Engineering
218-730-5200
411 West First Street | Duluth, Minnesota 55802
www.duluthmn.gov

2026 MS4 Stormwater Pollution Prevention Overview

What is an MS4?

MS4 stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System and is the network of stormwater drainage infrastructure that the City of Duluth owns and maintains to collect and convey stormwater runoff, which is runoff from rain and snow melt. Stormwater is typically conveyed through an MS4 directly into a receiving water. Receiving waters in the City of Duluth include Lake Superior, St. Louis Bay Estuary and many local streams, 16 of which are Trout Streams. Stormwater runoff is separate from Sanitary Sewer from households. Sanitary sewer flows are conveyed through a separate system to WLSSD for treatment.

Pollution Prevention

Pollution prevention practices are needed because stormwater runoff is largely untreated before flowing to receiving waters. The City of Duluth employs several methods to target pollution prevention through guidelines set by the MPCA in the City's MS4 Permit. These guidelines are broken into six (6) Minimum Control Measures (MCMs). The city performs, and partners with other agencies, on actions to prevent pollution along these guidelines.

City of Duluth MCMs

1. Public Education and Outreach

Each year the City of Duluth partners with local area agencies and authorities to distribute messages about pollution prevention in stormwater through a collaborative group named the Regional Stormwater Protection Team (RSPT). Some of these messages include a direct focus on smart salting to reduce impacts of the use of chlorides as a deicer, keeping leaf litter off the street and out of catch basins, and messages on picking up after pets to improve water quality. For more information visit – https://sites.google.com/view/rspt/home.

In 2026, RSPT and the City of Duluth focused on stormwater quality and native plant benefits. This included running many targeted public service announcements with local television stations and movie theaters to educate the public. The new Smart Salting PSA was developed in late winter 2026 which targets reduction in the use of chloride de-icers and increases stormwater quality. The PSA will run in local theaters throughout the 2026 and 2027 winter season. More information on these educational topics and videos can be found at. https://www.poopfairy.university/.

The City of Duluth is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

2. Public Participation/Involvement

The City of Duluth engages the community through events that help deliver a message about items that improve water quality. In the Fall of 2022, the City of Duluth began participating in the Adopt-a-Drain Program which is currently active throughout much of Minnesota and the United States. The City of Duluth asks residents to adopt a local storm drain of their choosing and work to keep the surrounding drainage area free of litter and debris that would otherwise wash into the storm drain, impacting our local water resources. In 2026, many classrooms at local schools have made the pledge to adopt a drain and protect local water resources, adding to the already growing group of Duluth residents making a difference. Currently, over 280 adopters have taken the pledge to keep nearly 600 drains clear of pollutants! For more information, and to sign up, please follow this link - https://mn.adopt-a-drain.org/ Additionally, City of Duluth Public Works and Utilities offers drop off locations for materials collected during drain clearing in the spring. In 2026, five drop-off locations were available around the city for around one month in the spring. This year Duluth residents dropped off almost 23 tons of materials, keeping them out of Lake Superior and our streams!

City stormwater staff also attended multiple community events and presented to a number of different student groups including elementary, middle and high school students, as well as college students within the city. Presentation and outreach content included stormwater pollution prevention, green infrastructure implementation, chloride pollution prevention and other stormwater management techniques.

The City of Duluth also welcomes comments or questions about the Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP). To discuss or comment on the SWPPP please contact Ryan Granlund at rgranlund@duluthmn.gov or 218-730-4088.

3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination (IDDE)

Illicit discharge is the discharge of pollutants into the City's storm sewer system or a receiving water. The City of Duluth conducts regular inspections and maintenance of storm sewer infrastructure in an effort to detect and eliminate any signs or sources of pollution. The City responds to all concerns of illicit discharge and follows up with cleaning and enforcement where necessary. Things to watch for are water coming from out of a manhole lid, odd odors or discolored water/discharges, and blatant dumping of materials that could runoff into public water through the storm system or otherwise. Any concerns of illicit discharge in the City of Duluth should be promptly reported by calling 218-730-4130 or submitting online at https://duluthmn.gov/public-works-utilities/utilities/stormwater/report-illicit-discharge/.

4. Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control

The City of Duluth requires an Erosion Control Permit for all construction activities that disturb more than 3,000 s.f. or is within a shoreland zone. The City conducts regular inspections of construction sites within its jurisdiction to ensure that measures are in place to minimize erosion and discharge of sediment and other

pollutants in stormwater runoff during construction activity. There are currently over 250 active Erosion Control permits in the city and staff have completed over 600 compliance inspections in 2026 alone. Additionally, all proposed construction sites undergo a review process with City staff to ensure that there are erosion control measures designed for each site. All construction site stormwater concerns can be directed to City of Duluth Engineering at 218-730-5200.

5. Post-Construction Stormwater Management

The City of Duluth's Unified Development Chapter contains stormwater management requirements for all new and redevelopment projects that create 3,000 sq.ft. or more of new impervious surface. These requirements are combined with the MPCA Construction Stormwater Activities Permit for development projects that exceed an acre of new impervious surface area. The City conducts plan reviews and approves the stormwater management plan for all projects prior to construction. The City of Duluth requires the installation of structural stormwater management practices that provide rate, volume, temperature and water quality controls for stormwater runoff from the proposed development. The City has developed the Private Stormwater BMP Inspection and Maintenance Program to ensure that stormwater management features on private, non-residential properties are providing stormwater management for the impervious surfaces they treat. 185 individual sites City wide have received notice of their participation in the program and nearly half have submitted their inspection reports for compliance review by City staff. This program helps maintain the effectiveness of stormwater management in place for the benefit of the entire community drainage system.

6. Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping

The City of Duluth practices pollution prevention through a variety of efforts in its typical municipal operations. The city owns and maintains nearly 200 stormwater runoff Best Management Practices (BMPs) that manage runoff through a variety of means including improving water quality, reducing rate of runoff and capturing pollutants. Many of these BMP's are cleared of sediment, trash and debris annually in an effort to protect our public waters. The city also maintains a large network of storm sewer infrastructure which reduces flooding risk throughout the City. Additionally, the City's Street Maintenance Staff is focused and committed on reducing the use of chlorides during winter maintenance through staff training, and acquisition of equipment and technology that will aid in that venture. Stormwater management is a daily part of most of the City's Divisions. This includes everything from maintenance of City parks, facility maintenance and ensuring vehicles and equipment are maintained and not leaking.

The city has been working to complete several new stormwater management projects in 2026. A few of the projects can be viewed on the City website at https://duluthmn.gov/public-works-utilities/stormwater/storm-utility-funded-projects/ . These are just a few of the current and recent projects completed and more will be added as time allows. Some projects of note are the Irving Park Bio-Filtration Basin, which began treating stormwater in 2026, as well as the Palm St Smart Pond. The Palm St Smart Pond will provide an additional 12 million gallons of stormwater storage during major flood events within the Brewery Creek watershed, which in

turn protects some of Duluth most flood impacts areas from increased risk of flooding. This project was partially funded from a 5-million-dollar Minnesota Pollution Control Agency grant, and is expected to be finished in early 2027.

The City has also been wrapping up sites for drainage improvements in the Lincoln Park neighborhood, which aim to reduce localized flooding and improve water quality. This work has also been partially funded by an MPCA grant for the implementation of stormwater resilience projects.

City stormwater staff have also been engaged with other City departments to accelerate the integration of stormwater treatment, including through the use of green infrastructure, into capital improvement projects.

For more information on other practices of pollution prevention contact Ryan Granlund at rgranlund@duluthmn.gov or 218-730-4088.