COMBINED SEWER OVERFLOWS—

HOW DOES YOUR ROOF FIT INTO THE PICTURE?

CSO

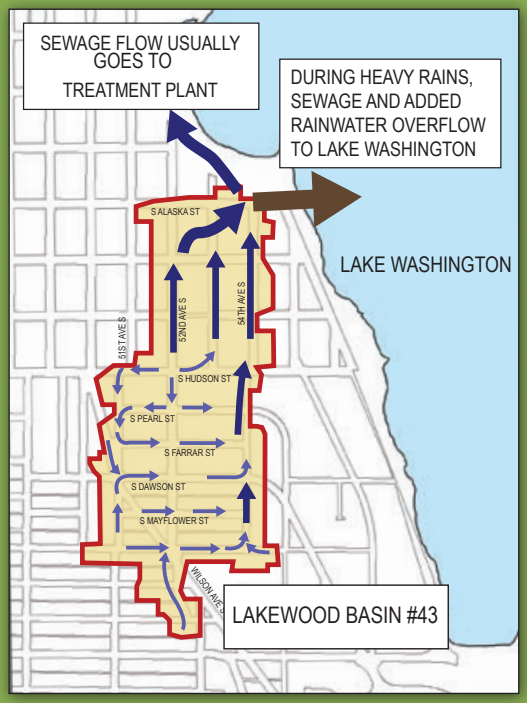
For more information contact:

Miranda Maupin
(206) 386-9133
miranda.maupin@seattle.gov

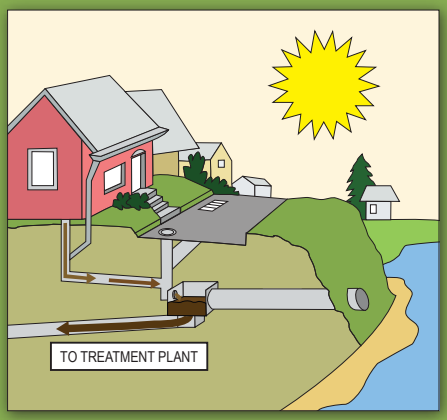
Seattle Public Utilities

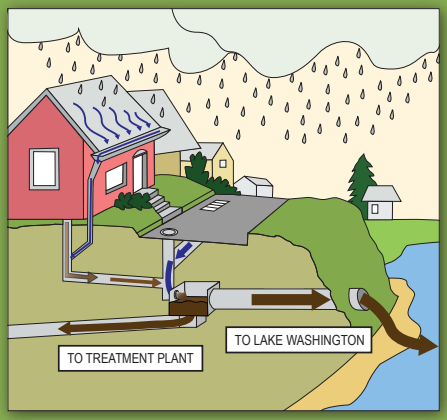
700 5th Ave., Ste 4900
PO Box 34018
Seattle, WA 98124-4018

What are Combined Sewer Overflows?



Most roof downspouts in your neighborhood are connected to the combined sewer system, which carries both sewage and rainwater to the wastewater treatment plant. But during heavy rains, the rainwater and sewage can exceed the capacity of the combined sewer, causing it to overflow into Lake Washington. These Combined Sewer Overflows, or CSOs, may present a danger to fish, wildlife and swimmers in the area.

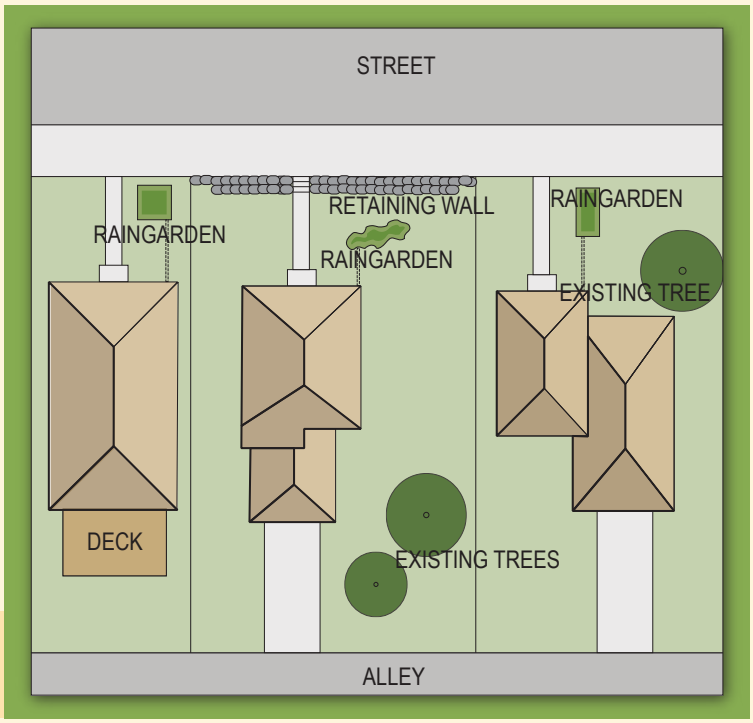




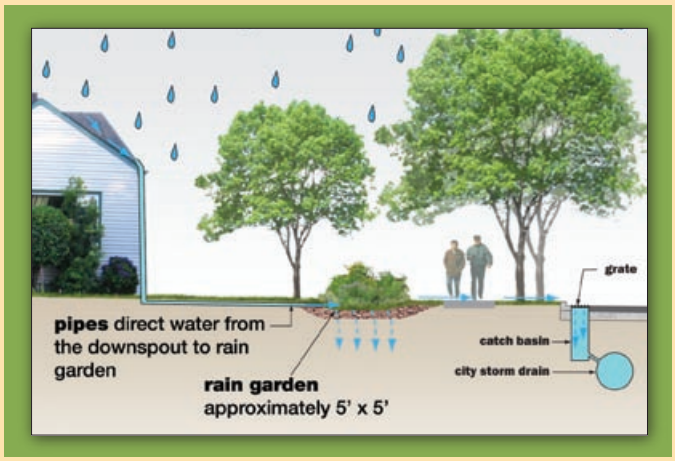
How can we solve the problem?

One way to solve the CSO problem is to increase the size of underground pipes and storage. This is a viable method, but it can be costly and disruptive.

By redirecting roof downspouts into a rain garden or cistern, less storm water goes into the combined sewer. If enough homes participate, all of that roof water would go into the neighborhood's rain gardens and cisterns instead of contributing to CSOs.



Rain gardens come in all shapes and sizes and can be designed to fit your landscape.



A rain garden lets water safely soak into the ground

A cistern can be discreetly placed next to your house

What's a Rain Garden?

A rain garden is a shallow area about 6 inches deep and 5'x5' wide planted with flowers, ferns or grass. The garden collects the water from the roof downspout and allows it to safely soak into the ground. While the shape and placement of a rain garden can be unique to each yard, rain gardens can be a low-maintenance addition to almost any landscape.

What's a Cistern?

A cistern is another option for collecting roof water. During the summer, cisterns can store water for use in the garden. During the winter, the cistern stores and slowly releases water back into the sewer system to reduce the risk of causing a CSO. Cisterns come in many shapes and sizes, but a typical residential cistern is about 4 feet in diameter and 6 feet high and holds 500 gallons of water. Usually they can be located in the utility area on the side of a house or under a deck.

What do you think?

Seattle Public Utilities has received grant funding to offer rain gardens and cisterns to residents in your neighborhood and find out if they help reduce CSOs.

SPU would provide to each participant:

- A rain garden with choices about location and plants, and/or
- A cistern with choices about location, and
- Materials, installation and/or guidance as needed

This program could be available as early as next spring.

We want to design a program with you in mind, so we are hoping to hear your thoughts and preferences. On behalf of SPU, Gilmore Research will be calling you and your neighbors in the next few weeks to ask you some questions about this proposal.

We hope you'll take the time to share your opinions, and if you do, please keep this brochure near the phone so that you can refer to it during the call.

A rain garden can be planted with ferns, flowers, grasses, or lawn.