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Tidy Tadpole lives in a nice little stream near the new subdivision off of the main road. Lately, Tidy Tadpole frets, "Where is my stormwater?" His stream has been drying up. Luckily, there is a stage five hurricane coming up the coast that will provide the stream with new stormwater runoff.

However, Tidy Tadpole has a problem: stormwater pollution! The natural land area near his stream has been reduced by the new construction. In the past, the stormwater runoff was filtered through all of the natural land near his stream. However, the approaching storm will produce stormwater runoff that will be polluted and Tidy Tadpole will be negatively affected. Tidy Tadpole will soon drink and swim in water full of pollutants. Oh no, could this be the end of Tidy Tadpole?!

This story is imaginary but Tidy Tadpole's situation could be real. Stormwater pollution negatively affects drinking water and recreational areas. Contaminants that may be collected in source water before it is treated include: dirt, fertilizer, pesticides, gas, metals, yard clippings, animal feces, litter, and motor oil. These contaminants can make humans sick, damage aquatic ecosystems, increase cost of water treatment, and reduce availability of clean water.

The stormwater was not always polluted. Before the new subdivision was built, surrounding land protected Tidy Tadpole's stream by providing soil and vegetation as a natural filter for the stormwater runoff. Stormwater runoff is rainfall that does not soak into the ground but flows into surface waters like lakes, streams, rivers, and ponds. With building new roads and subdivisions in addition to other human activities, contaminants seep into surrounding ecosystems and water travels over the surface of the land dissolving naturally occurring minerals and picking up the contaminants.

Humans can reduce pollution through business, individual and community created contaminant control procedures. For example, when building a new subdivision, construction workers can place barriers to prevent construction litter from going down drains. Construction companies can install landscape barriers to provide filtering for stormwater runoff.

Similarly, homeowners can perform procedures to reduce pollution such as sweeping instead of hosing off dirty areas, never dumping waste down storm drains, washing cars at the car wash, checking cars for leaks and recycling car fluids. Homeowners can properly dispose of yard waste by bagging, mulching or composting, use less yard chemicals, and choose low-maintenance plants to provide filtering for runoff. They can also dispose of pet waste in the garbage.

Community leaders can help, too. They can create guidelines for controlled growth. Guidelines can reduce the amount of asphalt and concrete in driveways. This would make

less stormwater runoff. In addition, leaders can educate the public about the dangers of pollution.

The imaginary Tidy Tadpole story does not have a permanent ending. Humans can create a positive or negative ending to the story. Humans can create a favorable ending with business, individual, and community initiatives. Through careful planning, thoughtful work habits, and environmentally responsible actions, humans can have less polluted stormwater and a cleaner environment.