IMPORTANT STORM SEASON TERMS

Acre-Feet: Used to express volume of storage. One Acre-Foot is equal to one acre times a one-foot depth or 43,560 cubic feet (325,850 gallons).

Basin: The area of land that a river drains. This is used to determine how much water will enter a river after rainfall.

Capacity: The measure of water capable of flowing through a channel, measured in cubic feet per second (CFS). Also the measure of how much water a stormwater detention facility holds, usually measured in acre-feet (AC-FT).

Catch Basin: A chamber or well, usually built at the curb line of a street, for the admission of surface water to a storm sewer or sub-drain.

CFS/C.F.S.: The measuring unit of cubic feet per second (C.F.S.), which is used to quantify the amount of flow in a wash. A cubic foot is equivalent to 7.5 gallons of water. Thus, 1 C.F.S. is 7.5 gallons of water passing by you every second.

Channel: An open conveyance of surface storm water having a bottom and sides in a linear configuration. Channels can be natural or man-made. Channels have levees or dikes along their sides to build up their depth. Constructed channels can be plain earth, landscaped, or lined with concrete, stone, or any other hard surface to resist erosion and scour.

Crib Dam: A barrier or form of gravity dam constructed of timber forming bays, boxes, cribs, crossed timbers, gabions or cells that are filled with earth, stone or heavy material.

Culvert: A hydraulically short conduit that conveys surface water runoff through a roadway embankment or through some other type of flow obstruction.

Debris Basin: A deep depression constructed in a stream bed on the outwash fan, essentially for intercepting detritus material (mud, rocks, sediment and/or vegetation). Typically located at the mouths of canyons, debris basins capture the sediment, gravel, boulders, and vegetative debris that are washed out of the canyons during storms. Debris basins capture this material and allow water to flow into the downstream storm drain system, thereby protecting drainage systems in the lower-lying areas of the watershed.

Drainage Area: The area (acres, square miles, etc.) from which water is carried off by a drainage system.

Drainage Basin: That portion of the surface of the earth which is drained by a river and its tributaries, or which is occupied by a permanent body of water (lake, pond, reservoir) and all of its tributaries. Alternatively, a geographical area which contributes surface water runoff to a particular point. The terms “drainage basin,” “tributary area,” and “watershed” can be used interchangeably.

Flood: A flood is commonly interpreted as the temporary overflow of lands not normally covered by water, but which are used or usable by man when not inundated.

Flood Control: Various activities and regulations that help reduce or prevent damages caused by flooding. Typical flood control activities include: structural flood control works (such as bank stabilization, levees, and drainage channels), acquisition of floodprone land, flood insurance programs and studies, river and basin management plans, public education programs, and flood warning and emergency preparedness activities.

K-Rail: A type of concrete barricade used esp. as a highway divider to protect each side from traffic crossing over. Public Works crews use K-Rail to help channel rainwater and mud away from homes and into streets where the material can be easily removed.

Outlet Structure: A hydraulic structure placed at the outlet of a channel, spillway, pipe, etc., for the purpose of dissipating energy and providing a transition to the channel or pipe downstream.

Runoff: Surface water resulting from rainfall or snowmelt that flows overland to streams, usually measured in acre-feet. Volume of runoff is frequently given in terms of inches of depth over the drainage area. One inch of runoff from one square mile equals 53.33 acre-feet.

Sediment: Soil particles, sand, and minerals washed from the land into aquatic systems as a result of natural and human activities.

Spillway: An outlet pipe or channel serving to discharge water from a dam, ditch, gutter, or basin.

Trashrack: A metal bar or grate located at the outlet structure of a detention or retention basin which is designed to prevent blockage of the structure by debris.

Tributary: A stream that contributes its water to another stream or body of water.

Watercourse: Any minor or major lake, river, creek, stream, wash, arroyo, channel or other topographic feature on or over which waters flow at least periodically. Watercourse includes specifically designated areas in which substantial flood damage may occur.

Watershed: An area from which water drains into a lake, stream or other body of water. A watershed is also often referred to as a basin, with the basin boundary defined by a high ridge or divide, and with a lake or river located at a lower point.