

# FACT SHEET: Earth Day and Stormwater...a Call to Action

*"Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species – man – acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world."*

~ Rachel Carson

First celebrated in the United States in 1970, Earth Day was originally organized to teach Americans about the environment and to get them outside for peaceful demonstrations focused on environmental reform. Now celebrated annually on April 22, Earth Day events are held worldwide in an effort to support environmental awareness.

Over time, groups have turned Earth Day into a call for action, leading to changes in policy and human behavior. Many communities celebrate Earth Week – or even Earth Month – with activities focused on environmental issues. These activities reinforce environmentally friendly behaviors, inspire responsible stewardship, encourage best practices, and focus on increasing green living.

## ▶ Why Worry About Stormwater?

The environment is composed of the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the sun that provides us with energy and heat. While about 71 percent of earth's surface is covered by water, only a small fraction of that is fresh water. Additionally, the amount of water on earth is essentially the same as it was millions of years ago; new water is not created. By effectively protecting the quality of stormwater, we also safeguard our creeks and rivers, and ultimately the water we need to survive. Without these water systems, life would cease to exist on our planet. Therefore, on Earth Day doesn't it make sense to pay homage to our natural water systems?

## ▶ Why Care About Earth's Water Resources?

While the majority of us believe water is abundant, the main concern is the amount of fresh water available. Did you know?

- Earth's water comprises 97.5 percent salt water and 2.5 percent fresh water.
- Close to 70 percent of fresh water is not accessible for our use.
- Only about 1 percent of the world's fresh water available for human consumption is regularly renewed by rain and snowfall.

## ▶ "Every Day is Earth Day" Activities

You can help by celebrating Earth Day every day! Outlined below are a few ways you can actively make your home stormwater friendly and show your appreciation for our planet:

- Install a rain barrel.
- Plant a tree.
- Build a rain garden.
- Switch to green cleaning products.
- Reduce your use of pesticides and fertilizers.
- Clean debris from areas surrounding your local stormwater drain.
- Check with your local municipality to volunteer for drain marker installation, creekside clean up, or stormwater system maintenance.
- Pick up after your pets and properly dispose of waste.
- Participate in Adopt-A-Stream or Adopt-A-Highway events.

*"...government cannot solve problems alone – you have to engage the citizens of the community to develop solutions that will improve everyone's lives. By working with my community to connect them back to the river and focusing on environmental justice challenges, we have made a better, more sustainable future for all."*

~ Lisa Wong, Mayor of Fitchburg, MA, April 2015



## EARTH DAY AROUND THE WORLD

- ▶ In 1990, Earth Day went global, mobilizing 200 million people in more than 140 countries, putting environmental issues on the world stage.
- ▶ On Earth Day 2009, Disney released a documentary film entitled, *Earth*, that followed the migration paths of four animal families.
- ▶ During an Earth Day celebration in 2011, Earth Day Network planted 28 million trees in Afghanistan.
- ▶ On Earth Day 2012, more than 100,000 people rode bikes in China to reduce CO2 emissions and save fuel.
- ▶ In honor of Earth Day in Panama, 100 endangered species of orchids were planted and are being maintained to prevent their extinction.

## WE CAN HELP!

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