

STORMDRAINS AND SEWER DRAINS DIFFER

The **stormdrain system** includes underground pipes, as well as surface features such as drain inlets, streets, gutters, roadside ditches, and detention basins. Its purpose is to prevent localized flooding by collecting stormwater runoff (rain that doesn't soak into the ground) and conveying it to local creeks and the Bay without treatment. This means that pollutants entering the stormdrain system flow directly to these creeks and the Bay as well.

In contrast, the **sewer system** carries residential and commercial wastewater from sources including indoor plumbing (such as sinks, toilets, and floor drains) or industrial processes; it conveys wastewater to the water pollution control plant where conventional pollutants are removed before being safely discharged to the Bay. Most commercial carwash facilities dispose of their washwater to the sewer system after pretreatment.



Need more information?

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How to conduct a Bay-Friendly Fundraiser Carwash



SAN MATEO COUNTYWIDE
Water Pollution Prevention Program
Clean Water. Healthy Community. www.flowstobay.org

FUNDRAISER CARWASHES CAN HARM OUR CREEKS

Fundraiser carwashes are a valuable source of funding for local groups and organizations. However, the traditional way of conducting fundraiser carwashes in parking lots often results in draining wastewater containing dirt, grease, detergents, and other pollutants into the storm drain system. This dirty water flows untreated to nearby creeks and the Bay, where it can be harmful to aquatic and other wildlife.

All by itself, your carwash may not seem to be contributing much pollution to our local waterways. But collectively, fundraiser carwashes can contribute significant amounts of harmful pollutants to our creeks and the Bay. Additionally, state and local regulations prohibit discharges of pollutants to the stormdrain system.

CONDUCTING A BAY-FRIENDLY FUNDRAISER CARWASH

A Bay-Friendly fundraiser carwash protects our creeks and Bay by not allowing wastewater to enter the stormdrain system. When planning a carwash event, please consider the following options to make your carwash Bay-Friendly.

Team up with one of the following Bay-Friendly Partners when planning a fundraiser carwash event:

- Commercial Carwash — Some commercial carwash facilities have vouchers or tickets that your group can sell, or your group can rent a “bay for-a-day.”
- Business—There are businesses, (for example, some gas stations) that implement measures to properly manage wastewater from carwashes and will partner with fundraising groups to host Bay-Friendly carwashes.
- Park and School Districts—Some park and school district sites are set up to host fundraiser carwashes and properly dispose of the wastewater.

If not teaming with a Bay-Friendly Partner, please follow these guidelines to comply with local stormwater ordinances and to protect our creeks and the Bay:

Before the Carwash:

- Hold a meeting with all participants to explain proper procedures that must be followed during the carwash.
- Choose a location where proper wastewater management can be feasibly practiced.
- Consider how carwash wastewater will be managed during the fundraiser carwash event. There are two options:
 1. You may discharge the wastewater to landscaping, gravel, or soil provided that there is enough surface area to completely absorb all the wastewater without creating runoff; it does not produce nuisance conditions (such as mosquito breeding grounds or excessive pooling); you have the property owner’s Permission.
 2. Contain, collect, and properly dispose of all carwash wastewater. Refer to the “Guidelines for Manually Diverting Outdoor Wastewater to the Sanitary Sewer” booklet for detailed information on wastewater containment, collection, and disposal options.

This booklet can be downloaded at www.riverfriendlycarwash.net or you may call (650) 372-6245 to receive a free copy.

- Remove all trash and debris from the carwash area.

During the Carwash:

- Use products labeled “non-toxic,” “phosphate free,” and “biodegradable.” These products can be purchased at most large retail outlets. Please note, however, that even biodegradable and nontoxic soaps are harmful to aquatic life and water quality, and must be kept out of the stormdrain system.
- Do not use acid-based wheel cleaners or engine degreasers.
- Use a bucket of soapy water to re-soap rags or sponges throughout the carwash rather than adding more soap directly to rags or sponges.
- Wring sponges and rags into buckets, not onto the ground.

Conserve water and minimize the amount of wastewater you must manage by using a spray nozzle with an automatic shut off.

- Always empty buckets of wastewater into the sanitary sewer system via sinks, toilets, or sanitary sewer clean-out, or onto landscaped areas where the wastewater can be absorbed.

After the Carwash:

- Clean up the site—Have a volunteer walk the perimeter of the site to pick up trash and dispose of it properly.
- Be proud that today you made a difference by preventing pollution.