

## **FAQ**

### **Frequently Ask Questions**

The City of Glasgow adopted a Stormwater Management Fee in December of 2012 to improve their level of stormwater services for activities such as fixing drainage problems, fulfilling regulatory requirements, and reducing pollution carried by stormwater to our waterways.

#### **What is stormwater and why should we care?**

Like sanitary sewer services, the City operates and maintains a system of pipes and channels that drain stormwater and protect our homes and businesses from flooding. This system is costly to operate and maintain, and is facing increasing regulatory requirements from the Environmental Protection Agency.

Stormwater is water from rain. As rain falls to earth in agricultural and undeveloped areas, it is either absorbed or it slowly runs off and dissipates. Rooftops and paved areas not only prevent the water from being absorbed, but cause it to run off at a much faster rate. As a result, stormwater can accumulate, causing nuisance flooding and possible threats to public health and safety. Furthermore, our current infrastructure system of pipes needs repair and replacement due to age. A proactive replacement program is needed to keep the system functioning correctly.

Fixing drainage problems is only a part of the problem. As the rain falls onto our streets and runs off, it carries pollutants such as gasoline, oil, and heavy metals. Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are washed from lawns and other green spaces. With the passage of time, these pollutants build up in our waterways and underground drainage systems, damaging our streams, rivers and lakes.

## **What is the worst water quality problem faced in Glasgow?**

Water quality in the City of Glasgow is impacted by the urbanization of the watersheds that drain into the streams. The main pollutants being stream bank scour and trash and debris. Trash and debris are a visual pollutant in our streams. They also are a choking hazard to wildlife and create bacteria that are harmful to humans. An increased stormwater runoff volume in urbanized areas causes scour along stream banks. The increased impervious area results in more rainfall running off into nearby streams instead of being absorbed into the ground. The increased volume also causes the water to travel at a faster velocity and can wash away soil from the stream banks and release sediment into the stream. Just like silt from construction sites, this sediment settles in the stream and harms plants and other aquatic habitat that support fish.

## **Below are some of the impacts to streams caused by urbanization include:**

- Increased flood peaks
- Increased stormwater runoff volume
- More frequent bank full flows
- Lower base flow during dry weather
- Decline in habitat value of streams
- Loss of buffer zones and large woody debris
- Creation of fish barriers
- A shift in the energy source that drives streams
- Increased algae growth
- Disruption of natural water balance
- Increased stream temperature or pH
- Increased sediment and other pollutants
- Bacteria and other human pathogens leading to potential sickness
- Erosion and lateral migration
- Reduced fish passage
- Degradation of habitat structure
- Decreased channel stability
- Loss of natural or pool-riffle structure
- Fragmentation of riparian tree canopy
- Decreased substrate quality

## **What are some common storm drain pollutants?**

The most common pollutants are paints; dirt, grass and leaves; antifreeze and oil; trash and debris; and fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides.

## **Where do items placed in storm drains and ditches end up?**

The items placed in storm drains and ditches end up directly in streams or lakes, which is why it is so important not to place items in or near these receptacles.

## **What is a stormwater management fee?**

A management fee is a mechanism for the City to recover costs for services it must provide to meet public demands and stormwater regulations. The stormwater management fee is structured to recover costs fairly and equitably.

## **Are we the only community with a stormwater user fee?**

No. Stormwater user fees are being used in many cities in the United States and several in Kentucky. Nearby communities that have a stormwater user fee include Danville, Radcliff, Warren County and Hopkinsville.

## **Why do we need a stormwater user fee?**

Unlike water and sewer services, prior to the adoption of the stormwater management fee, there was no dedicated funding for the stormwater system and the City of Glasgow used general funds from taxes to maintain the system. However, with the city facing increasing costs it was decided that a more equitable way to fund the stormwater program needed to be explored. A stormwater management fee, was determined to be the most fair and equitable method of distributing the costs of maintaining and operating stormwater systems. It also provides the revenue needed to implement the stormwater program required by the United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Kentucky Environmental Protection Division.

## **What is impervious surface?**

Impervious surfaces are hardened surface areas that either prevent or limit the natural entry of water into the soil. Rooftops, buildings, streets, parking lots, sidewalks, asphalt, concrete, other paving, driveways, decks, patios, and artificial turf are all examples of impervious surfaces. These improvements reduce

natural infiltration into the soil, which increases runoff.

### **How are fees determined?**

The user fee is determined based on the square footage of parcel, category of parcel and the cost of implement a Stormwater Management Program. This fee is tied to estimated stormwater program cost. The fee schedule is as follows:

Type	Monthly Fee	TOTAL ANNUAL BILL
Commercial >1,000,000 square feet	65	780
Commercial 500,001 to 1,000,000	55	660
Commercial 100,001 to 500,000	45	540
Commercial 50,001 to 100,000	35	420
Commercial 10,001-50,000	20	240
Commercial 5001 - 10,000	15	180
Commercial < or = 5000	10	120
Religious	15	180
City	15	180
County	15	180
Education	15	180
Federal	15	180
Other	15	180
Residential	2	24

### **Who has to pay?**

All owners of developed properties within Glasgow pay the stormwater management fee. These properties include houses, businesses, industries, schools, public facilities, and churches. The City made a special effort to ensure fairness and equity. This has led to a policy that everybody pays, even government buildings. Everyone contributes to and benefits from the stormwater sewer system, which is separate from the sanitary sewer system.

### **Why are churches and schools being billed?**

This is a management fee and not a tax. The management fee, just like electric, drinking water, and sanitary sewer fees, is based upon the cost of services provided. Because this is not a tax, it is collected from all customers who receive service. Churches and schools, like other properties, contribute runoff to

the City. Because of the size and amount of parking lots and roofs on these properties, the runoff from these properties may be significant. Exempting properties that potentially generate large amounts of runoff would shift the burden of financing the stormwater program to homes and businesses that do not qualify for property exemptions. For this reason, they are treated like all other customers under the user fee rate structure.

### **What will the money be used for?**

Some of the other major components of this program include:

- Meeting the requirements of the City's stormwater permit;
- Improving maintenance and repair of the city's stormwater system;
- Developing stormwater design standards and regulations and ensuring they are met;
- Construction of flood protection and water quality management projects; and,
- Stormwater infrastructure replacement including culverts, dams, curb inlets, head walls and conveyance systems.

### **Why should I have to pay? I live on a hill and don't have a drainage problem.**

You may not have a problem, but the runoff generated from your property is contributing to problems downstream. The approach being taken through this program recognizes that everyone contributes to the runoff and pollution and everyone will share in the results—improved water quality, reduced flooding, unimpaired access to roads, etc.

### **Is there a way for me to reduce my bill?**

The fee billing cycle shall allow for up to a five percent (5%) discount if paid by June 30, please refer to bill for details.

**I live on a farm on a huge lot and the water never runs off my site. How can you justify billing me?**

The stormwater utility is responsible for cleaning and repairing the entire storm drainage system in the roads that citizens drive on every day and for protecting and improving the water quality, habitat and biology of our streams. While flows may be diminished from properties with small impervious surfaces compared to the total property, in large storms everyone contributes flow to the streams so everyone with impervious surfaces pays a fee. While runoff from the property may not flow into a street, it does flow into a stream and that stream flows through culverts under roads in the City. The utility is responsible for protecting the health of the streams which is part of the quality of life that all citizens of Covington get to enjoy. The utility also maintains the drainage system in roads that all citizens travel on everyday which also contributes to the economic well being and quality of life.

**It hasn't rained in a while. Do I still have to pay the stormwater fee?**

The storm drainage infrastructure including pipes, catch basins, etc. must be maintained no matter how much flow is running through it at any given moment. These drains must be kept maintained so that the next storm does not result in flooding and damage to roads and other infrastructure. In addition, the fee supports ongoing costs associated with investigation of illegal dumping into storm drains during dry weather and towards the repair of streams and watercourses damaged by previous storms.

**If I disagree with the amount being charged, what can I do?**

An appeals process has been established and instructions for an appeal can be found in Section Five of Ordinance Number 2809.

**When will I receive my bill and when is it due?**

The City sends out annual stormwater management fee bills in April of each year and are due no later than June 30. Annual Stormwater Management Fee Bills are mailed out to each land owner. Property ownership is determined from the Barren

County PVA office. Land owners, as recorded on January 1st, of each billing year are responsible for paying the full year amount. Payments can be paid in full on or before the due dates.

**I am renting an apartment or house. Do I have to pay this charge?**

Stormwater management fee bills are sent to the property owner.

**Do the elderly or disabled get a break?**

Since this is a management fee and not a tax, everyone has to pay. Owners, of developed property within Glasgow, pay the stormwater management fee. These properties include houses, businesses, industries, schools, public facilities, and churches.