



The Storm Drain Marking Program has been around locally for a number of years, as part of the overall water quality public education and participation programs promoted and conducted by Monroe County, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Water Education Collaborative (WEC), and others. In 2000, the Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County (www.thestormwatercoalition.org) was formed and included the Storm Drain Marking Program as part of its Public Education and Participation Program. With Coalition backing, the WEC has greatly expanded this program. Normally, groups of volunteers such as high school clubs, boy and girl scouts, community groups, etc. receive training and materials from water quality education specialists and mark drains in pre-selected areas. While most of the marking is done by volunteers, a few municipalities will do some themselves. This program is a great event for teaching children and adults alike about stormwater quality and overall environmental protection of our watersheds.

Water Education Collaborative Members

Center for Environmental Information / Lake Ontario Coastal Initiative

City of Rochester

Genesee / Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council

Monroe County Dept. of Environmental Services

Monroe County Dept. of Planning

Monroe County Dept. of Public Health

Monroe County Soil and Water Conservation District

Nazareth College

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation

NY Water Environment Association

Rochester Museum and Science Center

State University of NY at Brockport

Stormwater Coalition of Monroe County

University of Rochester

For further information and more volunteer opportunities, contact

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www.H2OHero.org

Monroe County Storm Drain Marking Program



The Water Education Collaborative

*Working Together for
Public Education on
Water Quality*

*Visit the H2O Hero at:
www.H2OHero.org*

How is Storm Drain Marking done?

Storm drain marking is a group activity requiring at least 3 people (one of whom must be an adult supervisor). Participants attend an informal training session where they learn about stormwater runoff and its impact upon local water quality, storm drains and their connections to local waterbodies, and how to minimize stormwater contaminants that come from routine homeowner activities. Participants also learn the proper procedures for attaching storm drain markers near storm drain inlets, as well as safety precautions needed for working near roadways. In addition to marking the storm drains, participants go door-to-door in the neighborhood, hanging stormwater educational materials on doorknobs. Storm drain marking can help deter storm drain dumping and reduce non-point source pollution by informing residents that anything that goes down a storm drain goes directly into a waterbody without being treated. Adhering storm drain markers with the message: "Keep Clean – Drains to Lake" near the storm drain inlets can remind would-be-dumpers and passersby that the storm drains empty storm water directly into local water bodies and that activities such as dumping chemicals or raking debris into a storm drain pollutes those waters.

How widespread are storm drain markers?

The WEC has promoted their use throughout Monroe County, and many communities throughout the country have similar programs. It is relatively common to find storm drains marked in many areas across the U.S. During the Coalition's 2007-2008 reporting year storm drains were marked in 14 Monroe County municipalities, by nearly 1600 volunteers during 54 storm drain marking events.

How are choices made about which drains to mark?

In many cases municipalities have expressed an interest in having certain locations marked (perhaps there have been previous problems, or sensitive waterways nearby). In some cases the volunteer group may have an area in mind that they'd like to mark (with the municipality's approval). Neighborhoods are prime areas for marking due to the ability to draw attention to homeowner activities that may contribute to stormwater pollution.

Do all drains lead to Lake Ontario?

All storm drains eventually lead to Lake Ontario. However in most cases stormwater follows a circuitous route to reach the Lake, flowing through such conveyances as swales, pipes, ditches, retention or detention ponds, creeks and/or rivers (i.e., the watershed) before reaching the Lake. As a result, contaminated stormwater has the potential to pollute many waterways on its journey.

What are the main concerns regarding the storm drains?

While this answer could be subject to debate, the overall answer that disposal of any material that is not purely stormwater. The mantra is "Only Rain Down the Drain". Of particular note however, are chemicals, such as household cleaners, floor cleaners, deck and house washes, etc., which can be acutely toxic to aquatic ecosystems. Also, it doesn't take much motor oil or similar petroleum-based products to cause a lot of damage to an aquatic environment. Regardless, it is imperative that people don't use storm drains to dispose of any wastes. So the H2O Hero Website (www.h2ohero.org) attempts to make people aware of problems which may arise when they conduct common everyday activities around their homes, and how to prevent those activities from contributing to water quality problems.