

HABITAT IMPACTS FROM STORM WATER POLLUTION

Choose from the following words to fill in the blanks

(some of the words may be used more than once):

flow into	impermeable
habitat	pollution
sediment	filtering
water	runs off
streams	storm water
birds	wetlands
fish	bays
home	urban
migrating	recharge
animals	mixing
human	environments
nonpoint	

All living things need WATER, and storm water is one way habitats acquire water. Storm water can help RECHARGE wetlands and keep STREAMS flowing at a healthy level. However, as you already know, pollution can be a major problem in STORM WATER, especially storm water that RUNS OFF surfaces. If storm water carries pollution with it, it can have many harmful effects on plant and animals habitats. Storm water can also harm habitats if it

carries too much water with it. This can upset the delicate balance of nature.

Wetlands are important HABITATS for many reasons. They provide food and protection for MIGRATING birds, homes for many wildlife and fish species, and protection from floods. Wetlands are also able to increase water quality by FILTERING out many pollutants. However, WETLANDS have limits on how much POLLUTION they can absorb. If human impacts

such as stormwater carry too much pollution into a wetland, the entire habitat can change. This can eventually kill fish and plants, degrade the water quality, and destroy wildlife habitat.

STREAMS and rivers are another habitat that can be affected by storm water. Storm water can benefit streams by keeping streamflow levels healthy. Storm water can also harm streams if too many pollutants and sediments

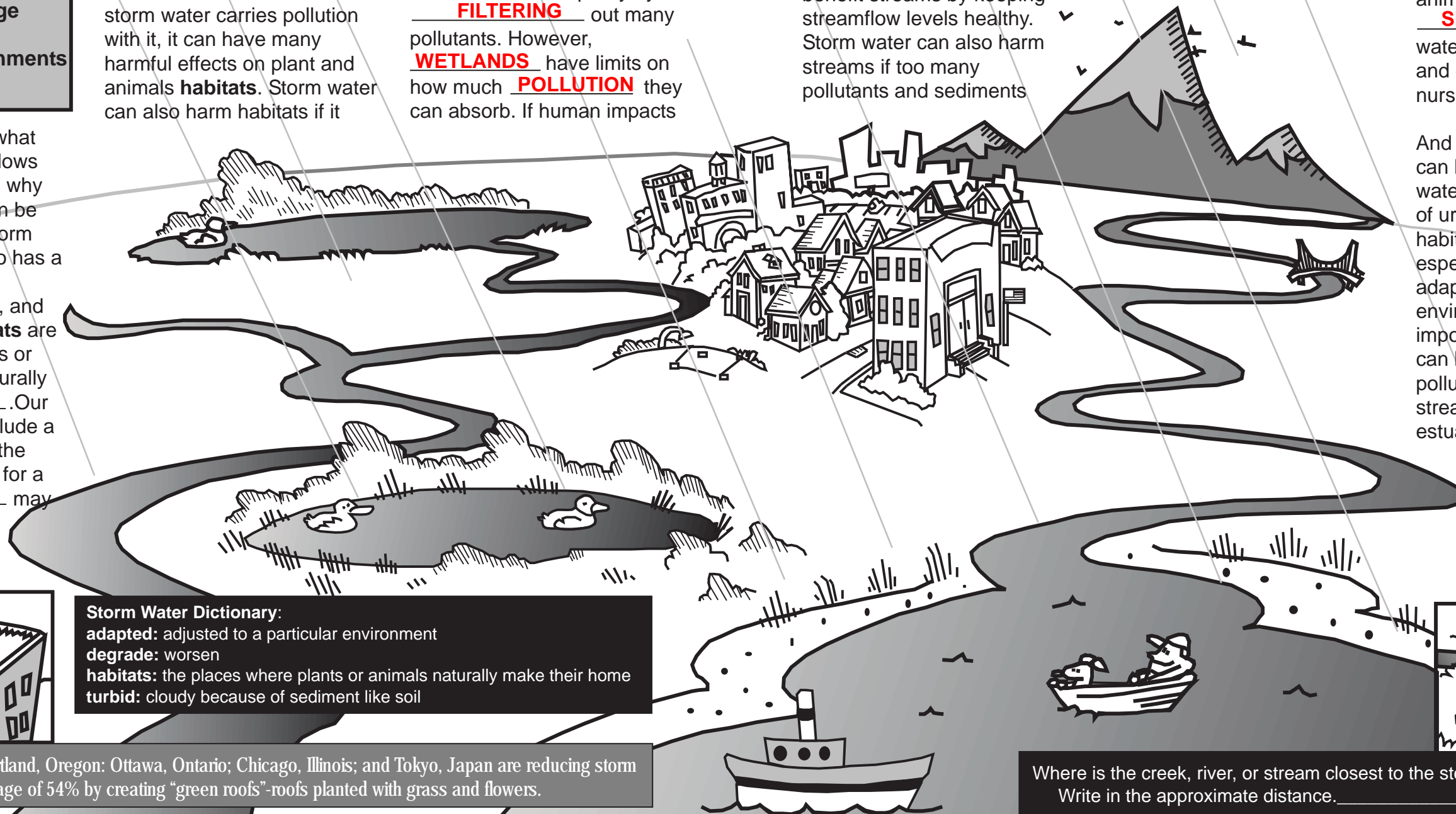
FLOW INTO the river. If this happens, the water can become turbid. This can prevent FISH and other organisms from receiving the sunlight they require.

SEDIMENT can cover fish spawning beds, clog fish gills, and slowly fill in our waterways.

Bays and estuaries can also be affected by STORM WATER. Bays and estuaries are known as MIXING zones, because they are located where fresh-water rivers meet salty oceans. There are many plants and animals that are adapted to this unique environment. If there is too much freshwater in bays or estuaries, the salinity can change, and the types of animals can be altered. Silt or SEDIMENTS from storm water can cover seagrass beds and disrupt important aquatic nursery areas.

And finally, our urban habitats can be affected by storm water. Most people don't think of urban areas as wildlife habitats, but many animals, especially BIRDS, are adapted to living in populated environments. Cities are also important for people, and we can be affected by storm water pollution, just like wetlands, streams, and BAYS and estuaries. Can you think of a way our HUMAN habitat can be damaged by storm water pollution?

So far you've learned what storm water is, how it flows and where it goes, and why POLLUTION can be such a problem with storm water. Storm water also has a big impact on habitats, including human, plant, and animal habitats. Habitats are the places where plants or ANIMALS naturally make their HOME. Our human habitat may include a house, school, and all the places in between, but for a duck, HABITAT may include a few acres of wetland.



Storm Water Dictionary:
 adapted: adjusted to a particular environment
 degrade: worsen
 habitats: the places where plants or animals naturally make their home
 turbid: cloudy because of sediment like soil



Cities as diverse as Portland, Oregon; Ottawa, Ontario; Chicago, Illinois; and Tokyo, Japan are reducing storm water runoff by an average of 54% by creating "green roofs"-roofs planted with grass and flowers.

Where is the creek, river, or stream closest to the storm drain you're observing? Write in the approximate distance.