MS4-Specific articles from the Committee newsletters

Contents

[What is an MS4? 1](#_Toc176425781)

[Preventing Illicit Discharges 1](#_Toc176425782)

[Pathogens 2](#_Toc176425783)

[New Stormwater General Permit 2](#_Toc176425784)

[New Stormwater Management Plans (SWMP) 2](#_Toc176425785)

[Understanding Lawn Fertilizers and Their Impacts 3](#_Toc176425786)

[Geese 3](#_Toc176425787)

9/5/2024

# What is an MS4?

(Taken from Spring 2024 newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/dc3495549cc1/spring2024>)

An MS4, or Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System, is a system designed to collect and carry stormwater (rain and snowmelt). This stormwater picks up pollution, such as trash, oil, bacteria, and nitrogen, as it travels, but it is not cleaned before discharging directly into Manhasset Bay. This polluted stormwater then harms the Bay’s water quality, habitats, and wildlife. Our local governments (county, town, and villages) are considered “MS4 Operators,” because they are responsible for these systems.

MS4 PDF: <https://manhassetbayprotectioncommittee.org/PDF_PUBLIC/Important_Information/What%20is%20an%20MS4_FINAL.pdf>

# Preventing Illicit Discharges

(Taken from Spring 2024 newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/dc3495549cc1/spring2024>)

It is important to know our own roles in either polluting or protecting Manhasset Bay. According to EPA, federal regulations define an illicit discharge as “… any discharge to an MS4 that is not composed entirely of stormwater. . .” with a few exceptions (e.g., firefighting activities, lawn watering). These discharges are prohibited, because the MS4 system is not designed to remove this pollution before reaching waterbodies. This means nothing can go into a storm drain, including:

* grass clippings and leaves;
* dog waste;
* fertilizer; and,
* soap from washing your car.

Instead of dumping into a storm drain, leave grass clippings and leaves on the lawn, dispose of dog waste in your municipal trash, fertilize as little as possible, and wash your car on the grass or at a car wash. Otherwise, these pollutants reach Manhasset Bay and can degrade water quality, cause shellfish bed closures, impact recreation, and can lead to reduced home values among other impacts. If you see or suspect an illicit discharge, you can call the Town’s 311 call center (516-869-6311). For more information on how to make sure your role is one of protecting Manhasset Bay, visit our “Reduce Your Impact” page. [https://manhassetbayprotectioncommittee.org/reduce-your-impact.html

~~From EPA (Stormwater BMPs website): “It is important that the public be aware of the significance of their behavior and that their actions can either pollute or protect our waterways.”~~

# Pathogens

(Taken from Spring 2024 newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/dc3495549cc1/spring2024>)

The top pollutant of concern to Manhasset Bay is pathogens. Pathogens are disease-causing bacteria, viruses, and protozoa and there are multiple modes by which they end up in our environment. One major source of pathogens is failing cesspools and septic systems. If you have an aging cesspool or septic system, New York State and Nassau County have made funds available to help replace it with an advanced system. Information on that program and how to apply can be found at: <[https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/5191/Nassau-Septic](https://www.nassaucountyny.gov/5191/Nassau-Septic#search/septic+smart/_blank)>

Another source of pathogens is polluted stormwater runoff, which picks up animal waste as it travels towards Manhasset Bay. Waterfowl, such as geese and swans, congregate in multiple locations in and along Manhasset Bay and they are a major source of bacteria. There are some things you can do to curb bacteria from animal waste: do not feed waterfowl, allow grasses and other vegetation along waterways to grow higher to dissuade waterfowl from congregating, and support local geese control programs. It is also important to pick up after your pets and dispose of their waste in municipal garbage.

To learn more about nuisance geese and what can be done, visit our dedicated webpage [manhassetbayprotectioncommittee.org/geese.htm].

# New Stormwater General Permit

(Taken from Winter 2024 newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/ef838b809974/winter2024>)

Your local governments (county, town, and, if applicable, village) are all subject to the MS4 General Permit administered by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC). An MS4, or Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System, is a system designed to collect and carry stormwater using streets, catch basins, curbs, etc. This stormwater picks up pollution as it travels, but it is not cleaned before discharging into Manhasset Bay.

Under the Federal Clean Water Act, stormwater discharge must be addressed through the MS4 permit system, which is handled in New York by NYSDEC. The permit requires municipalities and other entities to implement measures to reduce stormwater pollution. The latest version of the permit became effective at the beginning of the year and is the most comprehensive yet, which may prove to be a burden for the municipal members. At the Committee meeting on March 21st, there will be a special presentation about the new permit and what it entails.

MS4 PDF: <https://manhassetbayprotectioncommittee.org/PDF_PUBLIC/Important_Information/What%20is%20an%20MS4_FINAL.pdf>

DEC MS4 page: <https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/water/water-quality/stormwater/ms4-permit-forms>

# New Stormwater Management Plans (SWMP)

(Taken from the Summer 2024 newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/76c161d111f2/summer2024>)

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation has released a new Stormwater Permit, mandating new measures, including ten new plans and programs, with 82 deadlines within the next five years. These regulations are put in place to minimize harmful discharges from the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) within the Manhasset Bay watershed. Each of the Committee’s 15 member municipalities must take on additional responsibilities to comply with the new MS4 regulations. This includes an update of each municipality’s Stormwater Management Plan (SWMP), which was due at the beginning of July. Each SWMP details the goals and actions of each municipality in reducing stormwater pollution. Take some time to review the SWMPs of your county, town, and, if applicable, village. More information on the new MS4 regulations can be found [here](https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/water/water-quality/stormwater/ms4-permit-forms).

<https://dec.ny.gov/environmental-protection/water/water-quality/stormwater/ms4-permit-forms>

# Understanding Lawn Fertilizers and Their Impacts

(Taken from the Summer 2024 newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/76c161d111f2/summer2024>)

Not all the fertilizer you place on your lawn stays there. Rainwater will pick some up and transport it elsewhere, perhaps even to Manhasset Bay. When nitrogen, a key component of fertilizer, is introduced into marine ecosystems, it causes algal blooms which lead to oxygen deficiency and other environmental degradation. To help prevent fertilizer runoff, use natural fertilizers, like lawn clippings, instead and keep your grass at least three inches (3”) tall. If you do need to fertilize, use it sparingly and check the forecast so as not to fertilize before a rainstorm. It is important to note that Nassau County bans the use of fertilizers between November 15th and April 1st. Nassau County further requires the use of a low nitrogen fertilizer for lawns. All fertilizer bags will have three numbers representing the percentage of (in order): nitrogen, phosphate, and potassium. Look for bags with no more than 12% nitrogen. To learn more, check out these websites:

<https://dec.ny.gov/nature/waterbodies/oceans-estuaries/linap/initiatives/fertilizer-management>

<https://www.savethesound.org/2019/03/25/your-lawns-big-impact-on-long-island-sound/>

<https://lirpc.org/our-work/long-island-nitrogen-action-plan/nitrogen-pledge/>

# Geese

(Taken from the Summer 2024 newsletter: <https://mailchi.mp/76c161d111f2/summer2024>)

Feeding geese in Manhasset Bay may seem tempting, but it can have serious detrimental effects. On average geese can produce 1.5 pounds of bacteria-laden feces per day and congregate in locations around Manhasset Bay creating bacteria hotspots. In addition, feeding geese human food can lead to overpopulation, vitamin deficiency, aggressiveness, nesting in dangerous areas, and increased erosion along Manhasset Bay. To prevent this, do not feed geese or other waterfowl, allow grass along waterways to grow tall as geese will move away to find shorter grass, and support local geese control programs.

To learn more about nuisance geese and what can be done, visit our dedicated webpage [manhassetbayprotectioncommittee.org/geese.htm].