Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is stormwater pollution?

Stormwater is the runoff from precipitation that flows over land that does not infiltrate into soils. The amount of stormwater increases with the construction of nonporous surfaces such as roads, sidewalks, and roofs.

Pollutants can be collected by stormwater runoff and deposited into surface waters through man-made conveyances including municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) potentially having detrimental impacts on ecosystems.

2. Where do stormwater pollutants come from?

Stormwater pollutants originate from many human activities including lawn care, construction, and vehicle maintenance. Common pollutants found in stormwater include:

1. Pesticides
2. Nutrients
3. Petroleum products
4. Sediments
5. Detergents
6. Solvents
7. Heavy metals
8. Litter

3. How can stormwater pollution adversely affect the environment?

Toxic materials including petroleum products, pesticides, detergents, and other chemicals can harm aquatic ecosystems by killing organisms including fish, shellfish, and vegetation.

Nutrients including the nitrogen and phosphorus found in fertilizers and animal waste can cause an overgrowth of algae which can drive out indigenous plants and animals. In addition, when the algae die off, the decaying matter can deplete the water body of oxygen killing the fish and other aquatic organisms.

Sediments deposited to waterways by stormwater runoff increases the turbidity of waters and limits the depth to which light can penetrate, thereby decreasing the inhabitable space that aquatic vegetation can survive. Sediments can also settle on, and smother, existing vegetation.

4. To what water bodies does the stormwater from USF’s storm sewer discharge?

Stormwater from USF’s network or storm sewers discharges to several different water bodies including Lake Behnke on the west side of campus adjacent to Bruce B. Downs Blvd., Detention Pond 204B south of the Psychology and Communication Sciences and Disorders Building (PCD),
Detention Pond 104A-1 South of Residence Betty Castor, and the Hillsborough River.

5. Who is affected by stormwater pollution?

Everyone can be affected by stormwater pollution including boaters, fishermen, and anyone who enjoys the natural beauty of the Tampa Bay area. In addition, the Hillsborough River is our primary source of drinking water.

6. Who regulates stormwater runoff?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates stormwater runoff through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). EPA authorized the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) to implement the NPDES Stormwater Permitting Program in October 2000. FDEP is responsible for issuing permits and performing compliance and enforcement activities as the NPDES permitting authority in Florida. There are two phases of the NPDES Stormwater Program.

7. What is the difference between the two phases of the NPDES Stormwater Program?

Phase I of the NPDES Stormwater Program was promulgated in 1990. It requires large and medium municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) located in incorporated counties with a population of 100,000 or more to obtain NPDES permits.

Phase II of the NPDES Stormwater Program was promulgated in 1999. It requires MS4s not regulated by Phase I, and small construction activities to obtain NPDES permits and develop comprehensive stormwater management programs that will eliminate illicit discharges to MS4s and reduce pollutants in stormwater runoff. USF is a part of the Phase II MS4 program.

8. What are USF’s requirements under the NPDES Phase II MS4 permit?

As part of the permit application, USF submitted a list of best management practices (BMPs) that fulfill the various elements required as part of a comprehensive storm water management program. These BMPs are to be phased-in over a period of five years and include the following elements:

1. Public education and outreach
2. Public involvement and participation
3. Illicit discharge detection and elimination
4. Construction site stormwater runoff control, and
5. Pollution prevention and good housekeeping

9. What is an illicit discharge?
An illicit discharge is any discharge to a municipal separate storm sewer that is not a part of storm water runoff. MS4s are not designed to process or discharge such wastes. Some sources of illicit discharges include the improper disposal of mechanical fluids and toxic chemicals, improper disposal of debris, and the discharge of industrial wastewaters into storm sewer systems.

10. **Who can be contacted if an illicit discharge is observed?**

Illicit discharges can be reported to:

Environmental Health and Safety - (813) 974-4036

University Police Department (813) 974-2628.

11. **What are some things that can be done to ensure the quality of USF’s stormwater?**

You can view stormwater good housekeeping practices on the Good Housekeeping Practices webpage.