

# **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND COLORADO OWNER ASSOCIATIONS**

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## **STORMWATER MANAGEMENT AND COLORADO OWNER ASSOCIATIONS**

Owner associations that maintain grounds, landscaping, common areas, common elements, rights-of-way and /or medians should be aware of stormwater runoff issues and best practices to manage stormwater runoff.

### **What is Stormwater?**

Stormwater is the additional runoff from impervious surfaces in a Community (roads, rooftops parking areas, sidewalks, etc.).

These surfaces prevent rainfall or snowmelt from soaking into the soil, causing stormwater runoff. This runoff reduces the amount of groundwater that is available to well water users and increases downstream surface flows.

Stormwater runoff can exceed the capacity of existing natural and/or improved drainage. As a part of initial development of Colorado common interest communities, drainage is typically required to be modified by the developer, to better collect and manage stormwater runoff and direct it away. This is done through curb and gutter improvements, drainage swales, enclosed storm sewers, lined channels, etc. The end result is that stormwater should not cause flooding of the homes or improvements of owners, but rather, should end up discharged to downstream waters (streams, reservoirs and lakes).

### **Water Quality issues with Stormwater**

Stormwater runoff typically picks up pollutants (sediment, oil, salts, fertilizer, bacteria, etc.). With these pollutants, stormwater runoff can be challenging when it flows into drinking water reservoirs or sources.

### **The Clean Water Act**

This Act, passed in 1972, intended to keep clean and maintain water quality for all residents. Stormwater from one area frequently becomes drinking water for another, downstream, Community.

### **Stormwater – A Utility**

Similar to the water and sewer utilities that service Communities, stormwater, and the services of infrastructure of curbs, gutters, ditches, pipes, etc. constituting a sort of utility. Stormwater utilities need to be maintained, repaired, replaced and improved by someone – typically local government or an area-wide drainage utility or district. Whoever that is, that entity looks to improve stormwater quality.

### **What are the Responsibilities of Colorado Owner Associations?**

If the Association maintains grounds, the Association should:

- comply with applicable local ordinances when maintaining, repairing, replacing or improving these grounds
- replant bare areas quickly
- use erosion and silt control fences and/or other devices

These actions can avoid sediment, which is the main downstream pollutant.

### **Additional Steps That May Protect Local Waters**

To protect local waters, take the following steps:

- Clean up vehicle spills. Pick up pet waste and put these items in the trash.
- Limit the amount of impervious surface on your property.
- Use Porous paving surfaces such as wood decking, open-celled bricks, and concrete pavers that allow water to soak into the ground.
- Where possible, direct runoff from impervious surfaces to vegetated areas.
- Allow thick vegetations or “buffer strips” to slow runoff and soak up pollutants.
- Shovel snow onto grass/landscaped areas.
- Plant drought tolerant or native species where appropriate.
- Aerate your lawn.
- Drain roof gutters away from the foundation, but onto grass or toward landscaping.
- Avoid over-fertilizing lawns.
- Sweep up litter and debris from driveways instead of hosing debris into gutter and/or storm drain.
- Call your contract waste management company or 1-800-HHW-PKUP for disposal of household chemicals such as paint or oil.

### **Additional Resources on Stormwater Quality Control**

Additional resources for stormwater quality control are available on the web, including [www.highways.jeffco.us](http://www.highways.jeffco.us), or for additional information, contact an attorney at our firm and/or a qualified civil engineer.