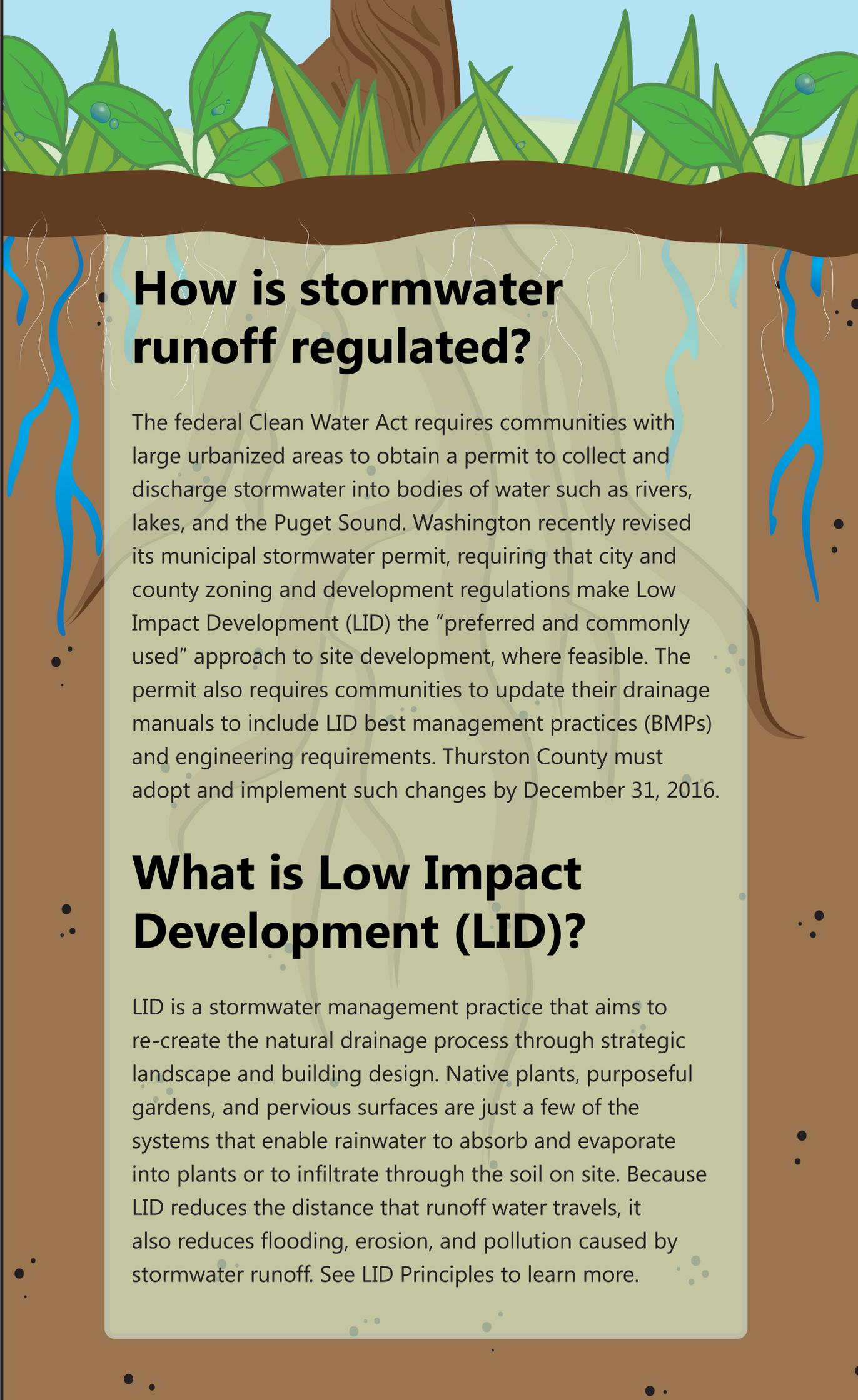


Why Do We Need Stormwater Management?

Stormwater Management protects our bodies of water and aquatic habitats through programs that reduce flooding, erosion, and pollution caused by stormwater runoff.

When native vegetation is replaced with impervious surfaces like roads, parking lots, and buildings, rainwater has to travel farther to be absorbed by plants or infiltrate down into the soil. The farther the runoff travels, the more pollutants it picks up along the way. Contaminants like oil, antifreeze, animal waste, and fertilizers get channeled into our streams, lakes, rivers, and bays.

Early stormwater management approaches focused on reducing local flooding risk by sending runoff into streams and Puget Sound — ultimately degrading water quality with pollutants. Subsequent approaches, such as building treatment ponds for subdivisions and shopping centers, have reduced but not eliminated polluted runoff. Low Impact Development (LID) offers a more distributed approach, using small rain gardens, swales, pervious pavements, native plants and other tools to filter stormwater on site.



How is stormwater runoff regulated?

The federal Clean Water Act requires communities with large urbanized areas to obtain a permit to collect and discharge stormwater into bodies of water such as rivers, lakes, and the Puget Sound. Washington recently revised its municipal stormwater permit, requiring that city and county zoning and development regulations make Low Impact Development (LID) the “preferred and commonly used” approach to site development, where feasible. The permit also requires communities to update their drainage manuals to include LID best management practices (BMPs) and engineering requirements. Thurston County must adopt and implement such changes by December 31, 2016.

What is Low Impact Development (LID)?

LID is a stormwater management practice that aims to re-create the natural drainage process through strategic landscape and building design. Native plants, purposeful gardens, and pervious surfaces are just a few of the systems that enable rainwater to absorb and evaporate into plants or to infiltrate through the soil on site. Because LID reduces the distance that runoff water travels, it also reduces flooding, erosion, and pollution caused by stormwater runoff. See LID Principles to learn more.