

CITY OF MEADVILLE

STORMWATER FAQS



Q What is stormwater, and why is it a problem in Meadville?

Stormwater commonly refers to runoff from rain and snow/ice melt. In natural settings, stormwater is able to slowly soak into the ground surface or flow overland into adjacent streams and rivers. In developed areas, these natural surfaces are often replaced with hard or impervious surfaces such as houses, streets, sidewalks, parking lots, patios, and other similar structures. The result of this development is a reduced amount of natural area available to absorb stormwater. This means that a larger amount of stormwater ends up flowing, at a faster pace, over the hard surfaces where it tends to collect chemicals and debris along the way. When not properly controlled, stormwater can overwhelm streams, cause flooding, soil erosion and surface water pollution. As is common in a developed area, the City of Meadville has established a stormwater management system which consists of gutters, channels, catch basins, pipes, detention ponds, and other structures to manage the movement of stormwater. With time, this system has aged and requires systematic repair and replacement and, in some cases, enlargement, to account for development activities that have occurred over the City's 200 plus year history.

Q What is the purpose of the stormwater fee?

Prior to the implementation of the Stormwater Management Program and User Fee, the cost of maintenance of the stormwater system came out of the City's general fund, which is mostly funded through real estate taxes. This meant that tax-exempt property owners were not contributing to the system's maintenance, and funding availability was directly impacted by competition for other spending priorities. As a result, funding for system upkeep became inadequate, unstable, and unable to keep pace with the growing need for system management, maintenance, and expansion. To help resolve this problem, the City instituted a stormwater fee for property owners within the City.

Q How is the stormwater fee different from a tax?

Taxes are collected from parcel owners, based on the assessed value of their property, to cover costs for a number of general government services. A fee is charged to support a specific service, such as gas, electric, water, or garbage collection. The stormwater fee provides an equitable way to distribute the cost of the Stormwater Management Program, by ensuring that every parcel owner using and placing a burden on the system is paying. All users of the stormwater system will pay a fee based on their estimated share of publicly provided stormwater services.

Q How is my bill calculated?

All property owners in the City of Meadville who have over 200 square feet of impervious surface will be assessed the fee. Single Family Detached (SFD) parcels will be billed a flat rate of one Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU), which is based on the median amount of impervious surface on single-family detached properties (i.e. residential lots with a detached house) in Meadville. Each SFD property will be billed \$90 per year, equal to \$7.50 per month. All Non-Single Family Detached (NSFD) parcels such as businesses, churches, apartment buildings, government buildings, factories, parks, and other open spaces with hard surfaces will be billed a multiplier of the ERU value based on the actual square footage of impervious surface on the property. The billing rate per ERU is determined by the number of ERUs in the City and the annual budget for the program. The initial rate of \$90 per ERU per year will remain in place for the first three years of the program. City Council will review the progress of the stormwater program and re-evaluate the rate prior to adjusting the rate during the third year of the program.

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Q Why base the fee on impervious surface?

In general, the more impervious area a property has, the more runoff flows from the property, placing a certain demand on the storm sewer system and/or the stormwater services provided by the City. Billing based on impervious surface area is a more equitable way to determine the fee than using property value and is a widely accepted method in stormwater management programs across the country.

Q How is impervious surface area calculated?

The City used aerial imagery to identify impervious surfaces. The area of the impervious surfaces has been calculated using Geographic Information Systems (GIS) computer software.

Q How often will I be charged?

The City will issue bills to parcel owners on, or after, January 1st of each year. Payments may be made on a quarterly basis. If the fee is paid in full within 30 days of the billing date, property owners will receive a 2% discount. A late fee equal to 5% of the total bill will be assessed in the event that the bill is not paid by the designated due date.

Q If I have a question, or disagree with my charges, who should I contact?

The City has set-up an appeals process to address billing errors, inaccuracies and customer concerns. If you have a question regarding your bill, or if you think your bill was calculated incorrectly, you can contact the City of Meadville Stormwater Program by either calling or mailing your questions to:

City of Meadville Stormwater Program
894 Diamond Park
Meadville, PA 16335
(814) 333-3310 | fbarber@cityofmeadville.org

Q Can I reduce my bill?

Single Family Detached (SFD) parcels are billed a flat fee of one ERU and cannot reduce the bill lower than one ERU. A Non Single Family Detached (NSFD) parcel owner can reduce their fee by reducing the amount of impervious area on their property. This can be done by converting impervious area (pavement, asphalt driveway, etc.) over to pervious area (landscape beds, grass areas, etc.), but in no case can a NSFD parcel reduce their bill to below one ERU. Another way to reduce your bill is to earn credits through implementing certain onsite practices. This can be done by installing best management practices approved by the City.

