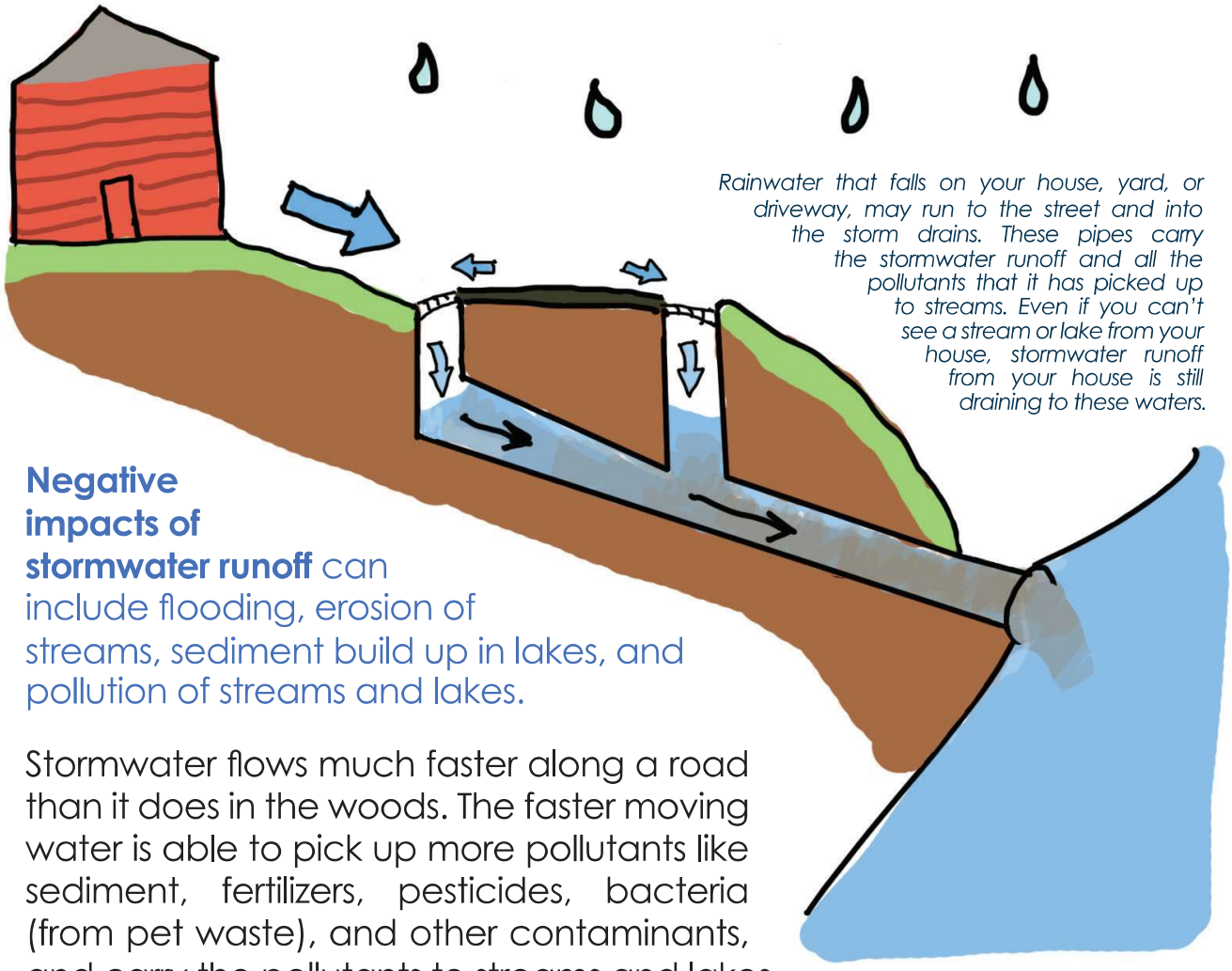
Why should you care about Stormwater Management?



Rainwater that falls on your house, yard, or driveway, may run to the street and into the storm drains. These pipes carry the stormwater runoff and all the pollutants that it has picked up to streams. Even if you can't see a stream or lake from your house, stormwater runoff from your house is still draining to these waters.

Negative impacts of stormwater runoff can include flooding, erosion of streams, sediment build up in lakes, and pollution of streams and lakes.

Stormwater flows much faster along a road than it does in the woods. The faster moving water is able to pick up more pollutants like sediment, fertilizers, pesticides, bacteria (from pet waste), and other contaminants, and carry the pollutants to streams and lakes.

An increase in the amount of water that runs off after development and how quickly it runs off can cause erosion and instability in streams. Stormwater runoff can cause streams to become wider, deeper, and straighter, losing their natural bends (or meanders) and decreasing habitat for fish and other animals that live in streams. Stormwater from developed areas can also be hotter than natural stream sources. Warmer water holds less dissolved oxygen so stormwater can be harmful to fish like trout that need more oxygen.

It's easy to notice the flooding impacts of large rain storms, but over time, smaller storms can have an impact on streams, too. Across the state, about 95% of the rainfall volume occurs in small events (less than 2.4 to 3.2 inches depending on your location.)

BMPs: what are they, & what do they do?

BMP stands for Best Management Practice, and includes designed "things" like detention basins, as well as non-engineered approaches like protecting open space to manage stormwater. SCMs are Stormwater Control Measures, which are engineered facilities that are designed and constructed to manage stormwater. For the most part, the terms BMP and SCM can be used interchangeably.

The goal of BMPs or SCMs is to reduce the impact of development on downstream streams and lakes by:

- **minimizing the amount of runoff,**
- **slowing down the runoff,**
- **infiltrating runoff,**
- **evapotranspiring runoff,** or
- **filtering runoff.**

Many BMPs or SCMs will use vegetation for their ability to use water, put water back into the atmosphere, or help it infiltrate into the ground, rather than allow it to become runoff.

If you've ever walked through a meadow or shaken a tree branch after a rain, you got wet with intercepted water. When it rains, some of the water is trapped on plants. This "intercepted" water never even makes it to the ground where it could be infiltrated. Plants also use water as part of the photosynthesis process where they use the sun's energy to create their own food. This water used by plants is called evapotranspiration. Larger plants with broader leaves and deeper roots like trees, shrubs, or decorative grasses will intercept and evapotranspire more water than a grass lawn.