

*Marion County Public Works*

# Stormwater Maintenance Fee



## ***Answers to Frequently Asked Questions***

*The information presented here is also available on the county's website:*

[www.mccleanwater.net](http://www.mccleanwater.net)



**Environmental Services**

*For additional information about the stormwater fee contact:*

**503-588-5036**

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# Table of Questions

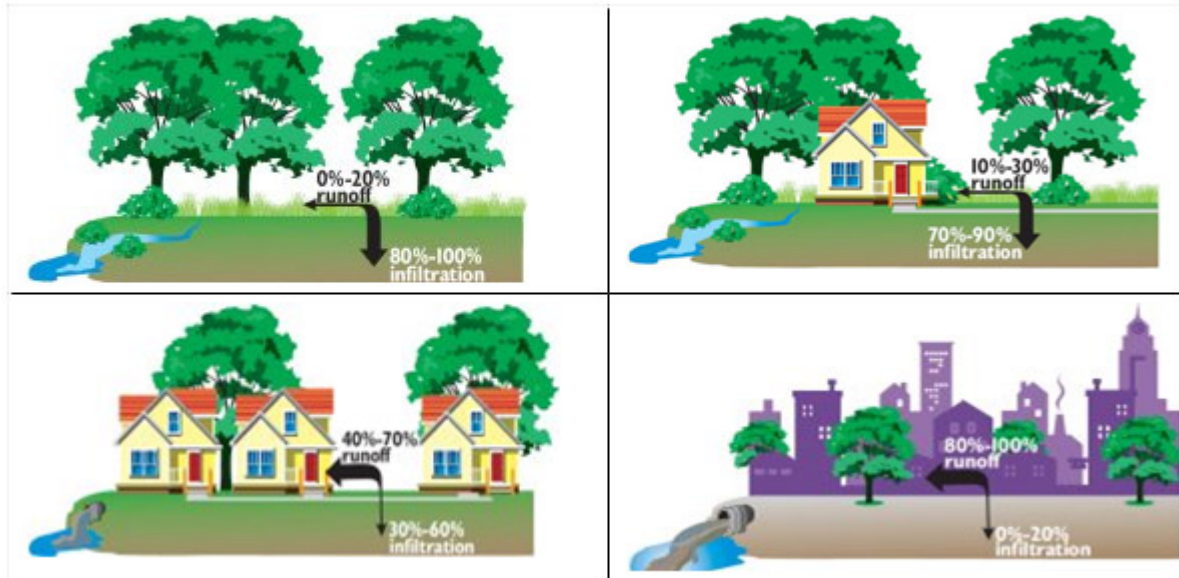
<b>About Stormwater Runoff</b> .....	1
WHAT IS STORMWATER RUNOFF?.....	1
WHAT IS IMPERVIOUS SURFACE?.....	1
WHY IS THERE A CONCERN ABOUT STORMWATER RUNOFF?.....	1
<b>About Our Stormwater Program</b> .....	2
WHAT DOES OUR STORMWATER PROGRAM DO? .....	2
WHAT IS AN NPDES MS4 PERMIT? .....	2
<b>About the Stormwater Maintenance Fee</b> .....	2
WHY DOES MARION COUNTY HAVE A STORMWATER MAINTENANCE FEE? .....	2
HAS THIS STORMWATER FEE APPROACH BEEN USED ANYWHERE ELSE? .....	3
WHO IS CHARGED FOR STORMWATER MAINTENANCE SERVICES? .....	3
HOW IS THE FEE CALCULATED?.....	3
HOW IS IMPERVIOUS SURFACE DETERMINED? .....	4
WHEN DETERMINING THE AMOUNT OF IMPERVIOUS SURFACE FOR A PROPERTY, ARE THE SIDEWALK AND STREET IN FRONT OF IT INCLUDED? .....	4
WHY IS GRAVEL CONSIDERED AN IMPERVIOUS INSTEAD A PERVIOUS SURFACE?.....	4
WILL THE STORMWATER MAINTENANCE FEE FIX DRAINAGE PROBLEMS CREATED BY NEW DEVELOPMENT?.....	4
<b>About Implementing the Stormwater Fee</b> .....	4
IS THE STORMWATER MAINTENANCE FEE IMPLEMENTED OUTSIDE OF THE EAST SALEM SERVICE DISTRICT? .....	4
WHY DON'T PEOPLE OUTSIDE OF THE EAST SALEM SERVICE DISTRICT AREA PAY FOR STORMWATER SERVICES WHEN THEIR STORMWATER DRAINS INTO OUR STORM SYSTEM? .....	5
WHY DOES A HOME OR BUSINESS THAT IS NOT CONNECTED TO THE COUNTY'S DRAINAGE SYSTEM HAVE TO PAY FOR STORMWATER SERVICES? .....	5
ARE UNDEVELOPED LOTS IN SUBDIVISIONS CHARGED FOR STORMWATER SERVICES?.....	5
WILL DEVELOPED PROPERTIES WITHOUT WATER OR WASTEWATER SERVICES BE CHARGED FOR STORMWATER SERVICES? .....	5
<b>About Billing</b> .....	5
HOW WILL I BE BILLED? .....	5
WHAT IS THE STORMWATER MAINTENANCE FEE FOR RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES? .....	5
WILL ALL SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL RATEPAYERS HAVE THE SAME FEE? .....	6
HOW ARE MULTI-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL RATES DETERMINED?.....	6
CAN BILLING ESTIMATES BE PROVIDED FOR SPECIFIC PROPERTIES? .....	6
HOW ARE DUPLEXES, CONDOMINIUMS, AND MOBILE HOME PARKS CHARGED FOR SERVICE? .....	6
IS THE COUNTY PAYING FOR STORMWATER ON COUNTY PROPERTY? .....	7
<b>Further Information</b> .....	7
<b>Appendix A</b> .....	8



## About Stormwater Runoff

### What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff is generated when precipitation from rain and snowmelt flows over land or impervious surfaces and does not percolate into the ground. If not properly managed, stormwater runoff can increase flooding, soil erosion, and water pollution.



*In natural settings most of the precipitation soaks into the ground, but with urban development there's more impervious surface area which prevents infiltration and increases surface runoff.*

### What is impervious surface?

An impervious surface is any surface that prevents water from soaking into the ground. Impervious surfaces include roofs, pavements, patios, roadways, parking lots, sidewalks, and highly compacted soils, such as non-paved surfaces that are subject to frequent traffic (trails, gravel driveways, etc.).

### Why is there a concern about stormwater runoff?

There are two primary concerns about stormwater runoff: quantity and quality. Quantity refers to the increased volume of stormwater runoff and the higher flow rates that occur when vegetation is removed or replaced by impervious surface. Higher stormwater flows may cause flooding that can damage property and create risks to public health and safety. These higher flows can also damage our urban and suburban streams and creeks by eroding banks and down-cutting channels. Quality refers to the fact that surface pollutants like sediment, metals, chemicals, oil, nutrients, soap, and bacteria can accumulate in stormwater runoff adversely affecting water quality since the runoff is discharged untreated into local streams and lakes, and eventually into the Willamette River. Surface pollutants can come from a variety of sources including vehicles, landscaping chemicals, pets, certain business practices, and construction activities.

## About Our Stormwater Program

### What does our Stormwater Program do?

Marion County's Stormwater Program was established to meet the requirements of a mandatory NPDES MS4 Permit (defined below) that was first approved by Department of Environmental Quality in March 2007. The Stormwater Program is implemented by the Public Works Department and is designed to address both stormwater quantity and stormwater quality. This includes a variety of best management practices, programs, and projects; such as conveyance system operation and maintenance, stormwater quality monitoring, public education and involvement, street sweeping, stream cleaning, spill response, municipal regulations, stormwater complaint response, outfall surveys, construction site-inspections, capital projects, and more.

### What is an NPDES MS4 Permit?

The National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit—is a federally mandated permit program administered on behalf of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency by the DEQ. As authorized by the Clean Water Act, the NPDES Permit Program controls water pollution by regulating point sources that discharge pollutants into waters of the United States. The permit requires Marion County to comply with the Clean Water Act, to protect water quality, and to reduce stormwater pollution to the "maximum extent practicable" through six minimum control measures:

1. Public Education
2. Public Involvement
3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
4. Construction Site Runoff Control
5. Post Construction Runoff Control
6. Pollution Prevention / Good Housekeeping

The permit outlines specific requirements, actions, and activities that the county must implement to reduce stormwater pollution. The requirements outlined in the county's NPDES MS4 Permit have continually expanded and are expected to increase further with each permit renewal, which will necessitate increasing investments into stormwater programs and projects.

## About the Stormwater Maintenance Fee

### Why does Marion County have a stormwater maintenance fee?

The purpose of implementing a stormwater maintenance fee is two-fold.

First, the county aims to provide a fair, understandable, and implementable funding mechanism for the federally mandated Stormwater Program. Traditional funding for the Stormwater Program has come from Environmental Services, Road Operations, and the General Fund. During the early stages of implementation, the cost of running the stormwater program was relatively small and had only a minor impact on these other program budgets. With increased stormwater regulations the cost of the Stormwater Program has grown considerably and is expected to continue to increase in the future.

Without a separate stormwater fee, the increasing costs of the program would divert funding away from other important programs. A fee based on impervious surface more closely aligns the rate that each residential, business, institutional, or industrial property owner pays with the impacts their developments have on the stormwater system and on our streams and rivers. It will provide a more equitable funding source while reducing the financial burden on other departments.

Second, Marion County residents have made a significant investment in the stormwater conveyance infrastructure, which requires regular maintenance and occasional upgrades to function properly. Given the increase in urban development and the age of the existing infrastructure (up to 50 years old in some places), some sections of the stormwater system are no longer adequate in meeting quality or quantity standards and are in need of upgrades, repairs, and/or routine maintenance. Without proper maintenance, these systems will continue to degrade which could lead to culvert failures, sinkholes, and flooding. The stormwater maintenance fee will provide a dedicated funding source to protect our investment in infrastructure.

### **Has this stormwater fee approach been used anywhere else?**

Yes. Many communities throughout the nation have adopted a stormwater fee to fund their stormwater programs. In Oregon, no fewer than 40 municipalities have implemented a stormwater utility funding mechanism including: Salem, Keizer, Ashland, Corvallis, Eugene, Gresham, Medford, Roseburg, Portland, Springfield, and the cities served by Clean Water Services (includes the cities of Beaverton, Tigard, Tualatin, Hillsboro, King City, Forest Grove, Sherwood, Cornelius, Banks, Gaston, Durham, and North Plains).

### **Who is charged for stormwater maintenance services?**

The stormwater maintenance fee will be charged to customers with developed properties within the East Salem Service District (ESSD), including single-family and multi-family residential properties, businesses, industrial facilities, public buildings, and facilities of nonprofit organizations. **Appendix A** contains a map and information about the ESSD. County-owned streets, designed to specific standards that are within planned residential developments, will not pay a stormwater rate, although a portion of the fee accounts for the impervious surfaces of public streets and right-of-way. In conformance with long-standing policy, property owned and operated by Marion County will not be subject to a stormwater fee.

### **How is the fee calculated?**

The new stormwater fee will have two components:

- The first component is a base charge that will be paid by all ratepayers regardless of the amount of impervious surface. This base charge will provide support for overarching programs such as street sweeping, account maintenance, and public outreach; it will also cover the cost of managing stormwater in the public right-of-way (impervious surfaces such as streets and sidewalks).

- The second component is a user charge that is based on the amount of impervious surface of each ratepayer's property. Impervious surface is directly related to the quantity and quality of stormwater flow from a property.

### **How is impervious surface determined?**

To determine impervious surface areas, county staff conducted an in-depth analysis of properties using LIDAR data overlain onto an aerial of the ESSD. The data was processed and paired with Marion County's tax lot data using GIS (a geographic information system). Impervious surface areas were calculated for each taxlot and all public right-of-way in the urbanized area.

### **When determining the amount of impervious surface for a property, are the sidewalk and street in front of it included?**

Neither municipal sidewalks nor the fronting street are included when determining the total impervious surface area of the property in order to calculate the fee. When determining a property's impervious surface, the following are included: rooftops, driveways, patios, paved walkways, parking lots, and non-paved surfaces subjected to vehicular traffic.

### **Why is gravel considered an impervious instead a pervious surface?**

Gravel and soil surfaces subjected to vehicular traffic, whether paved or not, are considered impervious for the purposes of establishing total area subject to the calculation. On gravel areas, automobiles and trucks moving and parking on the surface crush the rock and compact the soils to such a degree that infiltration is significantly impeded or entirely prevented. From a stormwater runoff perspective, a gravel surface that has been subjected to vehicular traffic (i.e., becomes compacted) acts much more like an impervious surface than a pervious surface with regard to infiltration, and can actually increase the amount of pollution (in the form of fine sediments) to stormwater.

Asphalt and pavement that is specifically designed and maintained to be porous will not be included in the impervious area calculations.

### **Will the stormwater maintenance fee fix drainage problems created by new development?**

Every permitted development in Marion County is required to provide any and all drainage improvements necessary to manage the runoff generated by that development. Public Works will continue to address drainage problems throughout the county as our resources allow.

## **About Implementing the Stormwater Fee**

### **Is the stormwater maintenance fee implemented outside of the East Salem Service District?**

No. Marion County is obligated by the NPDES MS4 Permit to manage stormwater in the ESSD. While enhanced stormwater management services will be limited to the ESSD, water quality and drainage will continue to be addressed county-wide.



### **Why don't people outside of the East Salem Service District area pay for stormwater services when their stormwater drains into our storm system?**

In many cases, properties outside of the urbanized ESSD are regulated by other federal and state agencies with regard to drainage and/or stormwater runoff. The ESSD is considerably more urbanized than properties outside this area; the ESSD contains about 92% of stormwater infrastructure that must be maintained.

### **Why does a home or business that is not connected to the county's drainage system have to pay for stormwater services?**

Even if your property is not physically connected to the drainage system, you and your property are still provided stormwater services. For example, the county's stormwater programs improve and maintain stormwater facilities that reduce flooding risks to your property and protect the roads leading to it. Additionally, Marion County's stormwater programs administer design criteria and regulate development in ways that help control stormwater runoff that otherwise could adversely impact your property, the roads on which you drive, and the establishments with which you do business. Our stormwater programs also provide benefits to all residents of Marion County by taking actions that reduce stormwater pollutants that can degrade our urban streams and waters.

### **Are undeveloped lots in subdivisions charged for stormwater services?**

Because an undeveloped property is presumed to remain in its natural state, it will not be subject to the stormwater rate. If pre-development activities result in compacted gravel or dirt and utility services are available to the property, the stormwater fee may be included in the service area billing.

### **Will developed properties without water or wastewater services be charged for stormwater services?**

A developed property will be charged a stormwater fee, even if it does not receive water or wastewater services.

## **About Billing**

### **How will I be billed?**

The majority of property owners will pay the stormwater maintenance fee through their property tax statement.

### **What is the stormwater maintenance fee for residential properties?**

The Board of Commissioners approved the implementation of a fee on March 4, 2015. The approved Base charge is \$2.55 per month and the approved Impervious Surface Area charge is \$2 per equivalent dwelling unit per month. The total for single-family residents is \$4.55 per month.

### Will all single-family residential ratepayers have the same fee?

Yes. The amount of impervious surface area on single-family residential (SFR) properties in the ESSD varies between 0 and 5,000 square feet, with an average impervious surface area of 3,000 square feet. Based on that average, an equivalent dwelling unit, or EDU was set equal to 3,000 square feet. That is, 1 EDU = 3,000 square feet.



All SFR customers will be assessed for a base charge plus one EDU. Therefore, at the current rate, a base rate of \$2.55 and an ISA rate of \$2 per EDU, the owner of a single-family residential property will pay:

$$\$2.55 + (\$2 \times 1 \text{ EDU}) = \$4.55 / \text{month}$$

### How are multi-family residential and commercial rates determined?

Non-SFR customers will pay a base charge as well, but the EDU charge will be based on the actual impervious surface area (i.e., the total number of EDUs).

For example:

#### Calculate the EDU:

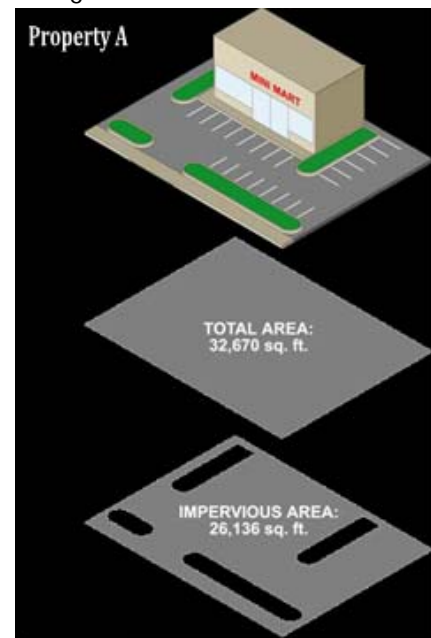
Property A has a total area of 32,670 square feet. Of that, 26,136 square feet is impervious surface area. Since 1 EDU = 3,000 square feet of impervious surface, we find that Property A has:

$$26,136 \text{ square feet} / 3,000 \text{ square feet} = 8.71 \text{ EDUs}$$

#### Calculate the Fee:

At a base rate of \$2.55 and an ISA rate of \$2 per EDU, the owner of Property A will pay:

$$\$2.55 + (\$2 \times 8.71 \text{ EDUs}) = \$2.55 + \$17.42 = \$19.97 / \text{month}$$



### Can billing estimates be provided for specific properties?

Individual estimates can be provided to the account holder upon request.

### How are duplexes, condominiums, and mobile home parks charged for service?

Property owners are billed for stormwater services. If a mobile home park is owned by a single person or entity, that person/entity will be billed on the annual tax statement. Condominium owners will be billed as single-family residents, which is \$4.55 per month. With specific regard to condominiums, the SFR rates include the impervious surface area of the community spaces.

### **Is the county paying for stormwater on county property?**

The county does not pay itself for services provided to county departments. The addition of a new stormwater maintenance fee does not change this policy.

## **Further Information**

Additional information is available on the county's website at:

<http://www.mccleanwater.net>

For additional information about the stormwater maintenance fee, call 503-588-5036 or email [mccleanwater@co.marion.or.us](mailto:mccleanwater@co.marion.or.us)

## Appendix A.

### About the East Salem Service District:

The East Salem Sewage & Drainage District was formed in 1965 by a vote of the people to provide sewer service to residents east of Salem with construction done in 1966. ESSD serves approximately 7500 residential, commercial and industrial accounts billed bi-monthly by the City of Salem who maintains the sewer lines and treatment plant at Willowlake; delinquent accounts are collected by the district. Lighting districts were added in 1971 to provide neighborhood street lights installed and maintained by PGE.

