



Borough of Spring Grove

1 Campus Avenue • Spring Grove • PA • 17362

www.springgroveboro.com

STORMWATER frequently asked **QUESTIONS**

1. There are no storm sewers on or near my property. Why should I pay a fee?

All properties produce stormwater runoff that must be managed by the Borough. Even if your property has never flooded and there are no nearby storm sewers, the stormwater that flows off of your property must be managed by the Borough so that it does not contribute to pollution and flooding downstream. This also applies to cases in which the majority of stormwater is managed onsite, property owners should contribute to services provided by the Borough that are beyond their property lines, such as permit compliance, MS4 system maintenance, and stormwater improvements throughout the Borough. Stormwater management is a community-wide service and the Program costs need to be distributed to all residents.

2. Why not just include the stormwater program costs in our property taxes?

The advantages of using taxes is that we can deduct them on our federal return if we itemize, even though the deduction will be small. A disadvantage is that there is no correlation between assessed values and the amount of impervious surface on a given property.

The Borough is required to reduce the volume and improve quality of stormwater that flows into the streams and eventually to the Chesapeake Bay. It will be difficult and expensive for the Borough to accomplish this objective. An advantage of a fee-based system is that we can offer credits to the business community & residents to reduce the amount of stormwater that leave their sites. The Borough will be credited with all such reductions assisting us in meeting the EPA/DEP requirements. We cannot give such a credit on a tax-based system.

Another disadvantage is that on a tax-based system, residents would be hit unfairly with a larger share of the costs of the budget. By requiring that the percentage of impervious surface be used as the basis rather than assessed value, the cost is shifted to the properties that create more stormwater runoff and have more ability to reduce it.

3. There is no separate fee/dedicated fund for police, fire, roads, etc. Why do we need it for stormwater?

Those services (police, fire, roads) are general services that the Borough provides. Stormwater is evolving to be a true utility, just like sewer, water and electricity, because of the regulatory requirements and the amount of infrastructure (pipes, channels, catch basins, etc.) that the Borough needs to operate and maintain. These utilities have separate fees because they need to link the fee to the services provided. For example, the more water you use the higher your water bill is. The best way of estimating the stormwater fee is to use impervious area (rooftops, driveways, etc.) because runoff from each property depends mainly on the amount of impervious area.

4. My property has less than 3,586 SF of impervious surface. Shouldn't I pay less?

Although there are variations in the amount of impervious surface between residential parcels and types of structures, a flat rate per residential unit is typically used and has been selected for the following reasons:



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- A flat rate structure is easier to comprehend and administer, requiring minimal cost and effort to implement and oversee compared to other billing options. The Borough wants to use the funds in projects that will solve problems and the operation and maintenance of the stormwater system.
- Spring Grove has invested a significant amount of money and time to collect additional impervious area for the existing geographical information system (GIS) in order to bill each residential customer for its amount of impervious surface. The resulting changes will be small, so at this time, it is not recommended to individually calculate the rates for residential parcels.
- All property owners benefit from the community-wide stormwater management system that manages stormwater from roads and properties.
- Residential customers pay a flat rate for wastewater and trash service (even though the amount of trash or wastewater generated by each property varies). The stormwater fee will take a similar approach and will facilitate consistency with these utility fees.

5. Isn't this fee really just another tax?

Some properties are exempt from taxes, but all developed properties contribute stormwater runoff and should pay the stormwater fee. Furthermore, the revenue can only be used for stormwater management and cannot be redirected for other uses.

6. My neighborhood has a stormwater pond and other residential neighborhoods do not. Can you provide a credit to reduce our fees?

Neighborhoods with existing stormwater retention or detention ponds still contribute runoff and pollution to the Borough's overall stormwater/drainage system. Stormwater management is a community wide service and the Program costs need to be distributed to the Borough residents. Moreover, all residents of the Borough benefit from our stormwater/drainage infrastructure, public streets, and public streams and lakes.

7. Why will the Borough be charging me for rain?

Residents and businesses are not being charged for rain. The stormwater management fee will fund a storm water management program to help reduce the pollution associated with stormwater runoff from reaching our local waterways, maintain the current stormwater drainage system, and address localized flooding concerns.

8. How do I affect stormwater runoff?

If you have a roof, driveway, parking lot or other impervious surface on your property you impact the amount and quality of stormwater that runs off the property. Also, household tasks such as car washing and use of fertilizer can impact stormwater quality. Because everyone contributes in some



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way to the stormwater system, everyone should play a role in supporting its maintenance and upkeep.

9. Hasn't the Borough always had a stormwater system? Nothing has changed on my property. Why will I be charged now when I haven't been in the past?

Yes, the Borough has had a stormwater system for a long time. However, new and forthcoming federal regulations require a comprehensive stormwater quality and management program. The stormwater management fee enables the Borough to meet its responsibilities to manage the stormwater system more closely, identify and eliminate illegal discharges, provide public education, and other regulatory requirements. It will also allow for increased inspection and maintenance of aging infrastructure and the ability to rehabilitate/replace infrastructure that's reached the end of its useful life.

10. Will I still be charged even if it doesn't rain for a long time?

Yes, the pollutant potential in stormwater runoff is actually much greater when it has not rained in a long time because pollutants can build up on all impervious surfaces. In any storm, the initial runoff, or first flush, is the most contaminated. In addition to costs incurred to reduce pollution, maintenance of storm water facilities is required whether it rains or not.

11. How much will I be billed for the stormwater fee?

Single-family residential (SFR) properties will be billed a flat rate at \$30.50 per quarter, or \$122 per year. While everyone with buildings, pavement and other impervious surfaces on their property will pay the fee, the amount will differ between residential and non-residential areas. SFR properties will pay a quarterly fee equal to one Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU). All non-residential properties will pay a multiple of that ERU based on the impervious surface area of their property since runoff and pollution increases as the amount of impervious surface area on a property increases.

12. Does everyone in the Borough pay the fee, including non-profits?

Yes, everyone who owns developed property in the Borough will pay the fee – homeowners, business owners, schools, churches. Tax-exempt properties are required to pay for other utility charges including electric, water and sewer and the stormwater fee is no different. Runoff from impervious surfaces from all properties makes its way into the stormwater collection system and receiving streams which need to be managed and maintained by the Borough.

13. What is an ERU?

An Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) is the amount of impervious surface (measured in square feet) on a typical, single family, residential property. That amount in Spring Grove Borough is 3,586 square feet. The ERU was determined by performing detailed measurements of impervious surfaces contained on SFR properties selected at representative locations across all areas of the Borough. The resulting data was analyzed along with records of impervious area for all buildings, and the average impervious surface value was set as the ERU value.



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14. What is impervious area?

Impervious area is any surface which inhibits infiltration of rainfall into the soil. This includes pavement (asphalt, concrete, etc.), rooftops, patios, sidewalks, and compacted graveled surfaces such as parking areas and driveways.

15. How are impervious surfaces determined?

Impervious surfaces are measured from aerial photographs that have been processed to produce scaled images from which accurate measurements can be made. In certain cases, the Borough may also utilize field measurements or data supplied on site plans to augment information available on aerial photography.

16. How did you come up with the cost of the stormwater management fee?

A list of known problems, scheduled improvements, and projected projects to comply with future regulatory requirements was used as a basis for preparation of a forecast of stormwater program expenses. A 5-year budget projection, including administrative and operation & maintenance costs was also developed to establish funding needs. These overall stormwater system costs were divided by the number of ERUs to come up with the stormwater management fee.

17. How will residential properties be billed?

For those properties with an existing sewer or trash bill from the Borough, the stormwater fee will appear as a separate line item on your existing bill. For those without a current sewer or trash bill from the Borough, a new quarterly stormwater bill will be issued. There will be no pro-rating of fees for partial billing periods. For example, a fee billed in July will cover the entire 3rd quarter of the year, even if the property was vacated in August.

18. How will non-residential properties be billed?

Each non-residential property has been measured to determine the amount of impervious area on the property. That impervious area will be converted to a quantity of ERUs based on one ERU per 3,586 square feet of impervious area, rounded down to the nearest whole number. Each property will be billed the number of ERUs times the Stormwater Assessment Fee rate. The fee will appear on a quarterly bill from the Borough and no property will be billed for less than one ERU.

19. Where does the money collected from the stormwater fee go?

All stormwater fees and interest generated by stormwater charges will be accounted for separately from all other Borough revenues and funds and will be used solely for the operation, maintenance, and management of the stormwater system. The fee will fund many initiatives required by the stormwater program, including:

- **Maintaining and Installing Stormwater Infrastructure** – Miles of piping and other system components make up the storm drainage system that protects Spring Grove Borough from flooding and makes the roads drivable during storms. Improvements to better control flooding are needed in areas of the Borough.



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- **Education** – The best way to protect stormwater quality and stop pollution is to educate our citizens. We make changes in our behaviors when we learn about the negative consequences they create.
- **Protection of the Environment/Regulatory Compliance** – Development and other human interactions with the environment increase the amount of stormwater runoff which is contaminated and carries pollutants into our surface waters. The Borough is required by state and federal regulations to address these issues, and works to reduce stormwater pollution, stop illegal dumping, clean up our watershed and restore local streams.
- **Mapping the System** – In order to effectively maintain the storm drainage system, our staff continues to work regularly to map all of Spring Grove’s outfalls, drains, ditches, pipes and other system components while assessing the stability/safety of the existing infrastructure and monitoring for illicit discharges.

20. Will property taxes go down as a result of the Stormwater Management Fee?

Spring Grove Borough Council is responsible for setting and adjusting property taxes. No changes are anticipated as a result of the stormwater management fee. Revenue from the stormwater management fee will be used only for stormwater management within the Borough.

21. How is unoccupied property treated?

Vacant residential structures and empty commercial/industrial buildings are charged because they continue to generate runoff similar to that generated by occupied property.

22. How is undeveloped property treated?

Undeveloped property is defined as real property that has not been altered by improvements such as buildings, parking lots, structures, or the addition of any other impervious areas. Undeveloped property will not be charged a stormwater fee.

23. How is billing for new properties initiated?

Most of the time, properties undergoing initial development will begin paying the stormwater fee when a certificate of occupancy is issued. This coincides with billing of sanitary sewer and trash. New residential properties will be billed a single ERU. New non-residential properties will be charged based on the amount of impervious area reported as required on the site plan which must be reviewed and approved by the Borough.

24. What happens when a residential property becomes vacant and other utility services are cut off?

The stormwater fee applies whether the property is occupied or not. When a vacant property becomes occupied, sewer and trash service will not start until any back stormwater fees are paid and the account is brought up to date.