

# Why Is Reducing Stormwater Pollution Important at NMSU?

## *Reducing Stormwater Pollution is the Right Thing to Do*

Stormwater pollution is a form of man-made pollution that impacts the environment on and off campus. Pollutants we create on campus are ultimately carried off campus by stormwater runoff and affect the desert that we call home. Polluted stormwater creates numerous costs to the public and to wildlife. As the saying goes, “we all live downstream.”

Stormwater pollution degrades the water quality of our arroyos and the Rio Grande and may harm fish that are present when the river is flowing, as well as animals that drink ponded stormwater. Common

pollutants in stormwater include heavy metals, toxics, oil and grease, solvents, nutrients, viruses, and bacteria. Dirt from erosion, also called sediment, covers the habitat of organisms living on the bottom of the arroyo and river. Fertilizers in stormwater can cause too much algae to grow, which hurts wildlife by using up the oxygen in water that they need to survive. Soaps hurt fish gills and fish skin, and other chemicals damage plants and animals when soap enter the water. All these materials can threaten aquatic life, wildlife, and human health.

## *NMSU is Required to Reduce Stormwater Pollution*

NMSU holds a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit under the NPDES Tracking Number NMR04L002. The

## *New Mexico Regulations*



Stormwater regulations for the State of New Mexico are administered by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), which is authorized by the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) to regulate discharges to surface waters in the United States.

Under the CWA, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permitting Program was authorized to control water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants to waters of the U.S.

permit was authorized by the USEPA. Under this permit, NMSU is required to do the following:

- ❖ Reduce the discharge of pollutants to the “maximum extent practicable”
- ❖ Protect water quality
- ❖ Satisfy the Water Quality Standards developed for the arroyos that flow through NMSU and for the Rio Grande

*An MS4 is a system of conveyances, including roads with drainage systems, streets, curbs, gutters, ditches, channels, and storm drains, that collects or conveys stormwater to waters of the United States.*

As part of the permit, NMSU has established a stormwater management program that contains six measures to reduce pollutants:

- 1) Public education and outreach on stormwater impacts
- 2) Public participation/involvement
- 3) Illicit discharge detection and elimination
- 4) Construction site stormwater runoff control
- 5) Post-construction stormwater management in new development and redevelopment
- 6) Pollution prevention / good housekeeping for municipal operations

Every year, NMSU must report to the USEPA the activities NMSU has completed for each of these measures.

### *What is NMSU Doing to Reduce Stormwater Pollution?*

- ❖ Distributing information about stormwater
- ❖ Inspecting stormwater outfalls for illicit discharges
- ❖ Asking all faculty, staff, and students to look for illegal dumping and illicit discharges
- ❖ Inspecting and removing trash and debris from the campus grounds once a week
- ❖ Reviewing stormwater pollution prevention plans for NMSU’s construction projects that disturb 1 acre or more or that are part of a common plan
- ❖ Utilizing Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for new facility construction
- ❖ Reviewing new development plans for compliance with drainage criteria
- ❖ Implementing pollution prevention measures at NMSU
- ❖ Conducting street sweeping of each major thoroughfare monthly
- ❖ Studying ways to control animal feed and waste runoff from agricultural pens

### *Additional information on NMSU’s Stormwater Management Program*

Website: <http://safety.nmsu.edu/programs/environmental/SWMP.htm>

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