

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is water that occurs from a rain or snow event. The water that is not absorbed by the ground is called stormwater runoff. This water that is not absorbed by the ground usually ends up flowing into a stormwater drain and then into a large body of water such as a river, lake, creek, or ocean, or a retention pond. Because stormwater runoff typically flows through driveways, parking lots, sidewalks, and roads, it is very important that we as citizens protect the stormwater by maintaining our vehicles and yards, and properly disposing of any waste we may have as well. Often times, litter, oil from oil leaks, sediment from eroded yards, and other waste end up in our rivers, creeks, and lakes affecting the water quality in a large way.

Why Does Water Quality Matter?

Water quality affects everything from wild life to the water you drink at home. Soil erosion, oil leaks from vehicles, waste from plant factories, soap suds from home car washes, litter and other things are all washed into our storm sewer systems and ultimately our rivers, lakes, and streams – in our case the Coosa River and its tributaries.

When these things are washed into our rivers, turbidity occurs. Turbidity is caused by particles suspended or dissolved in water that scatter light making the water appear cloudy or murky. High turbidity not only reduces the aesthetic quality of the river but also increases the cost of water treatment. It can also be very harmful to fish and other aquatic life by reducing food supplies, preventing reproduction, reducing growth rate, and sometimes killing them.

Ways You Can Help Protect Our Water Quality

There are many habits, the citizens of Attalla can practice to help protect and improve the Water Quality of the Coosa River and its tributaries.

1. Wash your car on a lawn or other unpaved surface to minimize the amount of dirt and soap and may flow into the storm sewer system.
2. Regularly check your cars, boats, motorcycles and other machinery for leaks and spills and make repairs as soon as possible.
3. Clean up any oil or gas spills with an absorbent material like kitty litter or sand. Do not rinse spills. Always properly dispose of clean up material.
4. Recycle used oil and other automotive fluids at participating service stations.
5. Use pesticides and fertilizers sparingly and only when necessary. Always use the recommended amount. Avoid using prior to a rain event.
6. Select native plants and grasses that are drought and pest-resistant.
7. Sweep up yard debris instead of hosing down area. Yard debris can often times be composted or recycled.
8. Don't over-water your lawn.
9. Keep dirt and mulch covered when working on a landscape project.
10. Vegetate any soiled spots in your yard to prevent erosion.
11. Locate nearest storm drain and protect using wattles prior to beginning an outdoor project.
12. Sweep up and properly dispose of construction debris such as concrete and mortar.

13. When using hazardous substances like paints, solvents, and cleaners, clean up any spills immediately, dispose of properly, and store in a safe location.
14. Use nontoxic, biodegradable, recycled, and recyclable products whenever possible.
15. Clean paint brushes in sink and not outside.
16. Reduce amount of paved areas and increase vegetated areas in yard.
17. When walking your pet, pick up pet waste and dispose of properly.

Gadsden-Etowah MS4

An MS4 is a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System. An MS4 is a system of conveyances used to collect and convey stormwater and is owned by a public entity. Storm Sewer Systems carry water from roads, driveways, and parking lots to a local water body during a rain event.

The City of Attalla along with the Cities of Gadsden, Glencoe, Hokes Bluff, Rainbow City, Reece City, and Southside are collectively considered as an “urbanized area” and treated as one MS4. The urbanized area was designated by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Alabama Department of Environmental Management (ADEM). Because we are an urbanized area, we are required to obtain a permit that requires us to develop and maintain a Stormwater Management Program. This permit is called an MS4 permit and the cities of Gadsden, Attalla, Glencoe, Hokes Bluff, Rainbow City, Reece City, and Southside are all on the same permit.

As a citizen of Etowah County, you have a part in the Gadsden-Etowah MS4 permit. Part of the MS4 Permit requires the City to participate in Educational Events. The City of Attalla is currently a part of Farm Town which is held each fall for first graders all over the county, the Water Festival which is held each Spring for fourth graders all over the county with the help of many high school students, and Message in a Bottle which is attended by students all over the county. These events give us an opportunity to teach the youth about water quality and the way we can impact our waterways! The City of Attalla is also part of Renew Our Rivers which is put on by Alabama Power each year. Renew Our Rivers allows the entire City to come together and help clean up any trash that has been put in the Coosa River our the past year.