

# February 2022 Stormwater Reader

## Employees for Stormwater Protection

### What harm is a little bit of soap?

Soap is a common use item that can have a tremendous negative effect on our waterways! Water entering storm drains, unlike water that enters sanitary sewers, does not undergo treatment before it is discharged into our waterways. When cars are washed on streets and driveways, that dirty water eventually winds up in rivers, streams, creeks, and lakes. Washing one car may not seem to be a problem, but collectively car washing activity adds up to big problems for our local lakes, creeks and streams. Pollution associated with car washing degrades water quality while also finding its way into sediments, impacting aquatic habitats. When soaps are allowed to enter a waterway, it changes the water quality creating impacts on the wildlife that call Carrollton waterways their home. All detergents destroy the external mucus layers that protect the fish from bacteria and parasites, can cause severe damage to fish gills, and detergents lower the surface tension of the water, making it hard for aquatic insects like water striders to float on the surface.

### How does Carrollton prevent soap from entering our waterways?

- City employees must wash their city vehicles at the contracted carwash or in one of the carwash areas at select city facilities that are equipped with a grit trap to separate sediment and other materials before the wash water flows into the sanitary sewer, where the water will be treated.
- Residents are allowed to wash their personal vehicles at their house. However, we prefer that they wash their vehicles at a commercial carwash or wash their vehicles on the grass and use less soap and water while washing their vehicles at home.
- Businesses are prohibited from washing vehicles at their establishment unless proper protocols have been taken, such as washing vehicles in an area that is set up as a carwash with a grit trap and plumbed to the sanitary sewer OR capturing any discharge before it enters into the stormwater system. Of course they can always bring the work vehicles to a commercial carwash!

