



# Storm Water System Responsibilities Property Owner and City

## WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?

During rain events, impervious surfaces such as rooftops, driveways, parking lots, and roads, prevent water from being absorbed into the ground. When a rainfall event occurs, the portion of water that is not absorbed into the ground becomes what is known as “stormwater runoff”. All properties contribute to stormwater runoff and property owners are responsible for storm drainage flowing through their property. This flowing water picks up and carries a wide variety of pollutants and debris – such as soil, fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste, trash, and motor oil – which then flow into storm drains or channels and eventually empty into the waterways used for recreation and drinking water. Unlike typical household wastewater (from sinks, toilets, and showers) stormwater is not filtered and treated at a wastewater treatment plant. This means that the everyday pollutants carried by stormwater runoff have a direct impact on our local water quality.



## MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC DRAINAGE AREAS

To allow for the proper function of the overall system, the City maintains the public stormwater drainage system and structures within specified and dedicated public stormwater drainage easements



and public rights of ways. Maintenance may include ponds, streams, roads, wetlands, curbs, and gutters located throughout the City. These items work in concert with sophisticated underground pipe networks and stormwater pollutant separators, which are designed to help remove/treat pollutants before hitting open bodies of water. The debris that clogs or blocks public drainage inlets is moved from private property to the inlet during the heavy rain event, not before. Ensuring this debris is minimal on your property increases the operational efficiency

of the drainage system. It is dangerous and generally not advisable for staff or residents to attempt to remove the clog during the height of the storm and flooding.

City maintenance will be in accordance with the most recent City Council-approved map of maintained drainage areas and also in accordance with the City's required Florida Department of Environmental Protection's Phase II MS4 Stormwater permit. However, the City is not required to maintain drainage utility easements (including concrete channels, retention walls, retention ponds, detention ponds, etc.) located on private property. Importantly, the utility easements give the City the legal right to enter private property located within a dedicated drainage easement to remove an



obstruction or otherwise repair or rehabilitate the storm drainage system. The City of Gulf Breeze maintains the storm systems located within the City's incorporated boundaries. Stormwater systems on land owned by other public entities are maintained by those entities, which in our area include the Florida Department of Transportation. There are also numerous private systems that are the responsibility of private property owners, including driveway culverts and bridges that cross public drainage systems. While the City takes proactive measures to mitigate drainage issues and concerns throughout the city, flooding of both property and homes, can and will occur during times of heavy rain.

## PRIVATE DRAINAGE & EROSION ISSUES

Private drainage and erosion issues, as well as groundwater issues (i.e., natural springs), are generally the responsibility of the property owner. The City is not responsible for ensuring proper drainage on



privately owned property. In general, the easement holder (property owner) has the duty to maintain the easement. This includes public drainage utility easements located on private property. Property owners are responsible for maintaining drainage easements located on their property in a neat and clean manner. This may include routine groundskeeping such as grass mowing as well as removal of trash, vegetation, and debris. Owners should ensure that drainage systems and structures are kept free of yard waste (grass clippings, tree trimmings, fallen

limbs, and leaves) or other obstructions (privacy fencing or retaining walls) that may block the flow of water. Driveways, and their associated culverts, bridges, or other appurtenances, that cross public drainage systems (e.g., that cross over ditches or streams) are also property owner responsibilities.



Vegetative growth (trees, shrubs); firewood; driveways and their associated culverts or bridges; and fences or retaining walls, may be permitted or allowed in easements as long as they do not block the flow of storm drainage. Drainage directed from gutters, french drains, downspouts, swimming pools, retention walls, or other private systems to neighboring properties is a civil matter between the property owners. Moreover, owners that place obstructions, or fail to maintain property within public drainage easements (i.e., structures, sheds, buildings, curbs, retaining walls) may be subject to civil action from adjacent property owners and may be subject to a notice of violation as determined by the City.



Information or assistance may be available from the Community Services Department concerning the cause of a drainage issue or problem. While the City may propose or recommend possible solutions, the City cannot design or otherwise engineer improvements on private property. Additionally, the City cannot recommend a particular contractor or undertake any work outside a dedicated city drainage easement.

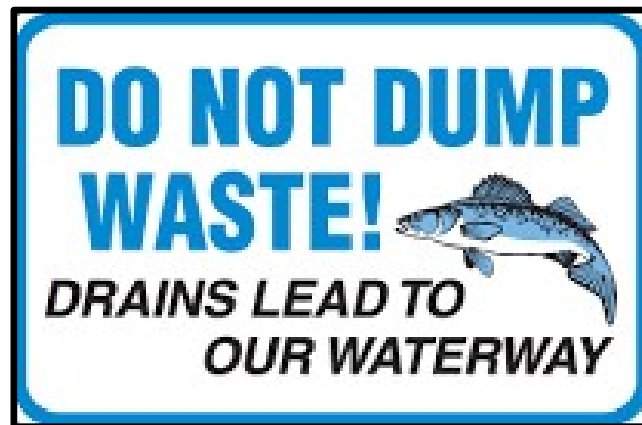
## HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Keep easements and storm drains free of litter and debris. (Do not rake, blow, or dump grass clippings or leaves into the storm drainage system).
- Keep the area easily accessible in case repairs or maintenance are necessary.
- Do not place sheds or other permanent structures in the easement or on top of drainage structures.
- Avoid obstructing the flow of stormwater with privacy fencing.
- Apply pesticides and fertilizers in accordance with label instructions to minimize chemicals entering the stormwater system.
- Never dump pet waste, used motor oil, paint, chemicals, or other substances into a storm drain.
- Additionally, due to various chemicals existing in swimming pools, owners should never drain a swimming pool into storm drains without first treating the water to remove detrimental chemicals.



These pollutants are often extremely difficult and costly to remediate or remove.

- Report drainage issues with documentation (photos, videos, surveys, etc.) to the City. Photos and videos taken at the time of heavy rain are particularly helpful. These can be emailed or physically taken to the Community Services Department located at City Hall.
- Report dumping or spilling of hazardous materials into a drainage system to the Fire Department by calling 911 in case of an emergency, or 850.934.5133 in a non-emergency situation.



Questions on your drainage easement or rights of way?

Contact Community Services Department at

**850.934.5109**