

## **GEHR Watershed Minute #8**

### **Urbanization Impacts: (192 words)**

Urbanization, or heavy development, changes how water flows in the watershed and what flows into the water. Both surface and ground water flow are changed.

As a watershed becomes developed, trees, shrubs and other plants are replaced with roads, rooftops, parking lots and other hard surfaces that do not allow stormwater to soak into the ground. Without the plants to store and slow the flow of stormwater, the rate of stormwater runoff is increased and less stormwater soaks into the ground.

This leads to more flooding after storms and reduced flow in streams and rivers during dry periods. The reduced amount of infiltrating water can lower ground water levels, which in turn can stress local waterways that depend on steadier flows of water. And the increased runoff also contains greater amounts of contaminants like litter, cigarette butts and other debris and pollution from sidewalks and streets.

In the stream, erosion of stream banks and scouring of channels will occur due to volume increases. This degrades habitat for plant and animal life that depend on clean water. Sediment from eroded stream banks clogs the gills of fish and blocks light needed for plants.