

## Through Rain, Sleet, and Snow...

By Peter J. Hanlon, Massachusetts Bays Program

### Let's compare stormwater to the mail.

Postal carriers pound the pavement and bring mail to our doors. Rain and snowmelt flows off those same streets and into storm drains.

No real problem there.

Sometimes, through no fault of their own, postal carriers bring not-so-welcome mail to our door, such as bills and junk mail. Also through no fault of its own, stormwater whisks trash, car oil, dog poop, fertilizer, and myriad other pollutants that have collected on the street into storm drains and into the nearest waterbody.

Not so good.

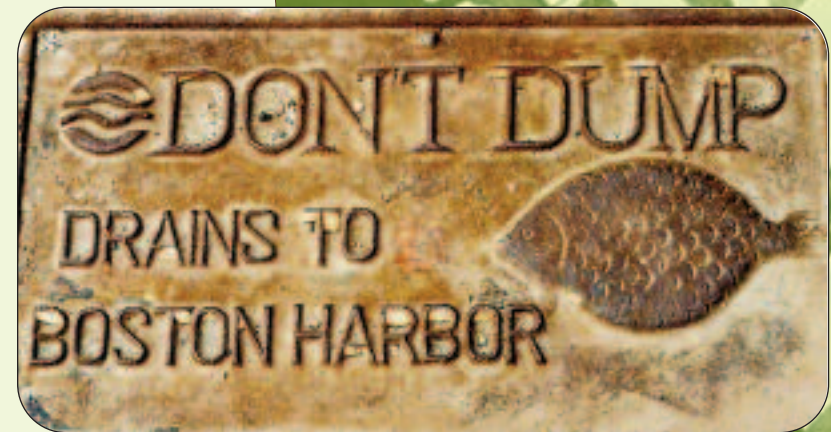
So just as the mail carrier isn't the one to blame for bringing junk mail to our door, it's not the stormwater itself that causes pollution, but rather things that we leave on the ground that get carried away by the rainfall and melting snow. The solution is pretty simple—pick up our trash, maintain our cars, pick up after our dogs—but helping everyone understand the connection between stormwater and the health of our bays, rivers, and beaches can be difficult.

Think Blue Massachusetts is an outreach campaign designed to help make that connection and inspire stewardship of coastal and inland waters. The Think Blue campaign was created by advertising and environmental professionals, and is coordinated by the Massachusetts Bays Estuary Association (MBEA) with the Think Blue Coalition, a partnership of diverse supporters and sponsors that guides the campaign's implementation.

Since 2006, Think Blue Massachusetts has brought its exhibit (including a 15-foot tall inflatable duck mascot, Stormy) to numerous outdoor festivals. Now, Think Blue is helping volunteers organize Think Blue projects, large and small, in their own communities and neighborhoods. The Think Blue Toolbox, a free online resource, provides a wealth of campaign materials to help create local stormwater outreach projects. The Toolbox consists of professionally produced campaign media (television, radio, and print), access to customized materials and promotional items, project suggestions, and professional guidance.

Stormwater pollution requires a local solution, so volunteers can use their knowledge of local issues to help keep pollutants off of streets and yards so that they don't end up flowing to our rivers, beaches, and bays.

Think of it as giving your mail carrier's back a break by stopping junk mail at its source.



### Stormy Says...

Always bring baggies when you walk your dog so you can pick up after he leaves a special "gift." Dispose of it in the trash or flush it (without the bag, of course) down the toilet. Pet waste bacteria is harmful to animals that live in our rivers and oceans and can make our beaches unsafe for swimming.

Checking your car for oil and fluid leaks is a good idea not just for your car, but also to ensure that those fluids don't end up on the roads or your driveway and then wash into storm drains.

If you have a lawn, use as little fertilizer as possible because excess nutrients from fertilizer can leach through the soil into groundwater, or are washed by rain into storm drains. These nutrients can contaminate our drinking water and cause algal blooms in rivers and bays.

Cigarettes are the most littered item in America—176 million pounds of butts end up on the ground each year. And no, they're not biodegradable. Cigarette filters are made with cellulose acetate tow (plastic) and can take up to 20 years to decompose.

For more information, or to join or start a Think Blue! team, visit [www.ThinkBlueMA.org](http://www.ThinkBlueMA.org).