



# Regional Stormwater Program

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## Stormwater Program Q&A Session

**Q: No stormwater leaves my property. Why do I have to pay a stormwater utility fee?**

A: The stormwater system and stormwater quality is a benefit to all residents. There is a cost to maintain the system and an administrative cost to the program to meet the requirements of the NPDES Phase II Stormwater Permit. This is a fixed cost for being in the city or county.

Also, the cities and county have obligations under the Permit to meet water quality standards and reduce pollution from the stormwater system. While discharges from stormwater systems are considered point sources of pollution, the water flowing into the system comes from many different sources making it extremely difficult to isolate where the pollution is coming from.

**Q. What is the service that I would be paying for? This sounds more like a tax.**

A. The stormwater utility fee will pay for stormwater services to the community. All properties are affected by rainfall and excess water runs off all properties. All properties benefit by having the cities or county manage the overall stormwater system and incur administrative costs; therefore, all properties should pay. The funds collected specifically pay for stormwater services rendered. Our stormwater program is based on the regulatory requirements of our NPDES Phase II Permit to improve and maintain water quality related to stormwater. This includes continuing our existing maintenance program, increasing maintenance activities according to a schedule, developing plans to implement pollution prevention practices, training municipal staff in pollution prevention practices and capital improvement projects to meet Phase II Permit requirements and to improve the stormwater system. Our permit requirements are very specific and can result in fines, lawsuits and loss of certain funding, so we want to do a very good job in meeting these requirements. These requirements are also new and result in added costs and requirements that we haven't previously had.

**Q: How will the costs be divided? (How much will this cost me?)**

A: The most common method to determine costs is through the calculation of an Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU). Through this process, the impervious surface is measured on GIS photos for several different sized residential properties (small, medium and large). The surfaces that will be measured include rooftops, patios, driveways (both asphalt and gravel), garages and outbuildings and other hard surfaces used for parking, storage or vehicle access. These surfaces are measured because they allow stormwater to run off them rather than being absorbed into them. An average ERU of 3,700 square feet was calculated. This ERU is then applied to all residential properties, regardless of their size. (1 single family home = 1 ERU).

Next, all non-residential properties will then be measured. The total area of non-residential impervious surfaces will be divided by the ERU giving you the number of ERUs for that property. For example, the Asotin County Courthouse has an impervious area of 43,600 square feet. We divide the Courthouse area by the ERU – 43,600 square feet divided by 3,700 square feet for a total number of ERUs of 11.78. Using an example of \$6/month per ERU, the cost to the County for the Courthouse would be \$70.68 per month or \$848.16 per year.

$$\begin{aligned} 43,600 \text{ sq ft} \div 3,700 \text{ sq ft} &= 11.78 \text{ ERU} \\ 11.78 \text{ ERU} \times \$6/\text{month per ERU} &= \$70.68 \text{ per month} \\ \$70.68 \text{ per month} \times 12 \text{ months} &= \$848.16 \text{ per year} \end{aligned}$$

**Q. Are city streets and county roads charged a stormwater fees?**

A. City streets and county road right-of-ways form part of the stormwater system itself and will not be charged.

**Q. Why are gravel parking lots and gravel driveways considered impervious surfaces?**

A. While they are somewhat more permeable than asphalt or concrete, they can become quite compacted and largely impermeable over time. In addition, runoff from gravel roads can contain gravel, dirt that works up through the gravel and accumulated pollutants increasing the sediment load and impacts to the stormwater system.

**Q. Will there be credits?**

A. Not at this time. We evaluated developing a credit program. We feel that our cost estimate is very reasonable and a credit program will add administrative and financial burdens to the program. We will review credits in the future.

**Q. What if we don't implement a stormwater program?**

A. Because this is a requirement under the federal Clean Water Act, a stormwater program must be implemented. If the cities and county elect not to develop a program locally, Ecology will develop one for us. We feel it is better to have local control and involvement in the program. This gives us the opportunity to take public input on the program and consider local economic and environmental conditions in developing the program. Additionally, failure to implement a program could result in fines, legal actions, and potential loss of future funding sources.

**Q. It never rains here. Why is stormwater a problem?**

A. It's true that it doesn't rain all year. But because we get our rain during a few concentrated months, it is still important to develop a stormwater program. The streets, parking lots and other impervious surfaces that increase runoff during storms collect dirt, debris and pollutants during the dry season. The first rains of the season deliver more pollutants to the stormwater system than subsequent rains. This is called the "first flush" effect. By sweeping streets, cleaning stormwater systems and reducing erosion during the dry season, we can reduce the impact of accumulated pollutants during the rainy season. Also, working on the stormwater system all year reduces the chances that we will have a problem, such as a plugged drain that floods your lawn (garage, basement, etc.) and will be better prepared to handle stormwater when it arrives.



Serving: Asotin County



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