

During a car wash, dirty water containing soap and detergents, residues from wearing brake pads, grease, gasoline, and motor oils washes off of the cars. If not directed properly, this water flows off the pavement and into nearby catch basins and storm drains. In the Wachusett Reservoir watershed, most of these storm drains flow into a surface water and then into the Wachusett Reservoir, a drinking water supply for 2.2 million Massachusetts residents.

*What goes in here ...*



*... comes out here.*

**To comply with federal, state and some local regulations, car wash wastewater should not be directed into the storm drain system or waterways!**

## **ADDITIONAL TIPS**

- Use detergents sparingly.
- Limit washing to the exterior of the vehicle and avoid washing the engines, transmissions or undercarriages.
- Avoid using metal brighteners, chemical degreasers, and hot water.
- Properly disperse any sudsy puddles that remain after the car wash is over. They contain toxic residues and can attract (and harm) thirsty animals.
- As an alternative to holding your own car wash, consider cooperating with a commercial carwash facility. Wastewater from these are treated before being released into the environment. Commercial facilities also use high pressure nozzles and pumps that minimize water usage. Some facilities have their own fundraising programs already in place.

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April 2012

dcr  
Massachusetts



# **Car Wash Fundraisers**

Car washes are a great way for sports teams, scout troops, schools, clubs, churches, and other non-profit organizations to raise funds. Unfortunately, they are also an opportunity for large amounts of pollution to be deposited in nearby rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands.



*Follow the recommendations in this brochure to protect local water resources.*

***The following list of good housekeeping practices will help you have an environmentally successful fundraising event:***

- ◆ Wash cars on grassed or gravel areas or in an area where water can be directed to grassed areas to slowly filter into the ground and **not run into a storm drain.**
- ◆ Use only soaps, cleaners, or detergents labeled “non-toxic”, “phosphate free”, or “biodegradable.” Avoid the use of acid- based wheel cleaners.
- ◆ Think about a “waterless car wash”. A few environmentally friendly products have been created that do not require the use of water. (Suggested internet search: waterless car wash fundraisers)
- ◆ Empty buckets of soapy water onto a grassed area and **not** into a parking lot, street, gutter or storm drains.
- ◆ Minimize water usage. Use a spray gun with flow restriction to minimize water volume and runoff.



Washing one car may not seem like a problem, but collectively car washing activity can add up to big problems for local lakes, streams and wetlands. Pollution from car washing degrades water quality while also finding its way into sediments that impact aquatic life.



Algae Bloom

Phosphates found in soap can cause excess weeds and algae to grow. Excess algae smell bad, look bad, and harm water quality. As algae decay, the process uses up oxygen in the water, which can kill fish.



## **Fundraiser Sponsors**

Because washing vehicles can discharge pollutants into water, it is an example of a process that would require a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit if the run-off reaches waters of the United States. This permit is issued through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.



The EPA recommends that companies or individuals take their vehicles to car washes. If a car wash is not available, NPDES permit requirements may be avoided and impacts on waters of the United States minimized if vehicles are washed in a vegetated or grassy area where the wash water will be absorbed into the ground instead of allowing it to run into the street and then into a storm drain.