

Healthy Watersheds Begin



In Our Ravines

Healthy watersheds lead to healthy communities. There are many simple, low-cost techniques that individuals can use to improve the health of their watershed.

Bluffs and ravines are important natural resources in areas throughout Illinois. Bluffs and ravines erosion and loss of vegetation impacts the entire watershed.

A good place to start protecting our bluffs and ravines are by controlling stormwater runoff and soil erosion. Stormwater is the rain or snow that falls to the earth and flows over the land (runs off), also viewed as the precipitation that does not soak into the ground. Stormwater flows into the storm drains or runs off down the ravine. Soil erosion is a natural process that causes a gradual wearing away of soil by water and wind. Erosion can cause slumping, surface runoff, soil deposits, and if left unconstrained, potential major property and building damage.

To manage stormwater runoff :

- ✓ Decrease the amount of runoff by minimizing paved and other hard surfaces. Use gravel or paving stones for driveway paths or patios.
- ✓ Detain runoff by using swales, berms, and other devices to help surface runoff slow down with curves, gravel trenches, and low areas. Avoid straight ditches heading directly for the ravine or bluff.
- ✓ Redirect rain gutters and other runoff to vegetated areas on your property or install rain barrels or rain gardens.

- ✓ Never run a drainage pipe to the edge of your ravine or bluff.

To manage erosion:

- ✓ Limit the amount of bare soil. Minimize exposed soil and disturbance of ground cover.
- ✓ Provide the least possible disruption of an area's natural features.
- ✓ Plant deep rooted native vegetation to reduce erosion damage caused by surface runoff.
- ✓ Protect new seeded areas with control blankets, mulches, and/or landscaping fabrics to help retain soil until plants are established.
- ✓ Install silt fences and/or haybales to catch soil during construction. During the construction period after a rainfall inspect site for any erosion problems.
- ✓ Protect new seeded areas with control blankets, mulches, and/or landscape fabrics to help retain soil until plants are established.
- ✓ Remove lawn waste and other debris from the ravine or bluff. Sunlight cannot penetrate waste- thus damaging vegetation and destroying habitat. Leaves and grass clippings also allow bacterial, oxygen consuming materials, phosphorus, and nitrogen to be released into our waterway.

It's Your Ravine and
You Can Make a Difference!!

For more healthy watershed ideas, contact your local University of Illinois Extension office or visit the Illinois Watershed Management Clearinghouse web site at www.watershed.uiuc.edu