially infiltrate into the ground and runs off of surfaces and is transported into nearby waterways.

Why is stormwater runoff a problem?

Stormwater can pick up debris, chemicals, dirt, and other pollutants and flow into a storm sewer system or directly to a lake, stream, river, wetland, or coastal water. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the waterbodies we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water.



Examples of Green Infrastructure Practices

Bioinfiltration



Vegetated Swales



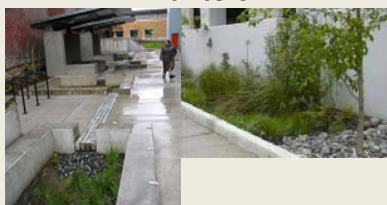
Pocket Wetlands



Rain Gardens



Planters



Curb Extensions



Parking Lot Infiltration Areas



Rain Harvesting & Use



Green Walls



Green Roofs



Permeable and Porous Pavement



How is stormwater managed?

Historically, stormwater controls were designed to quickly collect, store, and transport runoff away from developed areas into nearby streams to prevent flooding. However, it is now recognized that these systems alone are often not the ideal solution because they impact streams by increasing the volume and velocity of water and amount of pollutants.

Today stormwater management promotes a variety of practices and controls that help the runoff to soak into the ground and minimize contact of runoff with pollutants. These practices, commonly referred to as 'green infrastructure', mimic natural processes and enable runoff to soak into the ground, evapotranspire, and be captured and reused.

What is Green Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure is an approach to wet weather management that is cost-effective, sustainable, and environmentally friendly. At the largest scale, the preservation and restoration of natural landscape features (such as forests, floodplains and wetlands) are critical components of green stormwater infrastructure. On a smaller scale, green infrastructure practices include rain gardens, porous pavements, green roofs, infiltration planters, and rainwater harvesting for non-potable uses such as toilet flushing and landscape irrigation.

Why is EPA considering specific stormwater requirements in the Chesapeake Bay watershed?

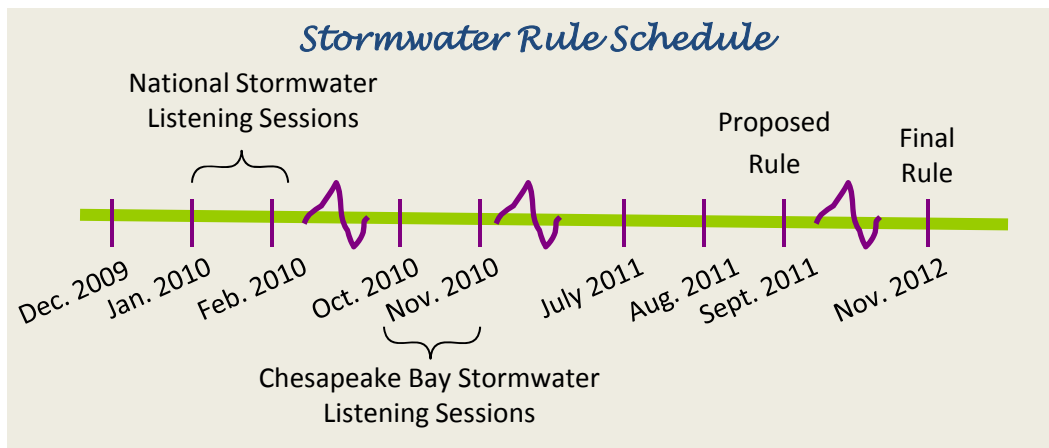
Over 64,000 square miles of land drain into the Chesapeake Bay or its tributaries. The Bay and its tidal tributaries are overweight with nutrients (nitrogen and phosphorus) and sediment. These excess nutrients can lead to harmful algal blooms that rob the water of oxygen while sediment can block sunlight from reaching underwater grasses that provide habitat for a variety of animals. In a separate effort, EPA is creating a 'pollution diet' called a Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) to limit the amount of nitrogen, phosphorus, and sediment entering the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries from various sources, including stormwater.

While some of the stormwater discharges coming from lands within the Chesapeake Bay watershed are currently regulated, some discharges from rapidly developing areas that may be impacting water quality may not be covered under the existing regulations. Therefore, EPA is currently considering revising its stormwater regulations in order to strengthen existing stormwater programs to improve and protect water quality and to more effectively achieve the objectives of the Chesapeake Bay TMDL.



What are the Benefits of Green Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure can result in cleaner water and air, stable hydrology of waterbodies, reduced flooding, reduced urban temperatures, and increased water supply. It can also help communities mitigate for and adapt to climate change, provide 'green' jobs, protect critical habitat for animals, and provide many community benefits related to recreation, public health, and crime prevention.



Important Links

General Stormwater Information – Learn more about stormwater management and the stormwater program ► www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/basics

Green Infrastructure Information – Learn more about how green infrastructure practices can help your community ► www.epa.gov/greeninfrastructure

Rulemaking Website – Learn more about the EPA's preliminary considerations in the Federal Register Notice, including how to submit comments, sign up for other listening sessions, view previous notices, and read the latest news regarding the stormwater rule ► www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/rulemaking



Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns following the stormwater rule listening sessions or environmental justice concerns then contact EPA using one of the following ways:

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