

What is a Sewershed?

A sewershed is the area where wastewater collects from rainfall on the streets and flushing at homes and businesses. This wastewater can overflow into local waterways from an outfall pipe when there is too much water for the sewer system to handle.

Combined Sewer Systems

In the City of Buffalo, rain running into street drains and sewage from homes and businesses enter shared pipes underground. These pipes have an overflow opening into local rivers and streams so that waste will not back up into basements during heavy rain events. This is called a *Combined Sewer System*.

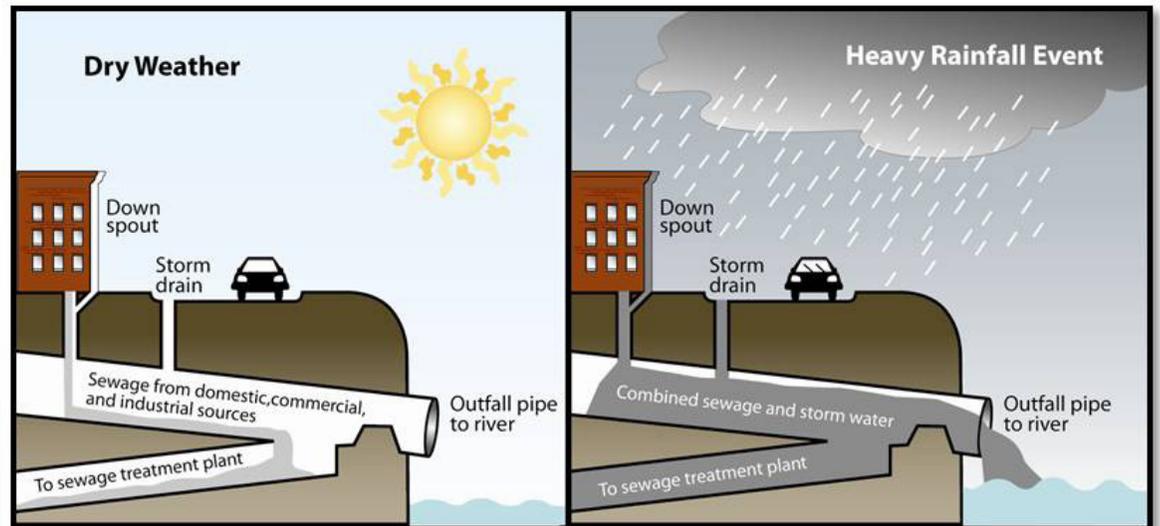


Photo: USEPA



From Roads to Waterways

On rainy days litter and contaminants are washed into street drains and may blow directly into local waterways. Keeping litter and pollutants like motor oil off of the streets is one way to protect water quality in Western New York.

Paved streets, driveways and rooftops that do not absorb rainwater are called impervious surfaces. When rainfall or snowmelt runs off of these surfaces, it flows rapidly into our sewer systems. Wastewater treatment plants typically cannot handle the high volume of runoff, causing overflow events to occur.

Sewage Overflows

Combined Sewage Overflow events bring untreated wastewater into our waterways, resulting in flooding, erosion, and pollution. This increases the amount of harmful bacteria in the water, often making it unsafe to swim.

To help reduce these overflow events, consider reducing impervious surfaces. This can include using pavers instead of asphalt or concrete, collecting rainwater in a rain barrel, disconnecting downspouts from the sewer line, and installing rain gardens.

Be a part of the solution to this ongoing issue! Learn more on the back of this sheet.



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You Can Help Prevent Pollution!

Stop, reduce and slow down the stormwater runoff from your property by implementing green stormwater infrastructure solutions. This can include rain barrels, rain gardens and permeable pavers.

Naturalize your property with gardens, lawns, trees, and permeable pavers to help reduce stormwater runoff.

Go toxic-free on your property. Limit or stop the use of fertilizers and pesticides. When it rains, these chemicals can enter local waterways.

Conserve Water! Be cautious of the amount of water used for washing your car, taking showers, landscape irrigation, etc. By reducing the amount of water entering the sewer system, the chance of a Combined Sewer Overflow event decreases.

Never flush or wash items down the drains of your house or into street drains. This includes motor oil, cooking oils, paints, pharmaceuticals, syringes, and personal hygiene products. Instead, find out how to dispose of them properly at:

<http://www2.erie.gov/environment/index.php?q=waste-management-and-recycling>



Be a good steward! Don't litter, as trash in the streets can end up in stormwater and combined sewer systems, thereby entering our waterways through outfalls.

Get involved in your local environmental organizations. Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper is a community based organization whose mission is to restore and protect our water and surrounding ecosystems for the benefit of current and future generations.

Visit us at: www.bnwaterkeeper.org



For information regarding Erie County cleanups and plantings at habitat restoration sites visit:

<http://www2.erie.gov/environment/index.php?q=habitat-restoration>



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