YES!

Everything that goes into the storm drains winds up in the natural watercourses, coastal lagoons, Mission Bay, San Diego Bay and in the ocean!

THIS IS THE PROBLEM

The City of San Diego covers approximately 365 square miles. About 65% of the area is urbanized, developed with streets, parking lots, housing, offices, commercial and industrial uses. Water from rain, irrigation, and washing your car runs off all of this hard-surfaced urban development, flows into the gutters along the streets and into the storm drain system. The City of San Diego has approximately 650 miles of storm drains. The purpose of the storm drain system is to channel rainwater away from urban development and prevent flooding. If all the urban development which the rainwater comes in contact with was clean and free of pollutants, there would not be a problem. Unfortunately, that is not the case. The rainwater picks up pollutants from many sources and carries them through the storm drain system and then into natural watercourses, coastal lagoons, Mission Bay, San Diego Bay and the Pacific Ocean at the beaches.

STORM DRAINS ARE NOT CONNECTED TO THE SEWAGE TREATMENT PLANT!

Many people mistakenly believe that the storm drains are connected to the City's sanitary sewer system and that stormwater is treated at the Point Loma Sewage Treatment Plant. This is not the case.

Pollution that gets into the storm drains in your neighborhood goes directly to local waters where you and your neighbors swim, boat, surf and fish.

We must all make an effort to keep pollutants out of our storm drains. Every little bit of pollution hurts. We have over two million people in San Diego County and the combined effects of pollutants is causing serious water quality problems in our bays, coastal lagoons and the ocean.

NONPOINT SOURCE POLLUTION

This widespread water pollution comes from all areas of the City. Nonpoint source pollution comes from:

- Automobiles contributing leaking oil, grease, and heavy metals from tires, vehicle exhaust and brake linings.
- Trash and litter, leaves, lawn clippings and organic matter.
- Household cleaners and solvents.
- Biological contaminants from animal and human waste.
- Lawn and garden care products such as pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers.
- Soil erosion from yards, hillsides and construction sites.

Nonpoint source pollution is ranked by the United States Environmental Protection Agency as the highest ecological risk impacting our region.

Much of our best wildlife habitat is located along natural watercourses, in coastal lagoons, and in the bays. Nonpoint source pollution poses a significant threat to the birds, mammals, reptiles, fish and sea life that live in these areas.

Some of the pollutants, like silt from exposed ground, and oil and rubber from streets, reach the storm drains unintentionally. However, many pollutants, like used crankcase oil, pesticides, fertilizer, detergents, paint, and solvents, are carelessly dumped into storm drains by people.

WHO TO CONTACT

Call City of San Diego NPDES Stormwater Program at 533-3793

- To report misuse of storm drains
- To report a spill or discharge into Mission Bay

Call HAZMAT (County Health Department Hazardous Materials) at 338-2284

- To report dumping of fuel and other hazardous substances in storm drains

Call Port of San Diego at 291-3900

- To report a spill or discharge into San Diego Bay

Call Environmental Health Coalition at 235-0281

- For information on safe use and storage of, and safe substitutes to, commonly used household products such as cleaners and pesticides.

Call County Health Department at 338-2267

- For information on dates and locations of household hazardous waste collections

City of San Diego
Engineering & Development Department

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HERE IS WHAT YOU CAN DO TO HELP:

IN YOUR HOME

- Buy household products which are labeled "non-toxic".
- If you have to use toxic products, such as paints, solvents, and cleaners, use them carefully, according to directions provided on the container, and store them properly.
- Never put unwanted hazardous materials in the trash can. Take unwanted hazardous materials to local collection sites for safe disposal.
- If you accidently spill hazardous material on a hard surface, use "kitty litter" or other absorbent material to soak it up. Depending on the substance, dispose of absorbents in the garbage can or at a hazardous waste collection event.
- When using water-based paint, rinse paint brushes in the sink. For oil-based paints, filter and reuse paint thinner or brush cleaning solvent. Dispose of used materials at a hazardous waste collection event.
- Practice recycling of reusable materials.

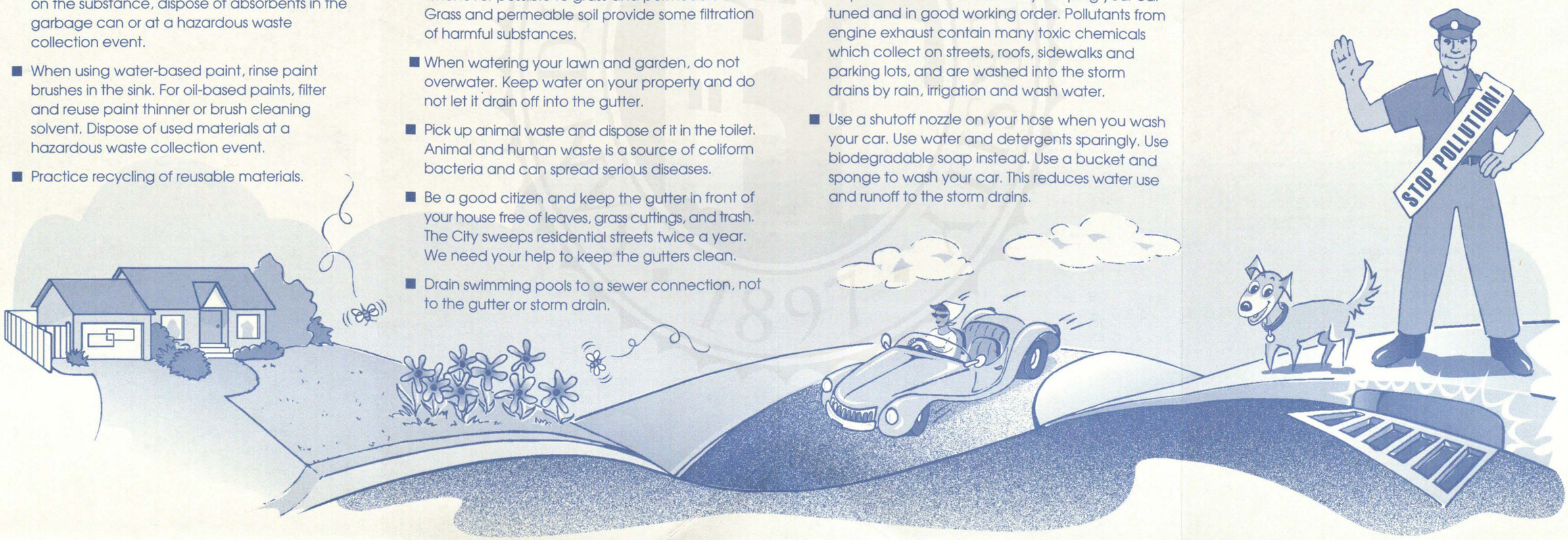
IN YOUR YARD AND GARDEN

- Read the labels of pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers carefully. Use them sparingly and follow the directions on the container. Do not apply these substances if rain is forecast. Store carefully in a safe place. Dispose of residual or no longer needed products at a hazardous waste collection location.
- Use a broom to clean up leaves, clippings and litter from patios, sidewalks and driveways. Do not use a hose. Put litter and other debris in the trash can. Compost plant cuttings and leaves and reuse as a soil amendment in your garden.
- Divert rainwater runoff from hard surfaces whenever possible to grass and permeable soil. Grass and permeable soil provide some filtration of harmful substances.
- When watering your lawn and garden, do not overwater. Keep water on your property and do not let it drain off into the gutter.
- Pick up animal waste and dispose of it in the toilet. Animal and human waste is a source of coliform bacteria and can spread serious diseases.
- Be a good citizen and keep the gutter in front of your house free of leaves, grass cuttings, and trash. The City sweeps residential streets twice a year. We need your help to keep the gutters clean.
- Drain swimming pools to a sewer connection, not to the gutter or storm drain.

YOUR AUTO

- Recycle used crankcase oil and antifreeze. The EPA estimates that each year Americans dump 180 million gallons of used motor oil down storm drains or on the ground. Estimates are that almost 2 million gallons of motor oil are illegally dumped by San Diegans each year. It is one of our worst problems. One quart of motor oil getting into the storm drains contaminates 250,000 gallons of water!
- Have your car regularly inspected for leaks. Maintain it in good condition to reduce the chance of oil, antifreeze, and brake fluid leaking onto the street and into storm drains.
- Help reduce auto emissions by keeping your car tuned and in good working order. Pollutants from engine exhaust contain many toxic chemicals which collect on streets, roofs, sidewalks and parking lots, and are washed into the storm drains by rain, irrigation and wash water.
- Use a shutoff nozzle on your hose when you wash your car. Use water and detergents sparingly. Use biodegradable soap instead. Use a bucket and sponge to wash your car. This reduces water use and runoff to the storm drains.

JOIN THE POLLUTION PATROL

You can help control nonpoint source pollution by helping us find and educate those who are misusing our storm drains. San Diego covers 365 square miles. We have inspectors in the field but they cannot be everywhere. If you see someone dumping something down a curb inlet, or into a natural streambed, overwatering landscaping, or draining a swimming pool into the gutter, call 533-3793. We will investigate.

We all must work together to keep our streams, rivers, bays and beaches clean and pollution free for the creatures that live there, and for ourselves.