



## Car Washing and Water Quality

### What's the big deal?

- Car washwater contains a mixture of detergents, oils, heavy metals, and other pollutants.
- Washwater that flows into the storm drain isn't treated and flows directly to streams, lakes, and Puget Sound, where it can kill aquatic plants and animals.
- All soaps can harm our waterways by breaking the surface tension of water and lowering oxygen levels, delivering oils and heavy metals to surface waters.
- Most soaps also contain phosphorus—a nutrient that causes unwanted algae blooms in surface waters.

### Car Washing is NOT illegal!

- But allowing soapy, dirty washwater to flow to Edmonds' storm drains is.
- The City of Edmonds has adopted an educational, not enforcement, approach.
- There are many practical options that keep the dirty, soapy washwater out of the storm drain (see other side for details)!



## What should I do to keep our waters clean?

- Take your car to a commercial car wash facility that discharges to the sewer system.
- When washing your car at home, have the soapy washwater and rinse water flow to a lawn or vegetated area instead of to the nearest storm drain.
- Use waterless car wash products, available at auto parts stores and online. It saves water too!
- Find a community car wash event that uses a car wash kit which discharges the washwater to the sewer.
- Use a shut-off nozzle to conserve water, and only use a small amount of soap.
- Choose a soap that has little or no phosphates, is biodegradable, and doesn't say "Caution" or "Danger".

If you have any questions regarding clean car washing, contact Patrick Johnson, City of Edmonds Stormwater Technician at (425) 771-0220 x1322 or [pat.johnson@edmondswa.gov](mailto:pat.johnson@edmondswa.gov).



**It's our responsibility to keep our creeks, Lake Ballinger, and Puget Sound clean!**

