

VFTU STORM WATER STATEMENT

One of the greatest threats to our trout streams is the devastating effect of storm water runoff. Our streams need rain; but when it comes in heavy storms, the watersheds cannot always handle it, and the rain hurts rather than helps our streams. The effects of storm water runoff are not always easy to see. In addition to eroding stream banks (which is painfully easy to see), storm water can pollute the stream and cause the stream bottom to silt. Silt can destroy habitat for aquatic insects and spawning beds for trout.

The storm water problem can be slowed and its damage reversed by using aggressive storm water management techniques.

The primary reason for the increased storm water impact on our watersheds is the growth of impervious coverage. Impervious coverage is any non-absorbent surface such as a parking lot or the roof of a building. When rainwater falls on an impervious surface, the water races off to the nearest storm sewer and into a stream. Along the way, the water may become heated from road surfaces or roofs and pick up dirt and oil. Then hot, polluted water is carried into our streams. Hot, dirty water and trout do not mix.

VFTU advocates two methods of handling storm water and lessening its impact on streams: groundwater recharge and evapotranspiration.

Groundwater recharge involves collecting storm water runoff into an underground storage system that allows the water to percolate back into the aquifer. Percolation back into the aquifer occurs naturally when storm water is able to soak into the ground rather than run off impervious surfaces. This percolation process naturally cools the water, filters out pollutants, and fills springs that feed streams.

Evapotranspiration is the process where plants use water and enable the water to evaporate and-transpire back into the atmosphere. During transpiration moisture is absorbed through plant roots and is returned to the air through plant leaves. This can be accomplished by collecting storm water and releasing it into grassy areas or wetlands, allowing nature to do its job. Evaporation has the added benefit of cooling the watershed.