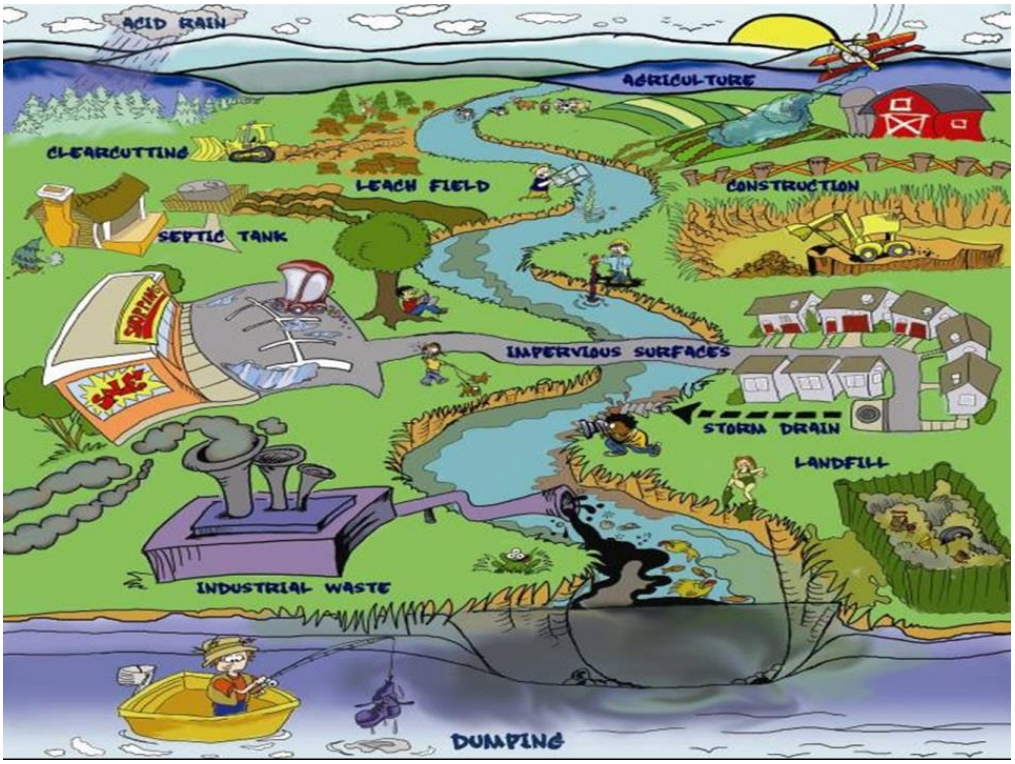
A Community Approach to Green Infrastructure for NH's Coastal Watershed

In natural landscapes like forests, wetlands, or fields, rainwater falling to the earth tends to quickly absorb into the ground and underlying soils. But when landscapes are developed - adding hard surfaces (called impervious cover) such as roads, sidewalks, buildings, and parking lots - rainwater is prevented from filtering into the ground and instead flows across these hard surfaces.

This unabsorbed water, called stormwater runoff, becomes polluted as it encounters pollutants that can cause substantial water quality problems when entering into waterways.

Research and monitoring clearly shows that in rapidly developing areas, greater amounts of impervious cover result in stormwater runoff that causes higher levels of water pollution. This can lead to significant financial costs to local communities. Green infrastructure can provide effective solutions to this problem by reducing the volume of stormwater runoff and filtering harmful pollutants from stormwater runoff.



[Image from http://www.henry4school.fr/Geography/water]

The Green Infrastructure project advocates a ***"complete community approach"*** for mitigating the negative effects associated with increasing impervious cover and stormwater runoff, thus minimizing impacts to water quality and protecting ecosystems and water resources.

The following measures outline a comprehensive strategy towards achieving the complete community approach:

- Adopt ordinances and regulations for new development that mandate the use of stormwater filtration to clean runoff and infiltration practices to reduce runoff.
- Require improved stormwater controls for reducing runoff for redevelopment projects or other significant construction and site improvements such as repaving or building renovations.
- Apply conservation strategies such as protecting naturally vegetated areas near water bodies and wetlands and limiting the size or percentage of allowable impervious cover in high value natural resource areas.
- Reduce existing impervious cover through targeted site improvements and stormwater management changes in high impact locations (i.e. locations that contribute high amounts of polluted runoff).
- Make a long-term commitment to fund and maintain stormwater controls along with an accounting mechanism to track long-term benefits of strategies. Consider innovative funding mechanisms such as impacts fees, exaction fees and stormwater utilities.
- Provide opportunities for outreach by sharing plans and progress with citizens and business owners through community newsletters, cable access, and on-site signs that explain what steps are being taken to protect waterways or improve stormwater management.