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Local Watershed Group's Report Claims Stormwater Pollution is Causing Water Quality Problems in Westwood, MA

Volunteers with the Neponset River Watershed Association (NepRWA), a local environmental non-profit, have been monitoring water quality in Westwood's rivers and streams for more than 20 years. In their most recently published report, the watershed association claims that stormwater pollution is driving much of the bacteria problems observed in the town's waterbodies. Chris Hirsch, the Association's environmental scientist stated, "Our 2018 results show that, across the board, *E.coli* bacteria levels in Westwood's waterways were much higher, reaching harmful levels, when it had recently rained. At one site in Westwood, *E.coli* levels were almost 25 times higher during wet weather. This is a big deal because *E.coli* can make waterways unsafe for recreation."

Stormwater pollution occurs when rain or snowmelt washes pollutants off of streets, yards, construction sites, etc. into our local streams and ponds. "It's a common misconception that the storm drains you see on your street lead to a treatment plant of some kind. In reality, the vast majority of those drains are connected to pipes that transport the rainwater directly to the nearest waterbody, completely untreated," Hirsch continued.

The Town of Westwood has been working with the Association and neighboring communities through the Neponset Stormwater Partnership to comply with new requirements from EPA to reduce polluted stormwater runoff. Under the new requirements, which apply throughout eastern Massachusetts, the Town must implement numerous pollution reduction measures, such as more frequent street sweeping, new rules for land developers, and checking for and eliminating sewer and septic leaks. Public education about stormwater pollution is another major requirement. Todd Korchin, Westwood's DPW Director is charged with overseeing compliance efforts, and said "[INSERT QUOTE ABOUT THE TOWN'S EFFORTS AND BENEFITS TO WESTWOOD'S CITIZENS AND THE ENVIRONMENT]."

For the full report on the health of Westwood's waterways, and for more information about how you can help reduce the amount of polluted runoff coming from your property, visit the Neponset Stormwater Partnership website, at [www.yourcleanwater.org](http://www.yourcleanwater.org).

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