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For Immediate Release

Contact: Jayne Jenks, 262-896-8305

Down the Drain!

Down the drain usually implies that something is gone. So when rainwater goes down the storm drain, it is gone....but where? When water goes down the drain, it travels through an underground pipe to the nearest lake, river or stream. It is not treated or cleaned before it enters the waterway. Here in Waukesha County it is delivered to the Fox River, Bark River, Pewaukee Lake or countless other streams and lakes in the county.

You might think that rainwater would be clean water. However, before the water enters the storm drain, it picks up fertilizers, gas, oil, pet waste and other pollutants from our neighborhoods. Combine that with all the things that people purposely dispose of in the storm drain, such as pet waste and grass clippings; it adds up to too much pollution entering our rivers and streams.

This sounds like a big problem—and it is. But there are lots of simple solutions. Actions such as picking up after your pet and sweeping grass clippings or fertilizers out of the road and off the pavement will help. You can also make sure that you are not adding extra water to the storm drain system from water softeners, sump pumps, gutter downspouts and even washing your car.

It comes down to an education effort to let people know that the storm drain is not a garbage disposal. One method used in the education effort is storm drain stenciling. Volunteers stencil the message, "Dump No Waste, Drains to River" beside local storm drains. At the same time, volunteers leave door hangers with clean water tips at homes in the neighborhood.

Charlie Shong, Director of the Pewaukee Lake Sanitary District organized over 150 Pewaukee students to participate in storm drain stenciling last spring. "The storm drain stenciling project not only educated the students, but the parents and neighborhood residents were informed as well," Shong stated. "The students became the teachers."

As the weather warms up, the stenciling project will kick into action again. If you would like to be part of the action, please call Jayne Jenks at 896-8305 for stenciling materials or for more information. Together we can have clean water—One Storm Drain at a Time.

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