

Where Does Your Water Go?

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W L S S D

Have you ever wondered where your water goes when you wash your hands, take a shower, or go to the bathroom? Most of us probably have. At River Quest, I learned exactly where all the wastewater from Duluth, Minnesota goes.

First, your water rushes down tubes that transport it to WLSSD (WLSSD stands for Western Lake Superior Sanitary District). WLSSD is Duluth's wastewater treatment facility. After going through the tubes, your water ends up at the treatment facility where it is cleaned and put back into Lake Superior.

Take a moment and picture this. Without WLSSD our wastewater would not be treated. If our wastewater is not treated, it will go directly into Lake Superior. Now imagine a bright, sunny day when you decide to go swimming in Lake Superior. When you arrive, you look around and see and smell terrible things! There are fish floating in the water and there is brown muck bobbing around at the surface. The lake is opaque, making it difficult to see the bottom. YUCK!

WLSSD cleans about 40 million gallons of dirty wastewater every day. However, there is one type of water that WLSSD doesn't handle and that is storm water. Storm water is the water that flows down into our storm drains or culverts. This water doesn't get treated anywhere and it flows directly into the lake or river.

One major concern with storm drains is that people seem to think that it is O.K. to dump anything into them. These things include: car oil, soap from washing cars, garbage, fertilizer, leaves and grass clippings. It is never O.K. to dump anything into the storm drains because you could end up hurting fish and other inhabitants or users of Lake Superior.



This is a picture of a storm drain

Here are some rules to follow to help keep the lake clean and healthy:

- Wash your car on the lawn and not in the driveway. By doing this, the grass will filter out any excess soap.
- Never, ever dump any garbage into the storm drains. Always think about where it will end up.
- When mowing your lawn, make sure that your grass clippings do not go into the street. If they do, make sure to sweep them up right away.
- When raking, make sure that you never rake leaves into the street or the storm drains.

Remember that wastewater is for sanitary sewers and rain water is for storm sewers. WLSSD works hard to keep the lake and the fish clean and healthy! Let's do our part to help them with this incredibly important task.

Bibliography

Picture of storm drain:

<https://encrypted-tbn2.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcSr0FmthDh2TkAlo-gBtoXrQ24L5-6EoHskVSPOPqIKZBHqnYt3>

Some information on sanitary sewers:

<http://www.wlssd.duluth.mn.us/>

Majority of information:

From my River Quest field trip on May 14, 2013