**Adopt a storm drain on your street to help protect rivers, lakes and wetlands**

In 2019, the Adopt-a-Drain program debuted across the seven-county metro area and Rochester. The program’s goal is to engage Minnesota residents in helping to prevent water pollution through small-scale volunteer action – just 15min at a time, and only twice a month. To date, nearly 10,000 storm drains have been adopted. Join the movement by signing up online - [www.adopt-a-drain.org](http://www.adopt-a-drain.org) - and volunteering to keep your nearest storm drain clear of litter, leaves, grass clippings and dirt that would otherwise pollute our waterways.

Storm drains help to protect neighborhoods against flooding, but they also flow to rivers, lakes, and wetlands, carrying debris off our streets and into the water. Most cities use street sweepers to help keep the streets clean, but these machines are expensive to operate and usually only run 2-4 times per year. Local residents can help do their part by spending a few minutes each month clearing their nearest storm drains and sweeping up leaves, dirt and garbage in the street in front of their homes.

To adopt a storm drain, go to www.Adopt-a-Drain.org and use the map to find your neighborhood storm drains. Then click and sign-up to adopt. To dispose of the waste you collect, separate it into three categories and place it in the appropriate receptacles: trash, recyclables (glass and plastic bottles, cans) and compostables (leaves and grass clippings). Sediment collected in the spring contains winter road salt and should be put in the trash. During the spring snow melt, you can also help to protect your street from flooding by clearing away snow and ice built-up around your storm drain so that the water can flow freely. When you’re done, go online to report your work so that local partners can measure our collective impact. So far, volunteers have reported collecting 145,908 pounds of refuse that would otherwise end up in our waterways.

Adopt a Drain was developed by Metro Watershed Partners, a coalition of more than 70 public, private, and non-profit organizations in the Twin Cities area that work together to inspire people to protect water quality in their communities. Partners also share stories of everyday Minnesotans taking action to protect water ([www.CleanwaterMN.org](http://www.CleanwaterMN.org)) and meet monthly to share resources and develop new skills.

According to Jana Larson, a staff member at Hamline University who’s played a lead role in developing Adopt-a-Drain, Minnesota’s program is the largest in the nation. Several other large cities are piloting similar programs – Houston, Oakland, New Orleans, Norfolk – but Minnesota’s is the only program that includes more than one city and, in typical Minnesota fashion, already has more volunteers signed up than in any other location. “People really become attached to their drains,” Larson laughs, “Many have even named them.”

To learn more about the program and adopt a drain in your neighborhood, visit [www.Adopt-a-Drain.org](http://www.Adopt-a-Drain.org).