

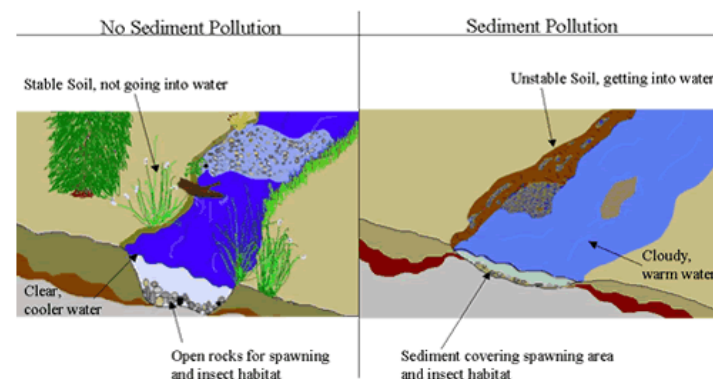
G Sediment Pollution

What is Sediment?

Sediment is the loose sand, clay, silt and other soil particles that settle at the bottom of a body of water. Sediment can come from soil erosion or from the decomposition of plants and animals. Wind, water and ice help carry these particles to rivers, lakes and streams.

Facts About Sediment

- The Environmental Protection Agency lists sediment as the most common pollutant in rivers, streams, lakes and reservoirs.
- While natural erosion produces nearly 30% of the total sediment in the United States, accelerated erosion from human use of land accounts for the remaining 70%.
- The most concentrated sediment released comes from construction activities, including relatively minor home-building projects such as room additions and swimming pools.
- Sediment pollution causes \$16 billion in environmental damage annually.



Why is This a Concern?

Sediment entering stormwater degrades the quality of water for drinking, wildlife and the land surrounding streams in the following ways:

- Sediment fills up storm drains and catch basins that carry water away from roads and homes, which increases the potential for flooding.
- Water polluted with sediment becomes cloudy, preventing animals from seeing food.
- Murky water prevents natural vegetation from growing in water.
- Sediment in stream beds disrupts the natural food chain by destroying the habitat where the smallest stream organisms live and causing massive declines in fish populations.
- Sediment increases the cost of treating drinking water and can result in odor and taste problems.
- Sediment can clog fish gills, reducing resistance to disease, lowering growth rates, and affecting fish egg and larvae development.
- Nutrients transported by sediment can activate blue-green algae that release toxins and can make swimmers sick.
- Sediment deposits in rivers can alter the flow of water reduce water depth, which makes navigation and recreational use more difficult.

How **YOU** Can Help

- Sweep sidewalks and driveways instead of hosing them off. Washing these areas results in sediment and other pollutants running off into streams, rivers and lakes.
- Use weed-free mulch when reseeding bare spots on your lawn, and use a straw erosion control blanket if restarting or tilling a lawn.
- Notify local officials when you see sediment entering streets or streams near a construction site.
- Put compost or weed-free mulch on your garden to help prevent soil from washing away.
- Avoid mowing within 10 to 25 feet from the edge of a stream or creek. This will create a safe buffer zone that will help minimize erosion and naturally filter stormwater runoff that may contain sediment.
- Either wash your car at a commercial car wash or on a surface that absorbs water, such as grass or gravel.