

City of Albany
Stormwater Management Program & Stormwater Utility User Fee
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Stormwater Runoff? Stormwater runoff is rainfall that drains off rooftops, driveways, sidewalks, parking lots, roads, compacted soil, gravel, and other surfaces that prohibit the infiltration of rainfall into the ground. The stormwater runoff then flows into the City drainage system and into our local streams/creeks and eventually into the Flint River. All developed properties in the City contribute stormwater runoff to the drainage system and, in some cases, to recurring drainage problems. In addition to flooding problems, stormwater runoff washes chemicals, debris, trash and other pollutants into the drainage system and our local surface waters. The discharge of these pollutants to local waterways can result in adverse impacts to the environment.

What is the City of Albany's responsibility for managing the impacts of stormwater runoff? The City of Albany is responsible for the management and regulation of both the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff within the City. The City must undertake various activities including the cleaning of ditches and pipe systems; replacement of aging culverts and drainage structures; and construction of new culvert systems to increase or improve conveyance capacity. Expanding stormwater regulations from the State and Federal government, combined with aging infrastructure and lack of resources to implement priority capital drainage projects, have driven the City's need to develop and implement a more comprehensive stormwater management program (SWMP). Although the State and Federal government has imposed these environmental regulations on the City, there has not been any corresponding funding from these agencies to assist the City with meeting its requirements. As such, these regulations are essentially an unfunded regulatory mandate that the City must address.

How is the City of Albany proposing to address expanding SWMP needs? The City of has adopted a Stormwater Utility User Fee that will be dedicated solely to addressing stormwater management and drainage issues. The stormwater user fee will provide the resources necessary for the City to improve delivery of stormwater services to residents, businesses, institutional and government facilities.

What is a Stormwater Utility User Fee? A stormwater utility user fee is a charge for stormwater management services provided by the City to all developed residential and non-residential properties in the City. Under the plan proposed, the stormwater user fee revenue collected will be dedicated to provision of stormwater management services to customers.

How do you calculate a Stormwater Utility User Fee charge for an individual property and utility customer account? The Stormwater Utility User Fee charge is based on the amount of **impervious and/or semi-impervious surfaces** on a parcel and its land use. Impervious and semi-impervious surface means those areas which prevent or impede the natural infiltration of rainfall and stormwater runoff. Common impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, rooftops, buildings or structures,

sidewalks, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, storage areas, awnings and other fabric or plastic coverings. Common semi-impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, gravel parking lots, compacted soils, gravel railroad yards, and pervious concrete areas. The square footage of impervious and semi-impervious surface on a property has a direct correlation to the amount of stormwater runoff discharged from that property. Developed parcels with greater amounts of impervious and semi-impervious area contribute more storm water runoff to the drainage system and place a larger impact on the City's drainage system and SWMP, and will therefore be charged a higher user fee.

Are gravel and compacted soil charged at the same rate as other types of impervious surfaces? No, gravel and compacted soil are identified as semi-impervious areas and will be charged at a reduced rate of 85% to account for the minor amount of superficial infiltration that can occur. This reduction factor of 85% is based on the hydrologic characteristics of these types of materials as compared to undeveloped conditions.

How is my stormwater user fee calculated? The stormwater user fee is based on a billing unit of 2,700 square feet of impervious surface. The billing unit of 2,700 square feet is the approximate average impervious area on a typical single family residential parcel. Most single family residential (SFR) properties will be charged 1.0 billing unit per month. All non-single family residential (NSFR) properties will be charged a custom user fee charge based on the total impervious area calculated as increments of 2,700 square feet. For example, if a commercial site had 27,000 square feet of impervious surface, that customer would be charged 10 billing units per month.

$$27,000 \text{ square feet of impervious surface} / 2,700 \text{ sq ft} = 10 \text{ billing units}$$

How much will customers be charged per billing unit? The stormwater user fee rate is \$3.00 per billing unit per month.

What will the average residential customer pay? A single-family residential customer will be charged one (1.0) billing unit, or \$3.00 per month for stormwater services.

Why did the City decide to implement a Stormwater Utility User Fee charge? The City has evaluated its SWMP service delivery needs and concluded that additional resources were needed. The City has evaluated the feasibility of charging a stormwater user fee as opposed to increasing property tax millage, and has determined that the user fee approach is more fair and equitable to allocate costs as opposed to increasing ad-valorem taxes to fund SWMP services. The user fee is not based on the assessed "value" of a property like ad-valorem taxes, rather it is based on each customer's demand that they impose on the drainage system and the corresponding SWMP services provided by the City. This user fee approach is very similar to water, sewer, gas and sanitation in that it is a fee for a particular service. An additional benefit of a stormwater user fee is that all stormwater user fee revenues are spent on stormwater management and drainage related issues whereas ad-valorem tax revenues are typically not subject to such restrictions. Although the user fee appears to be a new

charge to residents and businesses for stormwater services, SWMP costs have always existed and were previously funded through a portion of the City's Sanitary Sewer Base rate and General Fund allocations; albeit at an insufficient funding level.

Is there any way to reduce my Stormwater User Fee that is being charged? Yes, both residential and non-residential customers may be eligible for credits to reduce their stormwater user fee charge by following the procedures outlined in the City's Stormwater Utility User Fee Credit Manual. The credits are based on specific activities that the customer undertakes with regard to this property and customer account to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff on the City's drainage system and SWMP. The Credit Manual is available at the City of Albany Engineering Department or online on the City's stormwater webpage at <http://www.albany.ga.us/content/1798/2879/2953/184703/default.aspx>.

What will be the billing frequency and the billing mechanism? The stormwater user fee charge will be billed on each customer's existing monthly utility bill. If you do not currently receive a Water, Gas & Light utility bill, you will begin to receive a stormwater only bill beginning in April 2014.

Who do I call if I have additional questions? Contact the Albany Engineering Department with any questions at 229-883-6955.