

# PLANNING A CAR WASH FUNDRAISER

## WASH THE RIGHT WAY

## COMMERCIAL CAR WASH

**C**ar wash fundraisers are a popular means of raising money for worthwhile causes. However, wastewater from car washes, if not properly managed, can negatively impact our local creeks and coastal waters.



*Runoff from car washing harms aquatic life*

**F**undraiser car washes are not illegal, however discharges of wastewater and other pollutants to the storm drain system are prohibited by state and local laws.

**F**ollowing these guidelines will help reduce pollution impacts on local waterways and help your organization comply with municipal regulations.



*Anything that enters storm drains flows to our waterways untreated*

**W**ash cars on grass, gravel or other permeable surfaces to help filter and absorb pollutants.



*Cover storm drains*

**I**f the car wash must be held on a paved surface, block off nearby storm drains and divert water to a grassy or vegetated area.

**M**inimize water use by using a spray nozzle with an automatic shut off; turn off water when not in use.



**U**se detergents sparingly or not at all.

**A**void washing the engines, transmissions, or undercarriages.



*Two bucket method*

**U**se buckets to wash and rinse; empty buckets into sinks, toilets, or onto landscapes.

**T**ry products that do not require the use of water.

**E**xplain the proper procedures to all participants.



*Waterless car washing*

**A**s an alternative to holding your own car wash, consider scheduling a fundraiser in cooperation with a commercial car wash facility where wastewater is collected and treated. Commercial car washes also use up to 60% less water with high-pressure nozzles and recirculating systems.



*Wastewater from commercial car washes is treated*

**PROJECT  
CLEAN WATER**  
County of Santa Barbara

**FOR MORE INFORMATION:**

**(805) 568-3440**

**[www.sbprojectcleanwater.org](http://www.sbprojectcleanwater.org)**

**To report water pollution:**

**(877) OUR-OCEAN**



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# WHY THE CONCERN OVER A CAR WASH?

Unlike the water we use in our homes, which is treated at wastewater treatment plants, the water that goes into storm drains flows directly into our creeks and oceans without any treatment.



*Arroyo Burro Beach*

Wastewater from car washes carries dirt, grease, detergents, heavy metals and other pollutants along paved surfaces into the storm drain system. From there it flows untreated into our creeks and coastal waters.

In addition, even “biodegradable” soaps or detergents harm fish and invertebrates that provide food for fish. They also contain phosphorous which can cause excess algae to grow. As algae decay the process uses up oxygen in the water that fish and other aquatic life need to survive.



*Cachuma Lake*



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*Water Quality Guidelines for*

# CAR WASH FUNDRAISERS

*How to Plan a Successful Event While  
Protecting Local Creeks and Coastal Waters*