What is a Watershed?
A watershed is the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place.
Our Watershed

Surface Runoff

Precipitation (Rain)

Condensation (Cloud Formation)

Transpiration

Evaporation

Groundwater Flow

Infiltration (Percolation)

Rio Grande

“Only rain goes in the storm drains”

Storm Drain
Everyone lives in a watershed.

We live in the El Paso/Las Cruces Watershed which is in the stretch of the lower Rio Grande.

Rio Grande, Las Cruces
Where does all that stormwater go after it rains?
Has anyone seen one of these before?
Storm drains, storm sewers, canals, streets and catch basins carry excess rain and ground water from paved streets, parking lots, sidewalks and roofs.
Your neighborhood might use storm drains to carry stormwater.
Canals carry stormwater and help keep the town from flooding.
What is the difference between a storm sewer and a sanitary sewer?
Storm sewers carry rainwater only and the water does not get cleaned or treated.

Sanitary sewers carry wastewater which eventually gets treated and cleaned at the wastewater treatment plant.
Some homes have septic tanks. Instead of going to the treatment plant the wastewater is held in a tank and the wastewater is slowly filtered back into the ground.
Examples of wastewater are:

- Toilets
- Baths & Showers
- Sinks
- Dishwashers
- Washing machines
Where does the storm sewer take the stormwater?
Storm sewers carry stormwater to places like streams, arroyos, ponds, and rivers.

If you live near the coast the stormwater will end up in the ocean.
The Rio Grande meets the Gulf of Mexico.
Much of the stormwater doesn’t travel through pipes. Most of the stormwater travels down hill along streets, canals and arroyos.
Rivers and ponds are home to many animals that are vulnerable to harmful pollutants that runoff our streets.

Can you name some of the animals that live in our watershed?
A healthy environment starts with clean water. Only rain should go in the storm drains.

Every animal is effected if the water is polluted.
In the summer when ponds and canals get enough stormwater the spadefoot toad will emerge from the ground and you can hear their calls.
What happens when we pollute the streets?
If we litter the streets the pollution often ends up in our storm drains and eventually finds its way to the river or other water bodies.
Besides trash what other kinds of pollutants harm our water?
Dirt

Oil and Grease

Pesticides

Yard Waste

Pet Waste

City of Las Cruces
People Helping People
To help reduce stormwater pollution the City cleans the streets and storm drains but this does not remove all of the pollutants.

Vactor Truck

Street Sweeper
What can people do to help stop stormwater pollution?
• Throw your trash in a garbage can.
• Pick up pet waste and dispose of it properly.
• Recycle
• Wash your car at a commercial wash
• Conserve water
Use the pet waste disposal bags provided at parks but always bring your own bags just in case.

Show some style, scoop up the pile.

Pick up pet waste
Guess what we found in the storm drain?

Please put waste in the right place.
If only dogs could pick up after themselves.
Recycle used oil, paint, pesticides and other hazardous chemicals.
WHEN YOU'RE WASHING YOUR CAR IN
THE DRIVEWAY, REMEMBER YOU'RE
NOT JUST WASHING YOUR CAR
IN THE DRIVEWAY.

Wash your car at a commercial car wash.
Stormwater - In the city

**Doing it right**
- Rain barrel: collect rainwater from rooftops
- Water reuse: use rainwater for gardens
- Wash your car in the driveway
- Sweep driveway dirt to lawn or garbage, not road

**Doing it wrong**
- Capillary use of fertilizers and pesticides
- Oil and gas from cars
- Excessive use of fertilizers
- Roof runoff directed to street drains

**Down the drain:** how bad stuff can get into the river

There is a widespread myth that water goes down storm drains and flows to water treatment plants. This is not true. Storm drains are only meant for rainwater and snowmelt. Many street drains flow through pipes straight to the river.