

## Public Involvement

A key strategy in improving and protecting our waters involves changing the social behaviors that lead to water pollution. One method of accomplishing this is by increasing the public's general awareness of water quality issues. Involving the public through volunteer activities has proven to be a very effective method of increasing awareness. In many instances, activities can be performed by school age children under adult supervision, which we have found to be particularly effective and rewarding for the children.

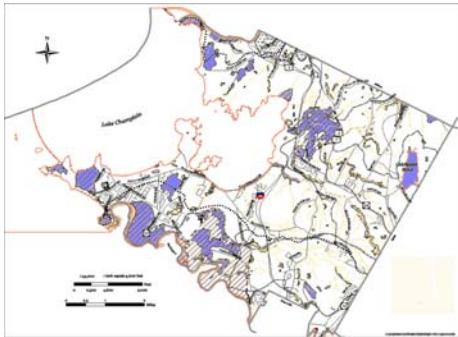
Colchester has over 800 storm water drains throughout the community. Historically, surveys conducted locally, regionally and nationally, have revealed that the majority of our population believes that these stormwater drains are connected to a treatment facility, or in many cases, have no idea where they lead to. Typically, stormwater drains lead directly to surface waters such as lakes, streams, rivers, etc., and discharge without any form of treatment. Because of this, it is critical to prevent any form of pollutants such as oil, paint, dog waste, etc., from entering into these drains. To raise the awareness of this issue, a stormwater stenciling project was recently completed where the Public Works Department worked with local residents, including many school age children, to apply stencils to these drains advising the public that they drained to receiving waters.



In some instances, stormwater pollution can become so severe that the aquatic life within a stream is impacted. If the impact is severe enough, the stream can be classified as impaired. In Colchester, Sunderland Brook is listed as one of the many Vermont streams that are impaired by stormwater. In an effort to address this impairment, the Public Works Department has completed a field assessment of Sunderland Brook, resulting in the

identification, inventorying and mapping of several illegal dump sites. As a part of the Town's annual Green up Day activities, a group of volunteer residents and their children worked with the Department to clean up some of these sites. The sites were carefully selected ahead of time, and the operations were closely monitored by Public Works representatives to ensure the safety of our young volunteers.

There are approximately 36 square miles of land, and a total of 35 sub-watersheds in the Town of Colchester. Looking for water quality problems or concerns is a big job. To improve our ability to accomplish this task, we have turned to the community for their



help. Several volunteer citizens are currently serving on Stormwater Watch Groups. A specific watershed is assigned to each volunteer. If a problem or concern is observed, it is reported to the Public Works Department for further investigation. Basic education and background information is provided to the volunteers to provide them assistance in performing this function. To date, several reports have been filed from citizen volunteers that assisted the Department in addressing water quality problems.

If you are interested in becoming a Stormwater Volunteer, click on [Volunteer Opportunities](#) on the Stormwater home page.