

What is a Watershed?

A watershed is an area of land that drains to a common point, such as a nearby creek, stream or aquifer. Ever small watershed drains to a larger watershed that eventually flows to the ocean.

Watersheds support a wide variety of plants and wildlife and provide many outdoor recreation opportunities . By protecting the health of our watershed we can preserve and enhance the quality of life for Morongo residents.

What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater is from rain or melting snow. It flows from rooftops, over paved streets, sidewalks and parking lots, across bare soil, and through lawns and storm drains. As it flows, runoff collects and transport soil, pet waste, salt, pesticides, fertilizer, oil and grease litter and other pollutants. This water drains directly into nearby creeks, streams and aquifers, without receiving treatment at sewage plants.

Polluted stormwater contaminates streams, and aquifers. It can kill or damage plants, fish and wildlife while degrading the quality of our water.



Morongo Band of Mission Indians
Tribal Water Program
12700 Pumarra Road
Banning CA, 92220

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Wash your car the right way



Morongo Valley

The car is clean but what about the water?



**Clean Water.
Healthy Life.**

The Facts About Car Washing

For many, car washing is a springtime ritual. Often, citizens don't know that by washing all that winter grime off their vehicles they might actually be causing harm to our local waterways and ground water.

Water entering storm drains and streets, unlike water that enters sanitary sewers and septic tanks, does not undergo treatment before it is discharged into percolation ponds. When cars are washed on the streets and drive ways, that dirty water eventually winds up in streams, groundwater, and creeks.

Washing one car may not seem to be a problem, but collectively car washing activity adds up to big problems for our local stream, creeks, and springs. Pollution associated with car washing degrades water quality while also finding its way into sediments, impacting aquatic habitat.



What's the Problem?

Washing your car is only a problem if you don't know where or how to do it correctly. The average home owner uses 116 gallons of water to wash a car! Most commercial car washes use 60 percent less water for the entire process than a homeowner uses just to rinse the car.

Among the many impacts of motor vehicles on our environment, car washing has been noted by water quality experts as a serious contributor to water pollution.

Water that runs off a car when it is washed in a driveway, street, or parking lot can contain substances that pollute the environment. Dirty water containing soap, detergents, residue from exhaust fumes, gasoline, heavy metals from rust, and motor oils can wash off cars and flow directly to storm drains and into the nearest creek or stream where it can harm water quality and wildlife.

The phosphates from soap can cause excess algae to grow. Excessive algae smell bad, look bad, and harm water quality. As algae decay the process uses up oxygen in the water that fish need.

Car fundraisers can be a significant source of pollution. These events are usually held in heavily paved areas where there is little runoff control or grass to filter out harmful substances before they reach our waterways.

What Can You Do?

The best way to minimize the effect washing your car has on the environment is to use a commercial car wash. Most locations reuse wash water several times before sending it to a treatment plant.

However, if you choose to wash your car at home or on the street, these are some things that you can do to minimize the water quality impact:

-  Use biodegradable soap, phosphate free, water based cleaner only.
-  Minimize water usage. Use a spray gun with flow restriction to minimize water volume and runoff.
-  Wash on an area that absorbs water, such as gravel, or grass. This can filter water before it enters ground water, storm drains or creeks. Avoid washing cars on concrete or asphalt pavement unless it drains into a vegetated area.
-  Only let wash water soak into the ground as long as you are using biodegradable, phosphate-free cleaners.
-  When planning a car wash fund raiser, try developing a partnership with a commercial car wash facility, or use a safe location.
-  Always empty wash buckets into sinks or toilets.