

Where are These Pollutants Coming From?

True or false? Factories are the major source of pollutants in our waters.

False. Thirty years ago that statement was true, but since then we've made a lot of progress cutting down on pollution from factories and sewage treatment plants. Although these can still pollute in some areas, today most of the problems in our waters comes from **polluted runoff** draining into rivers, lakes, and bays after a rain storm. Rain washing over the landscape carries dirt, oil, fertilizer, pesticides, animal waste and many other substances off streets and farms and into our waters.

As we pave over natural areas to make parking lots, driveways and roads (known as **impervious** surfaces) the rainwater doesn't slowly soak into the ground like it used to. Instead it's channeled into gutters, culverts, and storm drains. These tend to be convenient places for people to illegally dump used motor oil, trash, and yard waste. These pollutants then are whisked directly into our streams, wetlands, bays, and lakes.

Areas where water can slowly soak into the ground are described as **pervious**. Pervious areas include lawns, fields, wooded areas, and even brick walkways and gravel driveways that allow rainwater to soak in.

And there's more. All over the country, streams have been straightened and physically altered to flow in a certain direction; some have been lined with concrete. This makes water rush faster after a rainstorm (increasing erosion) and makes it difficult or impossible for plants and aquatic

