



Stormwater Program Fee Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why are you charging a fee?

The Township is charging a fee to meet the unfunded Federal and State mandates that were imposed as part of the MS4 Program. A Stormwater Fee was determined to be the most equitable way to disperse the costs of the program. As you may have seen, many other municipalities have been implementing Stormwater Fees as well. The rates between municipalities may vary due to a variety of factors. A few examples of reasons fee rates vary are the projects being proposed, the amount of impervious area, and the billing structure.

2. What is an ERU?

Equivalent Residential Unit, or ERU, is the average impervious area for a Single Family Residential (SFR) property in the Township. This was determined from aerial imagery of a randomized selection of properties and was set equal to 4,000 square feet or Impervious Area (IA).

3. What is Impervious Area (IA)?

Simply put, Impervious Area (IA) is area that does not allow water to infiltrate through it. In the Stormwater Fee Ordinance, Impervious Surface is defined as *“A surface that prevents or significantly reduces the infiltration of water into the ground. Impervious surface includes all structures, buildings, parking areas, driveways, roads, sidewalks, and any areas of concrete, asphalt stone, gravel, or other surfaces...”*

4. How much will I be billed for the stormwater fee?

a. How will Single Family Residential (SFR) properties be billed?

Single Family Residential (SFR) properties will be assessed a flat rate that is equal to 1 Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU), or \$9 a month (\$108 annually). The Stormwater Fee will be billed through the Silver Spring Authority and will follow their billing cycles. If you are not currently receiving a sewer bill, you will be receiving a new bill from the Authority for the purpose of collecting the Stormwater Fee.

b. How will Non-Single Family Residential (Non-SFR) properties be billed?

Non-SFR properties will be assessed a rate based off of multiples of Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs) the property has. For example, if a Non-SFR property has 20,000 square feet of Impervious Area (IA), that would be equal to 5 ERUs ($20,000/4,000 = 5$). For this property, the monthly fee would be \$45 a month (\$540 annually). The Stormwater Fee will be billed through the Silver Spring Authority and will follow their billing cycles. If you are not currently receiving a sewer bill, you will be receiving a new bill from the Authority for the purpose of collecting the Stormwater Fee.

c. How is unoccupied property treated?

Unoccupied property is treated the same as occupied property. Vacant residential structures and empty commercial/industrial buildings are charged because they continue to generate runoff whether they are occupied or not.

d. How is undeveloped property treated?

Undeveloped property, with under 500 square feet of Impervious Area (IA), will not be billed for the Stormwater Fee. If an undeveloped parcel has over 500 square feet of IA the fee will be assessed.

5. Does everyone in the township pay the fee, including non-profits?

All properties with over 500 square feet of Impervious Area (IA) are assessed a fee, including all tax-exempt properties.

6. Where does the money collected from the Stormwater Fee go?

The money collected from the Stormwater Fee is used directly for the MS4 Program. The funds primary purpose is to meet the financial needs of the Pollution Reduction Plan (PRP) that the Township is required to implement. The projects associated with the PRP are expected to cost between \$3.5-4 million. Portions of the funds will also be used for infrastructure repairs/maintenance and administration costs. The funds are held in a separate stormwater account with stringent accounting policies in place to determine appropriate use of funds.

7. How did you come up with the cost of the stormwater management fee?

A list of known problems, scheduled improvements, and projected projects to comply with regulatory requirements were used as a basis for preparation of a forecast of stormwater program expenses. A 4-year budget projection including administrative, operation, and maintenance costs were also developed to establish funding needs. A Stormwater Stakeholder Advisory Committee, consisting of residents and business owners in Silver Spring, was formed to review all information and offer insight on to how various topics should be addressed. Once determined, the overall stormwater system costs were divided by the number of existing ERUs in the Township to calculate a cost per ERU.

8. There are no storm sewers on or near my property. Why should I pay a fee?

All properties produce stormwater runoff that must be managed by the Township. Even if your property has never flooded and there are no nearby storm sewers, the stormwater that flows off your property must be managed by the Township so that it does not contribute to pollution and flooding downstream.

9. Why not just include the stormwater program costs in our property taxes?

There is no correlation between assessed values and the amount of runoff from a given property. If the costs were included in property taxes residents would be unfairly burdened with a larger portion of the stormwater budget. By using Impervious Area (IA) as the basis, the costs can be shifted to the properties that create the most stormwater runoff and have a better ability to decrease it. Additionally, by using a fee based system the Township is able to offer credits to reduce costs for property owners that install stormwater controls and reduce the volume of stormwater that leaves their property.

10. Isn't this fee just another tax?

Some properties are exempt from taxes, but the Stormwater Fee will be charged to all properties that have over 500 square feet of impervious area. Additionally, the revenue can only be used for stormwater management and cannot be redirected for other uses.

11. How do I apply for a credit?

A credit policy has been implemented as part of the Stormwater Fee and can be found on the township website (www.sstwp.org). To apply you must submit a credit application and all pertinent information for the stormwater controls you have installed or are planning to install. The application will be reviewed by staff and a decision will be made as to how much credit should be awarded.

12. My neighborhood or condo community has a stormwater controls and HOA fees to maintain it. Am I eligible for a credit?

Credits are reviewed on a case by case basis and you may be eligible for a credit. However, older basins may not meet current design criteria for Best Management Practices and therefore may limit the amount of credits that will be applied.

13. How do I affect stormwater runoff?

Any property that has a roof, driveway, parking lot, or other impervious surfaces has an impact on the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff. Even properties without impervious surfaces can create stormwater runoff. Various household tasks such as car washing or the use of lawn fertilizers can impact stormwater quality. Since all properties contribute in some way to the stormwater system, everyone should play a role in supporting its maintenance and upkeep.

14. Nothing has changed on my property, why will I be charged now when I haven't been in the past?

The Township is facing increasing regulations in the stormwater and MS4 Program and as a result require increased funding. The Stormwater Fee will allow the Township to install the required Best Management Practices (BMPs) in order to comply with the new and existing Federal and State requirements. It will also allow for increased inspection and maintenance of aging infrastructure and the ability to rehabilitate or replace infrastructure that's reached the end of its useful life.

15. Will I still be charged even if it doesn't rain for a long time?

Yes, the pollutant potential in stormwater runoff is actually much greater when it has not rained in a long time because pollutants can build up on all impervious surfaces. During any storm, the initial runoff, or first flush, is the most contaminated. In addition to costs incurred to reduce pollution, maintenance of stormwater facilities is required whether it rains or not.

16. Will property taxes go down as a result of the Stormwater Fee?

The Stormwater Fee is a result of increasing funding need within the MS4 Program to meet the Federal and State requirements placed on the Township. Because of this, there is no anticipated reduction to property taxes.

17. How is billing for new properties initiated?

Billing for new properties is initiated when a Certificate of Occupancy is issued. Once issued an account will be created and billing will begin.

18. What happens when a residential property becomes vacant and other utility services are cut off?

The Stormwater Fee will continue to be assessed whether the property is occupied or not.