

# VILLAGE OF WESTON STORMWATER UTILITY FAQs

## WHAT IS STORMWATER?

Stormwater is the water that runs off property when it rains. Stormwater flows into streets, storm sewers, and ditches and is carried directly into the nearby lakes and/or rivers.

## POLLUTION

When stormwater flows across driveways, parking lots, lawns, streets, and other surfaces, it can pick up pollutants along the way. The pollution comes from several sources: oil that leaks from vehicles, tire and brake lining wear, pesticides on lawns, leaves, etc. When this pollution reaches the lakes and rivers, it can hurt the fish and plants that live there. It can also cause algae to grow, making boating, swimming, or fishing in these water bodies less desirable.



## FLOODING



“Imperviousness” results when houses or buildings are built on a lot that was previously vegetated. An impervious surface does not allow water to

soak into the ground. For example, driveways, rooftops, parking lots, and streets are considered to be impervious surfaces.

**Increased areas of impervious surface result in more water running off the land and can lead to increased flooding.**

## STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Traditionally, stormwater management focused only on handling the “quantity” of water from precipitation and the resulting flooding issues. Storm sewers and ditches were built to quickly carry stormwater away from homes and buildings so that it would not back up and flood adjoining properties. More recently, the “quality” aspect of stormwater management has become increasingly important. Pollution from stormwater is recognized as a major reason for impairment to rivers and lakes in Wisconsin. Accordingly, stormwater management now also addresses water quality issues related to stormwater.



## WHAT IS A STORMWATER UTILITY?

A stormwater utility is a way to fund the cost of municipal stormwater management services. The stormwater utility is similarly to an electric, water, or wastewater utility. Citizens and businesses are charged a utility fee for stormwater management services provided.



**Stormwater utility fees are based on the amount of impervious surface on the property and the amount of runoff that surface generates.** (See detailed explanation on next page)

## WHY WAS A STORMWATER UTILITY CREATED?

Federal and state governments initiated regulatory programs for stormwater pollution control. However, local governments were left to finance the programs and capital improvements on their own to comply with these ever-evolving rule changes. The Village created the stormwater utility in 2004, when the impacts of impending rule changes weren't completely understood. What was clear was that the Village's ability to fund stormwater regulation compliance projects would not be possible through the property tax levy without reducing other services. This was due to reductions in state shared revenue (\$4,131,204 since 2003), as well as tax levy limits on local governments statewide.



**Weston's stormwater utility assures the Village can comply with stormwater regulations intended to protect and improve our valuable water resources – without diverting financial resources away from other services.** The utility funds such public amenities as storm sewer maintenance and repair, new storm sewer construction and ditch maintenance, as well as the administrative costs associated with stormwater management. Stormwater utility fees also pay for practices to reduce flooding and to help improve water quality.

Currently, the Village is compliant with the original regulations related to Total Suspended Solids Removal, but 2018 will see the introduction of new rules related

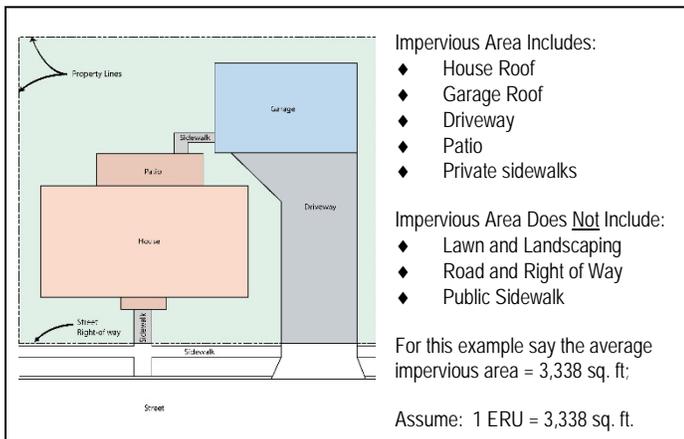
to phosphorus reduction. That study is still in progress by the DNR and the Village does not yet know what the implications will be.

## HOW DO YOU DETERMINE HOW MUCH I PAY FOR STORMWATER SERVICES?

Through the 2003 budget, stormwater services were paid by property taxes. However, paying stormwater-management service costs with property taxes tied stormwater costs to **the value of a property**. This method did not account for **the amount of runoff generated by the property**.

**Before creating the stormwater utility, residential properties in Weston used to pay 68% of the costs related to stormwater management, when in reality, residential properties only generated about 32% of the stormwater runoff.**

With the creation of a stormwater utility, fees became based on two factors: (1) the cost of the municipal stormwater management program and (2) the amount of impervious surface on a property.



To determine the amount of runoff generated (as measured by impervious surfaces) an ERU (Equivalent Runoff Unit) is calculated. The ERU is equal to the **average** impervious area of all the single-family homes in Weston.

For the Village, an ERU was calculated to equal 3,338 square feet. This was calculated by using aerial photographs and sampling a statistically significant number of homes. Each single-family homeowner pays the cost for one ERU. All other types of properties pay for multiple ERUs based upon the amount of their actual impervious area. Undeveloped property (with no impervious surfaces) does not pay a stormwater utility fee.

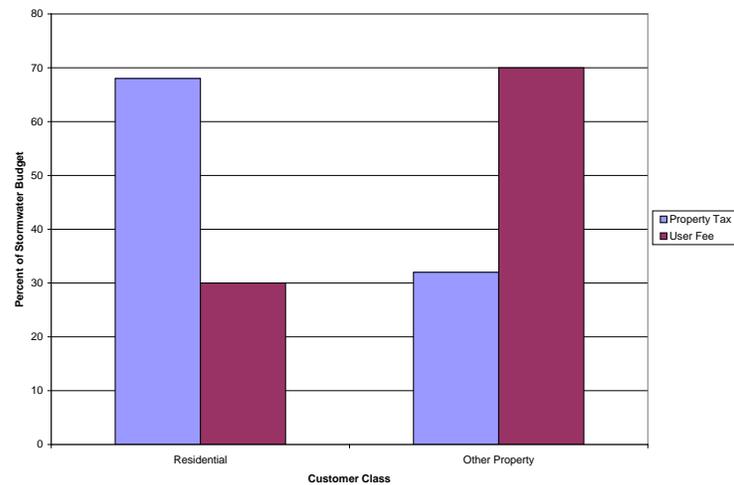
The stormwater utility fee is added as a separate line item on the quarterly utility bill each property already receives for sanitary sewer and drinking water services.

Rural property owners who do not receive sewer or water service still receive a bill from the stormwater utility.

Examples of Estimated Utility Fees for Different Property Types				
Type of Property	Sq. Ft. of Impervious Area	ERUs*	Quarterly Charge	Annual Charge
Single Family	3,338	1.0	\$12.50	\$50.00
Fast Food Restaurant	35,186	10.5	\$131.25	\$525.00
Church	85,000	25.5	\$318.75	\$1,275.00
Apartment Complex	133,009	39.8	\$497.50	\$1,990.00
Large Discount Retail	438,794	131.5	\$1,643.75	\$6,575.00

\*ERUs = Equivalent Runoff Units

By charging a stormwater utility fee based on impervious surface area, all property owners now pay for stormwater costs in proportion to the amount of runoff their property creates – 32% from residential properties and 68% from all others.



## A BETTER FUTURE...

The Village of Weston is striving to protect its infrastructure, businesses, and homes from damage due to flooding. It is also working toward improving the water quality of its nearby lakes and rivers so that its citizens may boat, fish, and swim in cleaner water. A stormwater utility is an equitable and fair system to support stormwater management services.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:

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