

# BE PART OF THE SOLUTION TO STORMWATER POLLUTION

by Mayor Carol Shafto

As part of the Alpena City Council's Visioning Process, committees were formed around the five priority areas of the plan. Among these is the committee to Preserve, Protect and Promote (P<sup>3</sup>) Alpena's Natural Resources. This committee has about a dozen members led by Mayor Carol Shafto and Councilman Sam Eiler representing the City Council and Jeff Shea and Mike Glowinski representing City staff. The committee decided to undertake a hands-on project rather than "just plan". The project chosen was a storm drain marking effort. The City has approximately 1,000 storm drains and it was decided to pilot the project by marking 250 drains in 2010. The purpose is to educate the public to the fact that anything placed in the storm drain goes directly to either Lake Huron or the Thunder Bay River. Each time it rains, water washes over our streets, driveways, and yards picking up pollutants along the way and flowing into our storm drains. This runoff may contain pollutants such as motor oil, yard clippings, pet waste, litter, lawn chemicals, antifreeze, or other toxins which can pollute our water supply as well as clog pipes and culverts which can lead to flooding. This is known as "Non-Point Source Pollution" and is the largest threat to our waterways today. Many people mistakenly believe that effluent from the storm drains go to the wastewater treatment plant before it goes into the lake or river. Instead, whatever enters the drain is discharged directly, untreated into local waterways!

Colorful blue and green circular markers were placed near the storm drain with an adhesive. The markers will last approximately five years. For the 2010 pilot, the project was funded entirely by United Water. Teens from the Alpena Boys and Girls Club Youth Volunteer Corps working in six teams led by an adult volunteer placed the markers on Saturday October 9<sup>th</sup>. The effort will continue in 2011 with the hope of completing the entire project during the year. Also as part of the program, a hang tag was placed on the doors of homes near the storm drain with information about stormwater pollution and the practices that lead to this contamination. People in the neighborhood were asked to "adopt a storm drain" by keeping it free of leaves and other debris. **YOU CAN HELP** by following these stormwater pollution preventive measures:

- Properly dispose of hazardous waste and recycle used motor oil;
- Use fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides sparingly and follow manufacturer's instructions;
- Keep yard waste, trash, and dirt off the street and out of the gutters;
- Clean up after your pets;
- Wash your car at a car wash facility or park your car in the grass before you wash it;
- Spread the word about protecting our waterways from polluted runoff.

