



CLEAN, HEALTHY WATERWAYS: TRACING POLLUTION UPSTREAM

Stormwater is the largest source of water pollution in our region. When rain falls onto rooftops or paved surfaces, it flows downhill into storm drains and pipes, which eventually “outfall” into ponds, streams, rivers, and coastal waters. Unfortunately, stormwater runoff often carries pollutants such as E. coli bacteria, oil, nutrients, and trash along with it. Currently, more than two-thirds of the region’s rivers and ponds are not safe for swimming and fishing because of pollution from stormwater and other sources.

To help communities cut down on water pollution and satisfy new federal regulations, MAPC developed a protocol for mapping properties that contribute stormwater to each outfall. By combining stormwater infrastructure data with statewide topography and land use information, we can map these areas without expensive data collection. The results will help municipal staff to focus their enforcement

and education efforts. For example, if an industrial area contributes to an outfall that tests positive for soap or other pollutants, a city or town might search for car washes and other businesses that are disposing of water improperly. If a residential area feeds into an outfall that tests positive for E. coli, the municipality could create a public service campaign encouraging people to pick up pet waste.