

Volunteers to Stencil Storm Drains to Advocate for Clean Water



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CONTACT:

Dottie Perham-Whittier
Community Relations Coordinator
(207) 513-3000, X3205
(207) 513-3007 (TTY/TDD)
(207) 795-5069 (FAX)

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dottie@lewistonmaine.gov
www.lewistonmaine.gov



LEWISTON: The Androscoggin Valley Storm Water Working Group will partner with local volunteers on Saturday, April 30th, for cleaner and safer waters. Volunteers will first meet at **10 a.m. at Festival Plaza on Main Street in Auburn and at the Lisbon Boat Launch.** The launch is at the intersection of Frost Hill and Route 196 (*Lisbon Falls at the bridge crossing the river*).



Following a brief clean water discussion on the banks of the Androscoggin River, volunteers will then split into groups to conduct storm drain stenciling in Lewiston, Auburn, Lisbon, and Sabattus neighborhoods. The stencils, as shown herein, will mark the street near municipal drainage structures.

Storm drain stenciling is intended to inform the public that area storm drains drain directly into local bodies of water. Saturday's volunteer participants will include three Girl Scout troops and representatives from the Ted Berry Company.

Education will include the fact that storm drains do not lead to treatment plants, and any pollution or trash carried from rain events or snowmelt will eventually proceed untreated to the Androscoggin River, Taylor Pond, Lake Auburn, No Name Pond, Sabattus Pond, and other smaller streams in each community. In addition, illegal dumping of waste or trash into the drainage system can create pollution and clog drainage systems creating backups and nuisance flooding—

requiring expensive cleaning operations. In addition, public engagement in pollution prevention, such as environmentally sensitive lawn care, can greatly assist municipalities, cost wise, as to environmental clean-up costs to taxpayers.

Residents may make a difference by following five steps on one's property:

- **Build Healthy Soil:** By using organic material and mulches, soil will increase its water retention and will minimize storm water pollutants.
- **Mow Better:** Taller grass helps maintain healthy soil, which absorbs more water, resulting in less polluted runoff from lawns. Leave lawn clippings for a natural fertilizer.
- **Practice Smart Watering:** Plan your plant/lawn watering around rain events & use automated systems efficiently to reduce the amount of property runoff. Give your plants just what they need but not too much.
- **Think Twice Before Using Fertilizers and Pesticides:** Use phosphorus-free or slow-release fertilizers. Phosphorous and pesticides can cumulatively contaminate waterbodies when they drain into them.
- **Practice Yardscaping:** Use native plants and group plants together that need similar amounts of water.

To find out more about environmentally sensitive law care techniques, residents may visit www.yardscaping.org.

Over the last 13 years, the Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MDEP) has regulated storm water discharges under the Federal Clean Water Act. The General Permit for the Discharge of Storm Water from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems, commonly known as the MS4 permit, obligates the Androscoggin Valley Storm Water Working Group, which includes the municipalities of Lewiston, Auburn, Lisbon, and Sabattus, to develop a storm water management program and implement a number of pollution control measures. Thirty (30) communities in Maine must comply with these regulations, and recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and MDEP audits in local communities will likely require additional clean water efforts and expenditures for communities. Two of the permit's control measures require

public education on storm water impacts and public participation in reduction efforts. **The April 30th stenciling project is part of this program.**

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