



Decatur's Stormwater Utility Some common questions AND their answers

What's this new fee I've heard about?

The City of Decatur has established a stormwater utility. Like electricity, water and sanitary sewers, stormwater runoff can be managed as a utility. The utility will be supported by fees that every property owner within the City would be billed for. The stormwater utility service charge will be added to the City Utility Bill.

Why do we need this?

The City has identified over \$60 million in projects to reduce flooding problems within the City and requires an increase of preventative maintenance of the drainage system. Also, Federal and State regulations on stormwater are becoming increasingly restrictive and the City must comply with those regulations as well.

To meet these challenges, the City has established a Stormwater Utility. The stormwater utility, supported by equitable fees, would provide a dedicated funding source to reduce flooding, replace storm sewer pipes, reduce stream bank erosion, and meet regulatory requirements to reduce stormwater pollution.

Another tax?!?!

User fees are a fee for services provided and have been common throughout the Country and in many cities in Illinois. They are used to fund all or part of public works programs such as water, sewer and stormwater. Utility fees are based on the amount used. Taxes, generally speaking, do not have a direct relationship between the source of revenue and the purpose to which it is applied. Not all properties pay taxes.

How much is it going to be?

For the first year, residential properties will pay \$3.00 base fee per month. After the first year, residential properties will pay \$3.67 per month.

For the first year, non-residential properties will pay \$3.00 base fee per month. After the first year, non-residential properties will pay \$3.00 per month + \$0.67 for every 4,500 sf of impervious surface that is on their property.

I thought you said the fee would be based on the amount used... why is there a base fee?

There are certain base costs that exist to manage the system and to provide a drainage system to connect to. In addition, the City has regulatory requirements that they must meet that affect the entire community.

What's an impervious surface?

An impervious surface is a hard surface that does not allow rain to absorb into the ground. Impervious surfaces increase stormwater runoff. Some examples are roofs, parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks.

I have a gravel parking area, is that impervious?

Unless gravel is specifically designed to be pervious, gravel is an impervious surface. Gravel is compacted and acts in that same way as concrete or asphalt.

Ok, what's NOT an impervious surface?

Lawns, gardens, flowerbeds, woods, retention basins. Almost every natural area is not considered an impervious surface.

Why's the service charge going to be based on hard surfaces?

The amount of stormwater runoff from a property is related to the amount of hard, or impervious, area that is on the property.

What if I don't agree with the amount of impervious surface the City thinks I have?

Impervious area won't be a part of the fee until the second year of the utility. Each residential property will have 1 ERU assigned to the property, that's short for "Equivalent Residential Unit". For non-residential properties, you will receive an estimate on the amount of impervious area the City believes you have prior to being charged for the impervious area. Appeal procedures will be available at that time.

I don't have City water or sanitary service, so I don't pay, right?

If you are living within the City of Decatur, you will pay the stormwater utility service charge. All properties benefit from the City's stormwater management program.

I get flooding around my house; I shouldn't pay until the problem is fixed!

If you are living within the City of Decatur, you will pay the stormwater utility service charge. All properties benefit from the City's stormwater management program and revenue brought in by the stormwater utility will be used to improve flooding issues around the City.

The City has 46 known flooding areas. We can't fix all of them at one time. We plan to start work on the Top 10 and when these are done we will work on another 10 until each one is

fixed. A portion of the fees collected will also go towards maintaining existing drainage systems that do work well.

I don't have storm sewers in my neighborhood, I shouldn't pay.

There are many other facilities in the City's drainage system other than storm sewers, such as roadside ditches, waterways, and curb & gutter in the street. If you are living within the City of Decatur, you will pay the stormwater utility service charge to support the entire stormwater drainage system.

I'm tax-exempt... I shouldn't pay.

The stormwater utility service charge is not a tax, therefore all entities including churches and nonprofit organizations will be required to pay the service charge. The stormwater utility is designed so that members of the community fund the program in relation to how their property generates stormwater runoff.

In 2005, the Illinois Supreme Court determined what made the stormwater utility a service charge and not a tax. (Church of Peace v. City of Rock Island, 2005)

Can I pay less?

The proposed stormwater utility will include a credit program that will provide a means for property owners to reduce their stormwater utility fee. The credits will be applied to the ERU portion of the stormwater utility fee. All credits will be outlined in a Credit Manual that should come out about 6 months after the Phase 1 billing starts.

Why can't the City use money from their higher water rate to pay for drainage?

Both the water fees and the sanitary sewer fees are dedicated funding sources for these two utilities. Revenues that are generated by these fees may not be used for any unrelated purposes. Drinking water consumption or sanitary sewer use has nothing to do with the storm drainage problem.

When did this going to Council?

It was presented and passed on Monday, April 21, 2014

When will this fee start?

Billing of all non-tax exempt parcels will start on the bills received in November 2014. This will be only the base fee of \$3 per month per parcel. Then, in November 2015, the ERU rate will begin. All parcels will be charged \$3 base + \$0.67/ERU. Residential properties will all be charged for 1 ERU. Tax-exempt parcels will begin to be charged the stormwater utility service charge in October 2015.