

STORMWATER UTILITY FEES

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is any form of precipitation, such as rainfall or snowmelt, which flows across developed and undeveloped surfaces. Stormwater that does not soak into the ground becomes surface runoff, which drains either into the storm sewer system, or our surface water, such as streams, lakes and the Santiam River.

What is an impervious surface?

An impervious surface is a surface that has been compacted or covered with a layer of material that prevents or slows water from soaking into the ground. Impervious surfaces increase stormwater runoff and contribute pollutants. Common examples include: sidewalks, rooftops, compacted soils, gravel surfaces, roadways, parking lots, patios, buildings, and other man-made structures.

Why is a Stormwater Utility Fee needed?

State and federal governments have passed regulations that require Jefferson to take steps to reduce polluted stormwater runoff. This is an unfunded mandate and adequate funding for the stormwater program is required. The Stormwater Utility Fee establishes a dedicated and sustainable funding source that provides for the operation, improvement and maintenance of the City's drainage infrastructure. The Stormwater Fee will be charged to all property based upon impervious surface, which is a reliable and equitable source of funding for the program.

When will the fee be in effect?

You will see the Stormwater Utility Fee listed on your water bill starting in July 2019.

How was the Stormwater Utility Fee Developed?

The Stormwater Utility Fee is based on an Equivalent Dwelling Unit (EDU). An EDU is equal to 2,500 square feet of impervious surface area. All single-family residences are deemed as 1 EDU; regardless of impervious surface area.

What is the EDU Fee?

One EDU or a single-family residential property will pay a flat fee of \$2.00 per month. The Stormwater Utility Fee will be listed on your water bill beginning in July 2019.

Is this a one-time charge?

The Stormwater Utility Fee will be an ongoing monthly service charge for the development of a stormwater maintenance program, operations, facilities, and water quality compliance.

I am a renter—do I pay the fee or does my landlord?

Under most circumstances, the bill will go to whoever pays the City's water bill for the property. (The "Person Responsible" or the "Customer").

Why do I have to pay this fee?

Every property in the City contributes to stormwater runoff. Therefore, every property should support the improvements, operation, and maintenance of stormwater drainage systems in an equitable manner.

Where is the money going?

The City of Jefferson has approximately:

- 255 storm drains
- 7.98 miles of storm sewers
- 9 storm sewer outfalls
- 2.4 miles of creeks and channels

The Stormwater Utility Fund will be used to support the estimated \$ 714,000 worth of drainage improvements needed throughout the City, based on figures from the Storm Water Master Plan adopted in 2002. In addition, the City must fund additional specific program requirements, such as bio-swales and mechanical treatment.

Is the Stormwater Utility Fee a tax?

No, the Stormwater Utility Fee is a utility like your gas, electrical, or water/sewer utility.

What if I have two residences on my property?

Two or more dwellings on one parcel is considered multi-family residential and will be charged for 2 EDUs.

What if I do not agree with my stormwater bill?

Customers disputing stormwater fees or related decisions may appeal. Appeals must be made in writing and submitted within ten days from the decision or utility billing statement under dispute. Utility bills more than ten days old cannot be appealed. Appeals should clearly identify the following:

- The utility billing account number which is the subject of the appeal;
- The date of the utility bill being appealed;
- The reason for the appeal; and
- All pertinent information necessary to support the claim (ex. Photos, maps, as-builts, etc.).

Written appeals can be submitted by mail, email, or in person to:

City of Jefferson
Sarah Cook, City Recorder
Attention: Stormwater Appeals
150 N Second Street
P.O. Box 83
Jefferson, OR 97352

The City Recorder's decision is appealable to the City Council within 15 days of the City Recorder's decision.

What if I don't pay, or pay late?

We have an excellent payment history with most of our customers and have been able to help them remain current with their bills. Stormwater fees will be collected in the same manner and at the same time as water service bills. Delinquent fees will be added to all delinquent accounts. The City is authorized to waive penalties for de minimis balances or extenuating circumstances. As a final resort, water service may be withheld in the event of non-payment.

What can individuals do to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff?

Create a more sustainable landscape

Always pick up after your pet

Don't wash cars in the street, but on lawns

Use lawn chemicals in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations

How can you impose this fee without a vote?

This is not a tax but a user fee. The Jefferson Council has been involved with reviewing a number of options for funding stormwater management. We have also worked directly with the City Attorney and City Engineer to discuss the fee and program. Announcements were mailed on March 28, 2019, two public meetings to discuss the fee are scheduled for April 11th and May 9th, and a public hearing is set for May 23, 2019.

How can I get help with a neighborhood stormwater problem?

Give us a call at (541) 327-2768 and we will be happy to see what can be done.

How can I be sure this money won't pay for other City projects?

Under law, stormwater fees may not exceed the cost of providing stormwater improvements and services. Your fees will go into an "enterprise" or special fund that will be used only to pay for the stormwater program.

How will you decide which stormwater projects/improvements get done first?

One of the initial actions of the stormwater utility was to inventory all the existing drainage system needs and develop an overall improvement plan. This plan will prioritize existing needs based on both stormwater quantity and quality considerations. For more information, see the Stormwater Master Plan.

Will this money attract grants and other money; for example, for State and Federal projects?

Yes, we expect to be more competitive for any funds which become available, especially those related to stormwater quality where City service charge revenues may be required as collateral or matching funds for federal or state loans.

Why are churches and schools being billed?

The service charge, just like water and 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 contribute a significant amount of runoff to the City because of their size and amount of hard surface. They will be treated like all other customers under the rate structure.



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