

**Q. My neighborhood has drainage problems. Who do I call to get some action on these problems?**

A. Service requests, reports of illegal dumping into the storm drainage system and other questions about stormwater utility services may be directed to the Stormwater Hotline at 972-1500 or via email to [stormwater@rockymountnc.gov](mailto:stormwater@rockymountnc.gov). City staff will collect the necessary information and investigate the problem. If it is determined that the problem is within the City's area of responsibility, we will advise you of the action to be taken by the City. If it is determined that the problem is outside the City's area of responsibility, city staff may be able to provide advice on possible solutions or direct you to other available assistance.

**Q. How can I help?**

A. If you know of any drainage problems in your neighborhood, instances of illegal dumping, or illicit discharges, please call the Stormwater Hotline. The success of the program to address water quality by reducing pollution will greatly depend upon the involvement of citizens like you. The best way to make a difference is to become an informed participant in the voluntary conservation and preservation programs in our area. The City's Stormwater Management Program provides helpful information on steps you can take in your business, home or school to help improve local water quality. Please look out for future publications and informational messages from the City.

Protecting our stormwater quality is everyone's responsibility. Water is a precious resource that we must protect. Spotting and reporting pollution, preventing pollution by recycling and properly disposing of household chemicals are simple things that people of all ages can do to protect our river and our community.

**Q. Where can I get more information?**

A. Visit the City website at [www.rockymountnc.gov](http://www.rockymountnc.gov) and click on Stormwater Management.



**FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**Q. What is a stormwater management program?**

A. We are all familiar with rain: water falling from clouds onto the surface of the earth. As rain reaches the ground, it becomes stormwater. What happens to stormwater after it reaches the ground depends on where it falls. In urban areas like Rocky Mount, stormwater runoff must be managed to protect public and private property, as well as to protect our streams and river from pollution that is created by our daily activities.

Both water *quality* and water *quantity* problems are created as land is developed. Even though the same amount of rain may fall on a rural farm and an urban city block, the city block will have a much larger amount of stormwater runoff since it has more impervious surfaces. Often, the amount of runoff is large enough to cause flooding and erosion problems due to rapidly moving water.

In late 1999, due to expanding state and federal regulatory requirements, increasing development and an aging stormwater system in need of repair, the City of Rocky Mount began to explore options for funding a comprehensive stormwater program. After studying the recommendations from a citizen Stormwater Advisory Committee, the Rocky Mount City Council approved the implementation of a stormwater utility, which became effective July 1, 2003. The utility fees are based on impervious area and pay for operation, maintenance and capital improvements for the City's stormwater system. Revenue collected from stormwater fees are used only for stormwater management related activities.

**EXAMPLES OF IMPERVIOUS SURFACE AREAS**

- concrete
- asphalt
- buildings
- roads
- sidewalks
- gravel driveways
- parking lots



**City of Rocky Mount**  
**Department of Public Works**  
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**STORMWATER MANAGEMENT STAFF**

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**Q. Why does the City have a stormwater management program?**

A. It has been more than three decades since the Clean Water Act began the process of cleaning up the nation's waters. In 2003, a federal mandate was enacted which added new requirements for the control and management of stormwater quality and quantity for all municipalities with more than 10,000 residents. The City of Rocky Mount is responsible for compliance with new federal and state regulations on water quality as well as providing stormwater management facilities and services. The city is responsible for installing and maintaining storm drains, inlets, and ditches, and ensuring that state programs such as erosion and sediment control are administered on construction sites. All of these services are done to protect personal and public property as well as provide for a healthy environment. Neither federal nor state agencies provide funding for these mandated programs.

The largest source of stormwater pollution in Rocky Mount is runoff from developed property. Every resident is likely to contribute to the problem in some way, but every resident can also be part of the solution. Stormwater pollution includes bacteria and viruses, chemicals, pesticides, trash, yard debris, sediment and motor vehicle fluids. Reducing stormwater pollution and protecting the quality of our surface waters is everyone's responsibility.

**Q. How were the recommendations for the utility developed?**

A. The utility was developed with the assistance of a citizen based Stormwater Advisory Committee to address new water quality regulations, maintenance, and flooding issues. The Committee was made up of citizens, developers, builders, and environmental leaders from throughout the City. Its recommendations included the development of a stormwater user fee, where all developed properties in the City would pay to fund stormwater services. Once the committee developed recommendations, the City began advising property owners of plans to create a utility to address stormwater issues and of the need to charge a monthly fee for the improved services.

**Q. Why do I have to pay a stormwater fee?**

A. Most people agree that residential, commercial, industrial, and institutional customers should pay for their fair share of water and sewer service based on their use of these systems. In comparison, the most equitable method to pay for stormwater service is to estimate a property's relative impact on the stormwater system. One of the best indicators of this impact is the amount of impervious area on the property which directly affects the quantity, quality, and rate of stormwater runoff generated by a property.

More than 300 other communities nationwide have developed stormwater utilities as an alternative funding mechanism for their stormwater management programs. With this funding the City maintains hundreds of miles of ditches and culverts, responds to flooding complaints, repairs and replaces infrastructure, and inspects new construction for compliance with local stormwater regulations.

**Q. Why do I have to pay when I do not have any drainage problems?**

A. Everyone in the City benefits from the Stormwater Management Program. If stormwater runs off your property, the City must have a program and funding to manage the increase in runoff and pollutants. Direct benefits may include complying with federal and state mandates, protecting your property from upstream runoff, protecting property downstream from your runoff, providing safe roadways, educating our children about pollution and improving water quality.

**Q. How is the rate established?**

A. The rate is set by the City Council, based on a program of services developed in response to federal and state water quality requirements as well as known stormwater quantity problems, such as maintenance and remedial repair needs. The Citizen Advisory Committee assisted in identifying the initial priorities for the program of services. Today, priorities are established by the City Council and program staff.

**Q. How are stormwater fees determined?**

A. Each single-family residential dwelling unit is billed a flat fee, based on the measurement of the local average of the building footprint, garage, driveway and other features that interrupt the natural absorption of stormwater into the ground. The average impervious area for a single-family residence in Rocky Mount is 2,519 square feet. Impervious areas were determined by analyzing aerial photographs to identify the amount of impervious surfaces on each property. Multi-family dwellings and all non-residential properties will be billed at a rate that is based on their impervious area; each 2,519 square feet of impervious surface found on the property is billed at a monthly fee of \$3.75.

**Q. How are non-residential or multi-family property fees determined?**

A. To determine the annual fee, divide the total impervious area by 2,519 square feet (or one Equivalent Rate Unit) to obtain the number of ERUs and multiply by the rate. The minimum utility fee for any developed property is never less than one ERU.

**Q. What is an "illicit discharge" or "illicit connection"?**

A. An illicit discharge is a discharge of something other than stormwater to the stormwater system (drains, inlets, ditches, creeks, etc.). Unlike sewage, water running into storm drains makes its way directly to the river without being treated. Because of this, it is very important that we do not put anything into the drainage system that cannot be released directly into the river.

Some examples of illicit discharges are sewage lines plumbed into storm drains or disposal of oil, grease, trash, or yard debris in ditches or drains. If you think you may have an illicit connection, or if you witness illegal dumping, please call the Stormwater Hotline at 972-1500. Reports may be anonymous.

The City is required to have an Illicit Discharge Detection Program. City staff conduct inspections to locate and correct illicit or illegal connections. Funding for this program comes from the stormwater utility.

**Q. What will be on my utility bill?**

A. Stormwater fees are assessed in the same way that water, sewer, gas, and electric fees are. You will notice a line item on your monthly utility bill for stormwater. If your property is a single family home, the charge will be \$3.75.

**Q. How are the revenues used?**

A. All revenues are used to support the stormwater program, which includes compliance with the state's Tar-Pamlico Nutrient Management regulations and the Environmental Protection Agency's National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) regulations for water quality. Program priorities include maintaining the drainage system, such as pipes and ditches; protecting properties from flooding; protecting our streams and wetlands from erosion and pollution; and implementing major capital investments for the drainage system.

**Q. Are revenues spent throughout the City?**

A. Yes, the stormwater management program is citywide. Services are provided throughout the City pursuant to service guidelines established with the funding level of the stormwater utility.

**Q. Why is the stormwater management program not funded by tax revenues?**

A. The stormwater management utility fee was selected as a more equitable way to distribute the program cost because: The fee is based on each property's actual demand for stormwater services as measured by how much impervious surface is on the property.

All property, including government, schools and tax exempt properties, will contribute their share towards the overall cost of the stormwater management program.

**Q. Are tax-exempt properties also exempt from the stormwater fee?**

A. No, tax-exempt properties will also pay the fee. Taxes are based on the value of the property. The stormwater fee is assessed based on how much the property contributes to the amount of stormwater runoff. The amount of runoff from the property is determined by the amount of impervious area on the property.

