

Author: John Thompson

We in the Pacific Northwest receive a lot of rain ... I mean, a LOT of rain. Portland alone is blessed with 40+ inches of rain per year. And the rain, in turn, is what keeps things green. We are proud of our green, our watersheds and beautiful rivers. Rain falls on the land, flows to the streams, to the rivers and to the oceans. So what flows into the streams eventually ends up in the oceans.

Catch basins, the grated openings in streets, collect rainwater which can



drain into the streams and rivers. Much of the rainwater in Portland goes directly into streams and rivers carrying oil, dirt, fertilizers, pesticides and other pollutants from our yards and streets. It is hard to believe, but some people dump motor oil, paints, solvents and other pollutants down catch basins. Nothing but rain water should ever go into catch basins / storm drains. When the rain water becomes polluted, it harms fish and wildlife.

A community service project initiated by the City of Portland is that of installing permanent curb markers with the message "Dump No Waste" to remind people that storm drain catch basins are for rainwater only. This is a summer project (May to October) that Portland Surfrider has become involved with. The City of Portland's Bureau of Environmental Services supplies all the materials and instructions and Portland Surfrider supplies some of the volunteers. We are part of the equation ... private citizens, schools and service organizations also get involved.

Portland Surfrider volunteers choose a location to begin the marking. The City provides



G.I.S. maps of the area showing all of the catch basins in the area. The City also provides the plastic markers, adhesives, cleaning brushes and safety equipment (rubber gloves, safety vests, etc). The face of the curb is first scrubbed clean with a wire brush. As this is being done, another volunteer squeezes the adhesive onto the back of a plastic marker. The marker is applied to the cleaned curb and twisted and pressed to ensure a good bond. The catch

basin is checked off on the supplied map and informational hangers are placed on door knobs in the immediate area telling why this is being done ... and how they can make a difference in their own neighborhoods.

Many citizens do not realize Portland has this project. We believe it is important and Surfrider Foundation – Portland Chapter is hoping to spread the word. One of our members not living within the city limits of Portland has requested his own community adapt a similar program. Because of the state of the economy, most communities do not have the budget or manpower to place these markers

themselves... they rely on volunteers.

Other Surfrider Foundation chapters might consider approaching their own communities to see if similar programs are available and if not, possibly start them.

Surfrider Foundation – Portland Chapter conducts curb marking activities in the Portland area on the third Tuesday of each month. This is seasonal work, as the plaque cannot be applied in the rain. We usually begin in May and end in October. Check the Chapter's calendar at <http://www.surfrider.org/oregon/events.html> or attend a Portland Chapter meeting for more information.

To see some of the concerns and programs currently going on in the City of Portland go to:

<http://www.portlandonline.com/bes/index.cfm?>