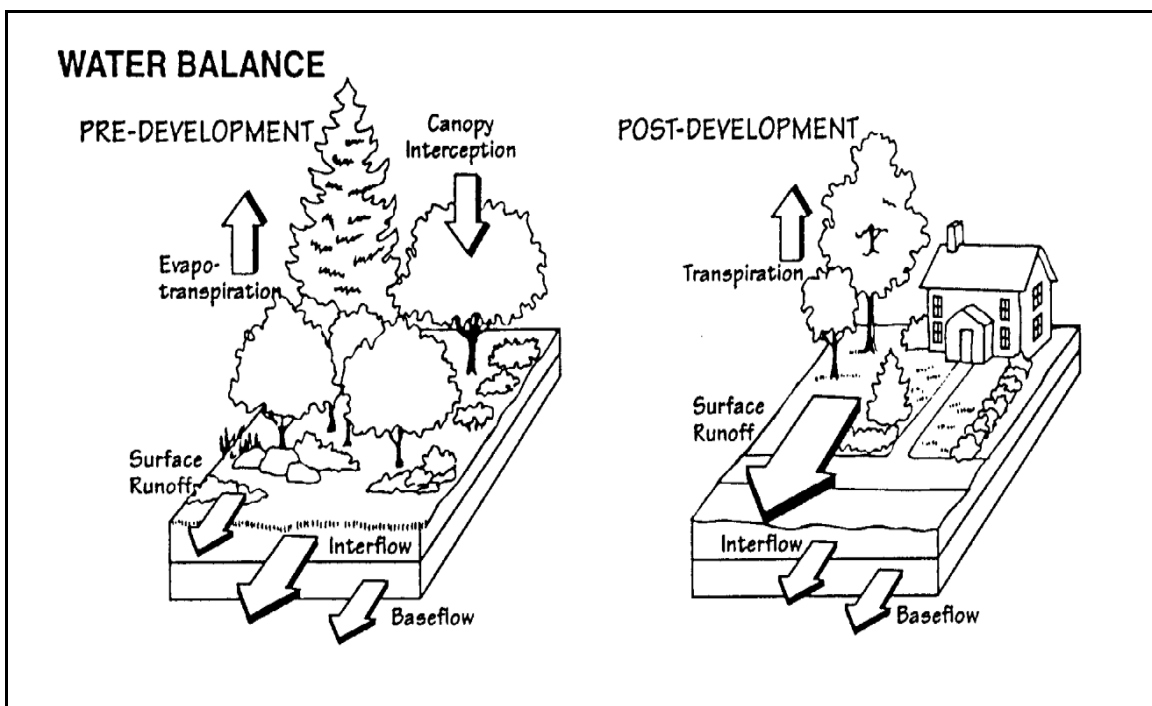


Urban development has a profound influence on the quality of New York's waters. To start, development dramatically alters the local hydrologic cycle (see Figure 2.1). The hydrology of a site changes during the initial clearing and grading that occur during construction. Trees that had intercepted rainfall are removed, and natural depressions that had temporarily ponded water are graded to a uniform slope. The spongy humus layer of the forest floor that had absorbed rainfall is scraped off, eroded or severely compacted. Having lost its natural storage capacity, a cleared and graded site can no longer prevent rainfall from being rapidly converted into stormwater runoff.

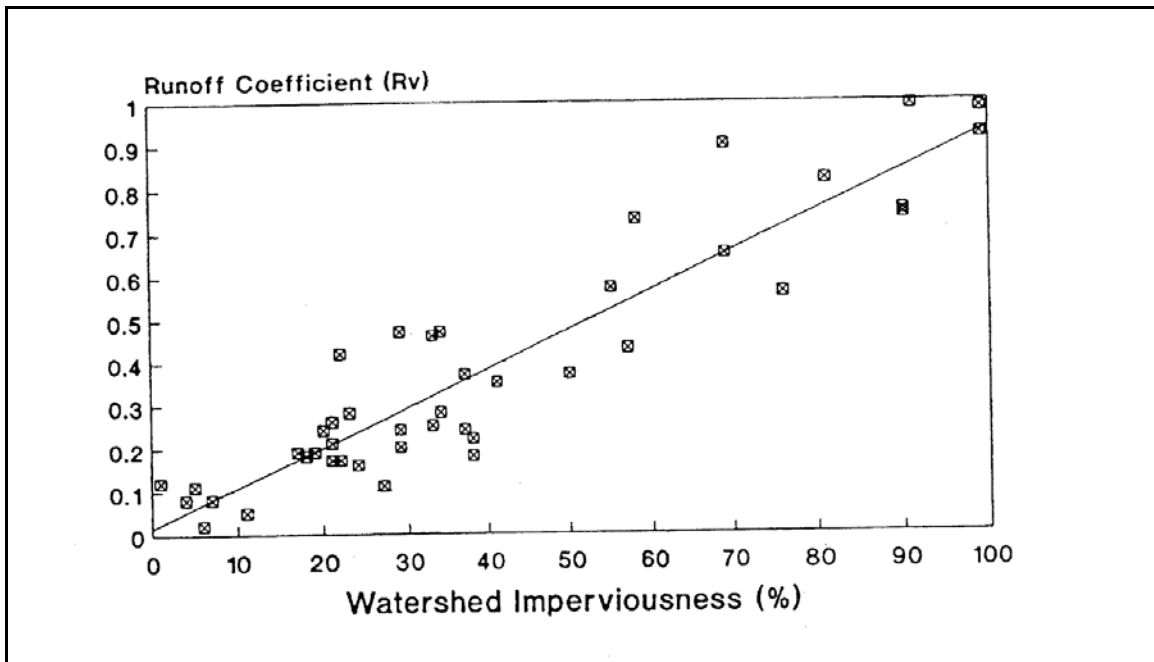
Figure 2.1 Water Balance at a Developed and Undeveloped Site (Schueler, 1987)



The situation worsens after construction. Rooftops, roads, parking lots, driveways and other impervious surfaces no longer allow rainfall to soak into the ground. Consequently, most rainfall is directly converted into stormwater runoff. This phenomenon is illustrated in Figure 2.2, which shows the increase in the volumetric runoff coefficient (R_v) as a function of site imperviousness. The runoff coefficient expresses the fraction of rainfall volume that is converted into stormwater runoff. As can be seen, the volume of stormwater runoff increases sharply with impervious cover. For example, a one-acre parking lot can produce 16 times more stormwater runoff than a one-acre meadow each year (Schueler, 1994).

The increase in stormwater runoff can be too much for the existing drainage system to handle. As a result, the drainage system is often “improved” to rapidly collect runoff and quickly convey it away (using curb and gutter, enclosed storm sewers, and lined channels). The stormwater runoff is subsequently discharged to downstream waters, such as streams, reservoirs, lakes or estuaries.

Figure 2.2 Relationship Between Impervious Cover and Runoff Coefficient (Schueler, 1987)



Section 2.1 Declining Water Quality

Impervious surfaces accumulate pollutants deposited from the atmosphere, leaked from vehicles, or windblown in from adjacent areas. During storm events, these pollutants quickly wash off, and are rapidly delivered to downstream waters. Some common pollutants found in urban stormwater runoff are profiled in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 National Median Concentrations for Chemical Constituents in Stormwater		
Constituent	Units	Concentration
Total Suspended Solids ¹	mg/l	54.5
Total Phosphorus ¹	mg/l	0.26
Soluble Phosphorus ¹	mg/l	0.10
Total Nitrogen ¹	mg/l	2.00
Total Kjeldhal Nitrogen ¹	mg/l	1.47
Nitrite and Nitrate ¹	mg/l	0.53
Copper ¹	ug/l	11.1
Lead ¹	ug/l	50.7
Zinc ¹	ug/l	129
BOD ¹	mg/l	11.5
COD ¹	mg/l	44.7
Organic Carbon ²	mg/l	11.9
PAH ³	mg/l	3.5*
Oil and Grease ⁴	mg/l	3.0*
Fecal Coliform ⁵	col/100 ml	15,000*
Fecal Strep ⁵	col/100 ml	35,400*
Chloride (snowmelt) ⁶	mg/l	116
<p>* Represents a Mean Value Source: 1: Pooled NURP/USGS (Smullen and Cave, 1998) 2: Derived from the National Pollutant Removal Database (Winer, 2000) 3: Rabanal and Grizzard 1995 4: Crunkilton <i>et al.</i> (1996) 5: Schueler (1999) 6: Oberts 1994</p>		

Sediment (Suspended Solids)

Sources of sediment include washoff of particles that are deposited on impervious surfaces and erosion from streambanks and construction sites. Streambank erosion is a particularly important source of sediment, and some studies suggest that streambank erosion accounts for up to 70% of the sediment load in urban watersheds (Trimble, 1997).

Both suspended and deposited sediments can have adverse effects on aquatic life in streams, lakes and estuaries. Turbidity resulting from sediment can reduce light penetration for submerged aquatic vegetation critical to estuary health. In addition, the reflected energy from light reflecting off of suspended sediment can increase water temperatures (Kundell and Rasmussen, 1995). Sediment can physically alter habitat by destroying the riffle-pool structure in stream systems, and smothering benthic organisms such as clams and mussels. Finally, sediment transports many other pollutants to the water resource.

Nutrients

Runoff from developed land has elevated concentrations of both phosphorus and nitrogen, which can enrich streams, lakes, reservoirs and estuaries. This process is known as eutrophication. Significant sources of nitrogen and phosphorus include fertilizer, atmospheric deposition, animal waste, organic matter, and stream bank erosion. Another nitrogen source is fossil fuel combustion from automobiles, power plants and industry. Data from the upper Midwest suggest that lawns are a significant contributor, with concentrations as much as four times higher than other land uses, such as streets, rooftops, or driveways (Steuer *et al.*, 1997; Waschbusch *et al.*, 2000; Bannerman *et al.*, 1993).

Nutrients are of particular concern in lakes and estuaries, and are a source of degradation in many of New York's waters. Nitrogen has contributed to hypoxia in the Long Island Sound, and is a key pollutant of concern in the New York Harbor and the Peconic Estuary. Phosphorus in runoff has impacted the quality of a number of New York natural lakes, including the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain, which are susceptible to eutrophication from phosphorus loading. Phosphorus has been identified as a key parameter in the New York City Reservoir system. The New York City DEP recently developed water quality guidance values for phosphorus for City drinking water reservoirs (NYC DEP, 1999); a source-water phosphorus guidance value of 15 µg/l has been proposed for seven reservoirs (Kensico, Rondout, Ashokan, West Branch, New Croton, Croton Falls, and Cross River) in order to protect them from use-impairment due to eutrophication, with other reservoirs using the State recommended guidance value of 20 µg/l.

Organic Carbon

Organic matter, washed from impervious surfaces during storms, can present a problem in slower moving downstream waters. Some sources include organic material blown onto the street surface, and attached to sediment from stream banks, or from bare soil. In addition, organic carbon is formed indirectly from algal growth within systems with high nutrient loads.

As organic matter decomposes, it can deplete dissolved oxygen in lakes and tidal waters. Declining levels of oxygen in the water can have an adverse impact on aquatic life. An additional concern is the formation of trihalomethane (THM), a carcinogenic disinfection by-product, due to the mixing of chlorine with water high in organic carbon. This is of particular importance in unfiltered water supplies, such as the New York City Reservoir System.

Bacteria

Bacteria levels in stormwater runoff routinely exceed public health standards for water contact recreation. Some stormwater sources include pet waste and urban wildlife. Other sources in developed land include sanitary and combined sewer overflows, wastewater, and illicit connections to the storm drain system. Bacteria is a leading contaminant in many of New York's waters, and has led to shellfish bed closures in the New York Bight Area, on Long Island, and in the Hudson-Raritan Estuary. In addition, Suffolk, Nassau, and Erie Counties issue periodic bathing-beach advisories each time a significant rainfall event occurs (NRDC, 2000).

Hydrocarbons

Vehicles leak oil and grease that contain a wide array of hydrocarbon compounds, some of which can be toxic to aquatic life at low concentrations. Sources are automotive, and some areas that produce runoff with high runoff concentrations include gas stations, commuter parking lots, convenience stores, residential parking areas, and streets (Schueler, 1994).

Trace Metals

Cadmium, copper, lead and zinc are routinely found in stormwater runoff. Many of the sources are automotive. For example, one study suggests that 50% of the copper in Santa Clara, CA comes from brake pads (Woodward-Clyde, 1992). Other sources of metals include paints, road salts, and galvanized pipes.

These metals can be toxic to aquatic life at certain concentrations, and can also accumulate in the bottom sediments of lakes and estuaries. Specific concerns in aquatic systems include bioaccumulations in fish and macro-invertebrates, and the impact of toxic bottom sediments on bottom-dwelling species.

Pesticides

A modest number of currently used and recently banned insecticides and herbicides have been detected in urban and suburban streamflow at concentrations that approach or exceed toxicity thresholds for aquatic life. Key sources of pesticides include application to urban lawns and highway median and shoulder areas.

Chlorides

Salts that are applied to roads and parking lots in the winter months appear in stormwater runoff and meltwater at much higher concentrations than many freshwater organisms can tolerate. One study of four Adirondack streams found severe impacts to macroinvertebrate species attributed to chlorides (Demers and Sage, 1990). In addition to the direct toxic effects, chlorides can impact lake systems by altering their mixing cycle. In 1986, incomplete mixing in the Irondequoit Bay was attributed to high salt use in the region (MCEMC, 1987). A primary source of chlorides in New York State, particularly in the State's northern regions, is salt applied to road surfaces as a deicer.

Thermal Impacts.

Runoff from impervious surfaces may increase temperature in receiving waters, adversely impacting aquatic organisms that require cold and cool water conditions (e.g., trout). Data suggest that increasing development can increase stream temperatures by between five and twelve degrees Fahrenheit, and that the increase is related to the level of impervious cover in the drainage area (Galli, 1991). Thermal impacts are a serious concern in trout waters, where cold temperatures are critical to species survival.

Trash and Debris

Considerable quantities of trash and debris are washed through the storm drain networks. The trash and debris accumulate in streams and lakes and detract from their natural beauty. Depending on the type of trash, this material may also lead to increased organic matter or toxic contaminants in water bodies.

Snowmelt Concentrations

The snow pack can store hydrocarbons, oil and grease, chlorides, sediment, and nutrients. In cold regions, the pollutant load during snowmelt can be significant, and chemical traits of snowmelt change over the

course of the melt event. Oberts (1994) studied this phenomenon, and describes four types of snowmelt runoff (Table 2.2). Oberts and others have reported that 90% of the hydrocarbon load from snowmelt occurs during the last 10% of the event. From a practical standpoint, the high hydrocarbon loads experienced toward the end of the season suggest that stormwater management practices should be designed to capture as much of the snowmelt event as possible.

Table 2.2 Runoff and Pollutant Characteristics of Snowmelt Stages (Oberts, 1994)			
Snowmelt Stage	Duration/Frequency	Runoff Volume	Pollutant Characteristics
Pavement Melt	Short, but many times in winter	Low	Acidic, high concentrations of soluble pollutants, Cl, nitrate, lead. Total load is minimal.
Roadside Melt	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate concentrations of both soluble and particulate pollutants.
Pervious Area Melt	Gradual, often most at end of season	High	Dilute concentrations of soluble pollutants, moderate to high concentrations of particulate pollutants, depending on flow.
Rain-on-Snow Melt	Short	Extreme	High concentrations of particulate pollutants, moderate to high concentrations of soluble pollutants. High total load.

Section 2.2 Diminishing Groundwater Recharge and Quality

The slow infiltration of rainfall through the soil layer is essential for replenishing groundwater. Groundwater is a critical water resource across the State. Not only do many residents depend on groundwater for their drinking water, but the health of many aquatic systems is also dependent on its steady discharge. For example, during periods of dry weather, groundwater sustains flows in streams and helps to maintain the hydrology of non-tidal wetlands.

Because development creates impervious surfaces that prevent natural recharge, a net decrease in groundwater recharge rates can be expected in urban watersheds. Thus, during prolonged periods of dry weather, streamflow sharply diminishes. Another source of diminishing baseflow is well drawdowns as populations increase in the watershed. In smaller headwater streams, the decline in stream flow can cause a perennial stream to become seasonally dry. One study in Long Island suggests that the supply of

baseflow decreased in some developing watersheds, particularly where the water supply was sewered (Spinello and Simmons, 1992; Figure 2.3).

Urban land uses and activities can also degrade *groundwater quality*, if stormwater runoff is infiltrated without adequate treatment. Certain land uses and activities are known to produce higher loads of metals and toxic chemicals and are designated as *stormwater hotspots*. Soluble pollutants, such as chloride, nitrate, copper, dissolved solids and some polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH's) can migrate into groundwater and potentially contaminate wells. Stormwater runoff from designated hotspots should never be infiltrated, unless the runoff receives full pretreatment with another practice.

Figure 2.3 Declining Baseflow in Response to Development

