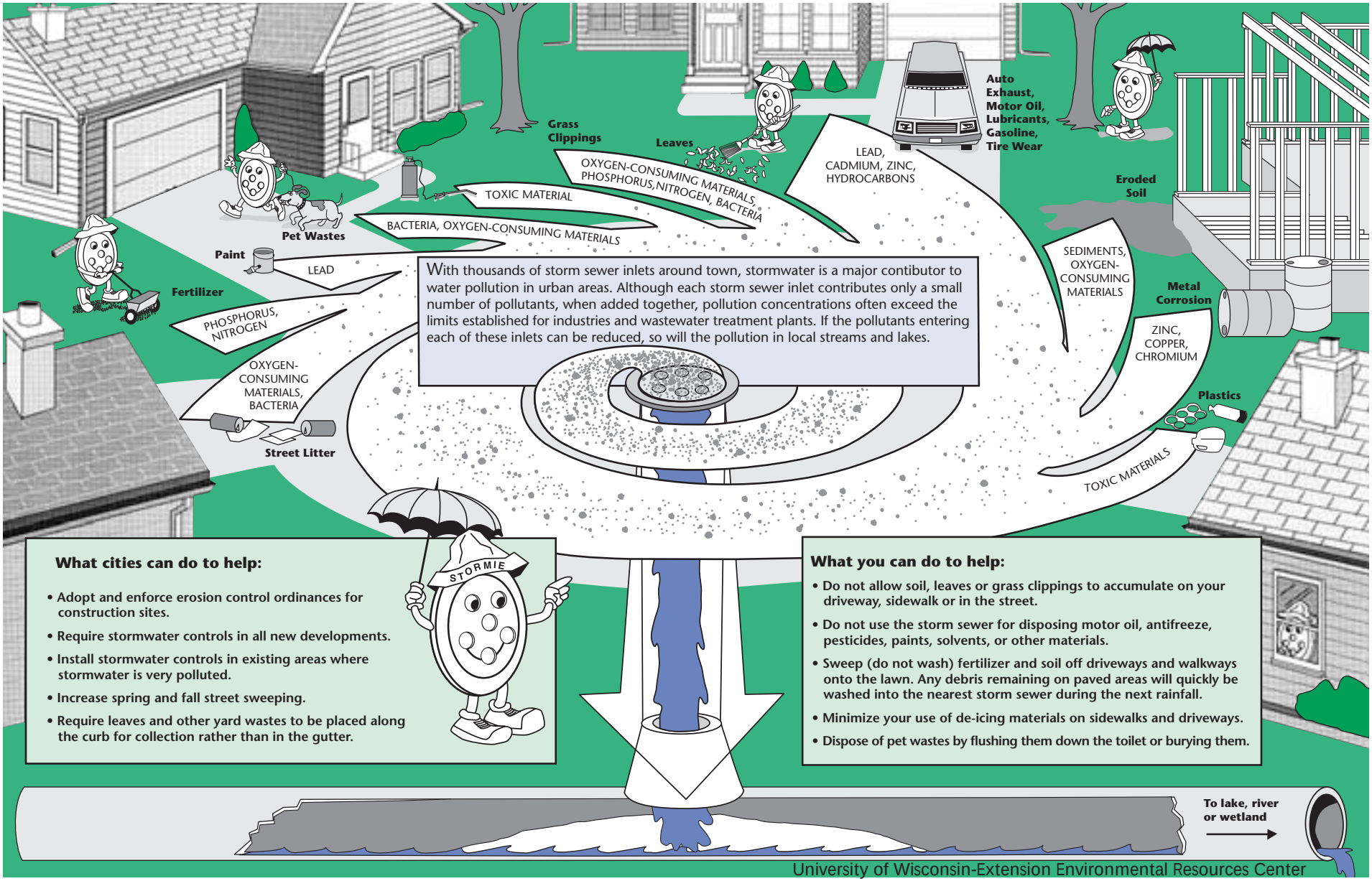



With thousands of storm sewer inlets around town, stormwater is a major contibutor to water pollution in urban areas. Although each storm sewer inlet contributes only a small number of pollutants, when added together, pollution concentrations often exceed the limits established for industries and wastewater treatment plants. If the pollutants entering each of these inlets can be reduced, so will the pollution in local streams and lakes.

**What cities can do to help:**

- Adopt and enforce erosion control ordinances for construction sites.
- Require stormwater controls in all new developments.
- Install stormwater controls in existing areas where stormwater is very polluted.
- Increase spring and fall street sweeping.
- Require leaves and other yard wastes to be placed along the curb for collection rather than in the gutter.

**What you can do to help:**

- Do not allow soil, leaves or grass clippings to accumulate on your driveway, sidewalk or in the street.
- Do not use the storm sewer for disposing motor oil, antifreeze, pesticides, paints, solvents, or other materials.
- Sweep (do not wash) fertilizer and soil off driveways and walkways onto the lawn. Any debris remaining on paved areas will quickly be washed into the nearest storm sewer during the next rainfall.
- Minimize your use of de-icing materials on sidewalks and driveways.
- Dispose of pet wastes by flushing them down the toilet or burying them.

University of Wisconsin-Extension Environmental Resources Center

# Storm Sewers
## The Rivers Beneath Our Feet

A SERIES OF WATER QUALITY FACT SHEETS ABOUT STORMWATER RUNOFF

If you look in the street outside of your home or office and search the parking lots around town, you will probably find storm sewer inlets. Did you ever wonder where they go?

A common misconception about storm sewers is that they go to a waste-water treatment plant. This is not the case. Storm sewers transport stormwater (rain and melting snow) to the nearest river, lake, stream or wetland.

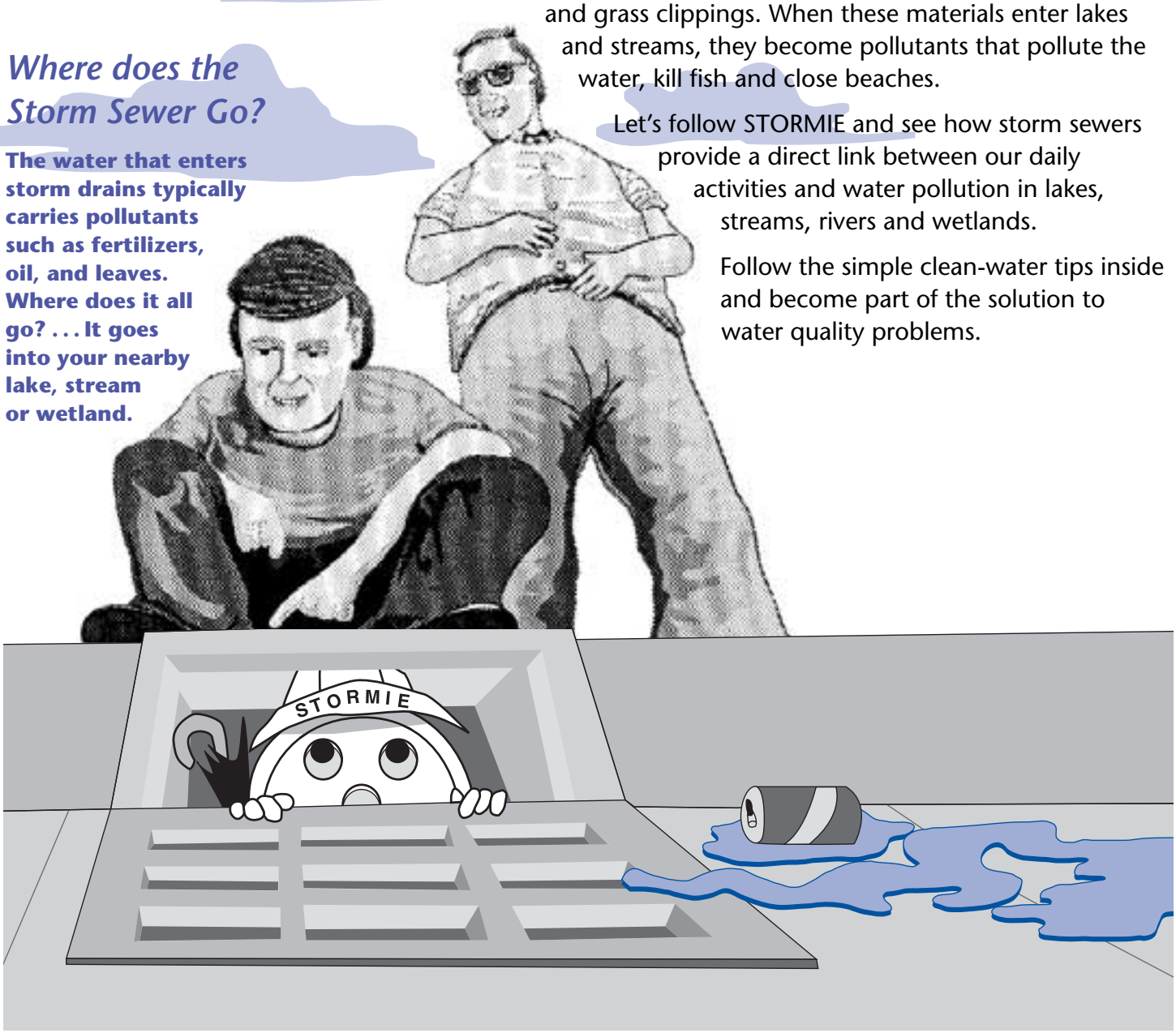
Stormwater often contains materials found on streets and parking lots such as oil, antifreeze, gasoline, soil, litter, pet wastes, fertilizers, pesticides, leaves and grass clippings. When these materials enter lakes and streams, they become pollutants that pollute the water, kill fish and close beaches.

Let's follow STORMIE and see how storm sewers provide a direct link between our daily activities and water pollution in lakes, streams, rivers and wetlands.

Follow the simple clean-water tips inside and become part of the solution to water quality problems.

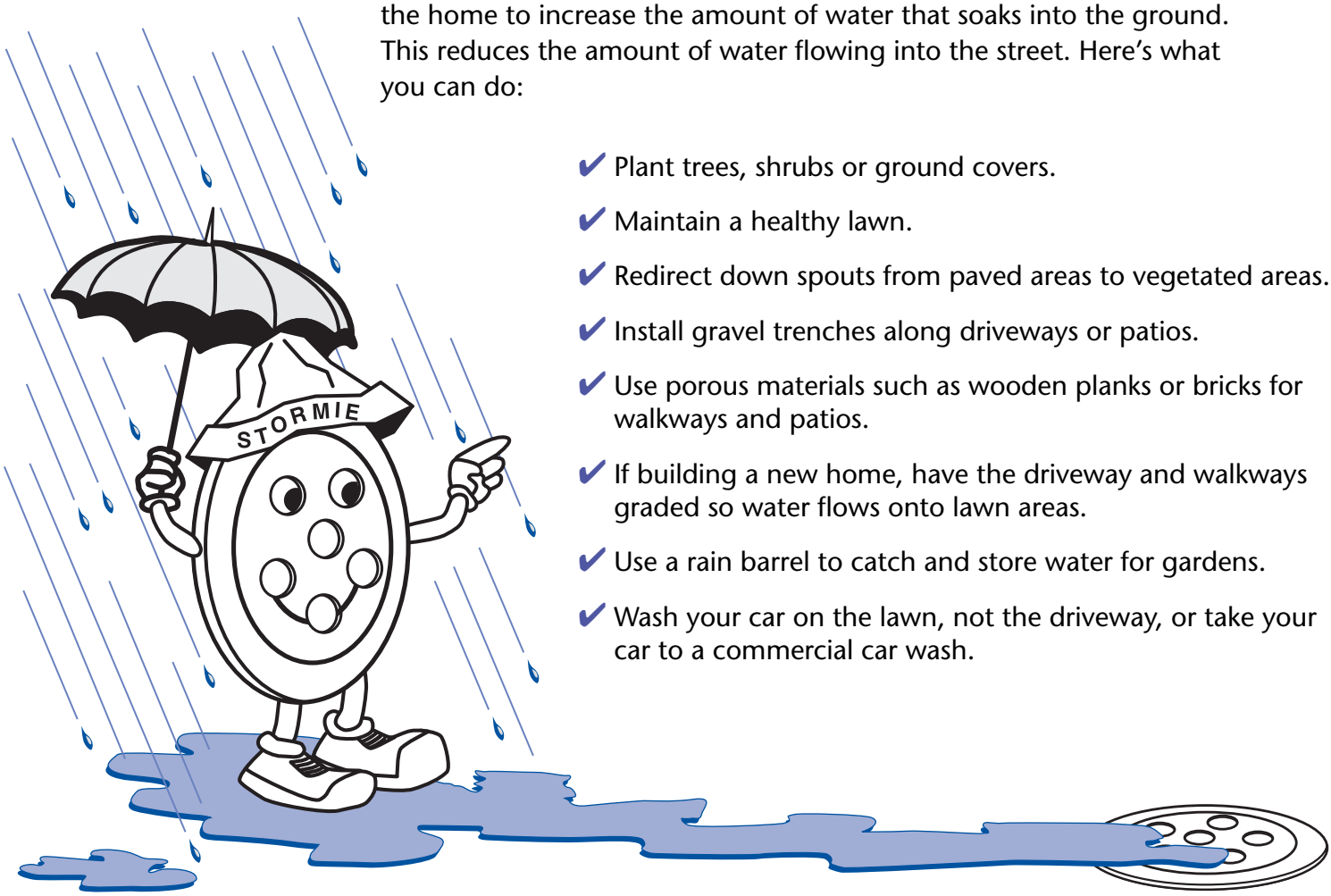
### *Where does the Storm Sewer Go?*

**The water that enters storm drains typically carries pollutants such as fertilizers, oil, and leaves. Where does it all go? . . . It goes into your nearby lake, stream or wetland.**



## CONTROLLING STORMWATER POLLUTION – WE CAN ALL HELP

According to federal regulations, many cities and industries must reduce water pollution from storm sewers. We can help by taking steps around the home to increase the amount of water that soaks into the ground. This reduces the amount of water flowing into the street. Here's what you can do:




- ✔ Plant trees, shrubs or ground covers.
- ✔ Maintain a healthy lawn.
- ✔ Redirect down spouts from paved areas to vegetated areas.
- ✔ Install gravel trenches along driveways or patios.
- ✔ Use porous materials such as wooden planks or bricks for walkways and patios.
- ✔ If building a new home, have the driveway and walkways graded so water flows onto lawn areas.
- ✔ Use a rain barrel to catch and store water for gardens.
- ✔ Wash your car on the lawn, not the driveway, or take your car to a commercial car wash.

For more information about stormwater pollution and what you can do to reduce it, contact the Deparment of Natural Resources or your county UW-Extension or Land Conservation office.

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