

Information on Car Washing May 23, 2016

Cars or other vehicles cannot be washed in the street or in locations where the wastewater runs off into city streets. This is because that wastewater not only contains detergents but also oil, grease and other vehicle fluids; sediment; and heavy metals such as lead, copper, zinc and cadmium that are washed off cars. If this wastewater makes it into the street, it will flow untreated to storm drains which empty into the creeks that flow through the city. Storm drains do NOT empty into sewer pipelines that carry wastewater from our sinks and toilets to the Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Chapter 13.15 of the City of Walla Walla Municipal Code prohibits the discharge of any material other than clean, uncontaminated stormwater into the City storm drain system, underground injection control wells (i.e., drywells), and/or surface and ground waters such as Mill Creek or any of the other many creeks running through the city. Prohibited contaminants listed in the code include, but are not limited to, trash, debris, petroleum products, paints, detergents, drain cleaners, pesticides, fertilizer, swimming pool or spa filter backwash, chlorine, bromine, other disinfectants, silt, sediment, concrete, and sewage.

The reason for this prohibition is that the materials listed above are pollutants that degrade water quality and can be toxic to fish and other aquatic life. The Walla Walla River and its tributaries are designated as water quality limited (degraded) by the State of Washington and we need your cooperation in our efforts to not further degrade and instead improve the water quality of our rivers and creeks. For this reason, nothing other than clean stormwater may be discharged into stormwater systems, including drywells, and surface or ground waters.

If you wash your car in the street or in other locations where wastewater runs off into the street, you need to discontinue this practice. Instead, vehicles should be washed at commercial car washing businesses where the wastewater is disposed of in the sanitary sewer. Alternatively, they can be washed on grassy areas, driveways, gravel surfaces or other pervious surfaces where it can soak into the ground provided no wastewater runs off these areas into the street. If a driveway slopes to the street, you need to divert the water to the sides of the driveway into grassy or shrub beds where it can percolate into the ground without reaching the street.

Your cooperation in this matter will be appreciated. Be advised that violations of the above-referenced municipal code could result in fines, penalties or other remedies as provided by law. Please contact Brad Daly, City of Walla Walla Stormwater Coordinator at 509-524-4669 or email him at bdaly@wallawallawa.gov if you have any questions.