

## River Quest 2018

### 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. This stormwater flows off the roads into catch basins or ditches; then it flows through underground **storm sewers** and culverts to the nearest creek, stream, river, or Lake Superior. Stormwater 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, bath tubs, laundry and toilets. This wastewater flows through the **sanitary sewer** system to a wastewater treatment facility, where the water is treated (cleaned) before it's discharged 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