

River Quest 2017

City of Duluth - Utility Operations

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Question: What is the difference between a storm sewer and sanitary sewer?

The City of Duluth has two separate sewer systems.

- **Storm sewers** carry snow melt and rainwater runoff from streets, buildings, lawns and parking lots. The water flows into catch basins; then it flows through underground **storm sewers** and culverts to the nearest creek, stream, river, or Lake Superior. Storm water runoff is not treated or cleaned before it enters our waterways.
- **Sanitary sewers** carry wastewater away from our homes and businesses; the water is used in sinks, showers, laundry and toilets. This wastewater flows through the **sanitary sewer** system to a wastewater treatment facility, where the water is treated (cleaned) before it is put back into the environment.



Sanitary and Storm Sewer Systems



Storm Sewer - Catch Basin

Vocabulary words:

Storm sewer - A sewer that carries snow melt and rainwater from streets, lawns and parking lots to the nearest creek, stream, river or lake without treatment

Sanitary sewer - A sewer that carries dirty wastewater from inside a home or building to a treatment facility for cleaning.

Runoff - Rainwater or snow melt that collects on the ground and flows off the land

Wastewater - Dirty water from sinks, showers, laundry and toilets that flows into the sanitary sewer and eventually to wastewater treatment facility or plant

Catch basin - A grate in the street (usually along the curb) that collects stormwater runoff

Culvert - A drain pipe that allows water to flow under a road, driveway, trail, or obstruction

Treatment facility - A wastewater treatment plant (WLSSD) or a septic system that is used to clean or treat wastewater so it can be discharged back to the environment