



## PROTECTING CLEAN WATER TOGETHER

By Carol Hillestad for the Brodhead Watershed Association

### Talking dirt

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With some of the downpours we've had this summer, you may have noticed creeks and streams running muddy brown, looking like dark beer.

It's easy to think, "oh well, that'll clear up."

But it's not natural, or normal, for rain — even quite a lot of rain — to erode enough soil into a creek to make it run muddy.

The cause is usually stormwater that hasn't had a chance to seep into the soil slowly, the natural way. Instead, at building sites and acres of paved and roofed-over warehouses and super

centers, water that has nowhere to go scours its way to the nearest creek. Dirt, debris, and sheer volume of concentrated water beat up and erode the banks.

You're right that, to our eyes, it eventually clears up — when the sediments suspended in the water eventually sink and lay down a blanket of silt.

In the meantime, the cloudiness in the water can clog the gills of fish and the guts of filter-feeders like fresh-water mussels. Sediment blanketing the natural bottom of gravel and stones prevents trout from reproducing, smothers fish eggs, and kills insect larvae and fresh water crustaceans. Muddy water also holds heat, endangering cold water fish. And it can carry chemical contaminants that compound the risks.

To trout, bugs, and aquatic plants, mud can be a deadly menace.

If you care to, you can help. When you see mud streaming from a construction site, let your township or borough officials know. Or call the Monroe County Conservation District to speak to a specialist. If you live where detention basins and swales are used to control stormwater runoff, don't assume someone else is making sure they are kept clear and open — check them out yourself. Clogged swales and outlet pipes make for big trouble downstream.

Find out more at <https://extension.psu.edu/stormwater-basics>

**Be Alert for Dirty Dirt!** When you get an offer of free, "clean fill," delivered and maybe even spread for you, your scam-alert antennae should go up. Ask questions! What is the name of the professional who certified the soils are clean? Can you see the documentation of the soil sampling at the site the fill is coming from? Is there a PA-DEP Certification of Origin of Clean Fill? That "free" fill could be hot fill — contaminated, and dangerous. More information at <https://www.mcconservation.org/clean-fill.html>



Messing in mud is fun for kids — but in creeks and streams, mud is a menace.