



Stormwater Utility

Frequently Asked Questions

1. How is stormwater management funded currently?

Stormwater management is currently funded primarily through the General, HURF, and the Wastewater funds. The General Fund pays for capital improvements. The HURF pays for street sweeping, which has important water quality benefits. The Wastewater Fund pays for some regulatory compliance and maintenance of underground stormwater infrastructure. In times of emergencies, all three funds have assisted in funding corrective operations.

2. Why is the city now charging a fee for stormwater management?

The fee that the City is considering would recover the costs of stormwater management. The city currently provides some stormwater and pollution mitigation related services, such as street sweeping, regulatory compliance, and capital improvement however the funding is provided by the General Fund, the Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF), and the Wastewater Fund. Due in large part to regulatory requirements, the city must increase its stormwater operations and construct capital improvements. It no longer makes sense to burden the General Fund, HURF, and Wastewater Funds with these increasing stormwater costs.

3. What is the cost of the proposed stormwater utility fee and how was that cost determined?

A stormwater utility is the most equitable method to generate the necessary revenue needed to operate and maintain the City's stormwater system, meet federal requirements, and construct capital improvements to mitigate existing flooding, erosion and sedimentation problems. Stormwater Utility charges are based on the amount of impervious area on a property which directly relates to the volume of runoff and the demand the property places on the stormwater conveyance (transport) system.

The stormwater rate that is proposed would be \$2.00 per equivalent dwelling unit (EDU) per month for single residential properties. This amount was determined by calculating the average amount of impervious surface areas (roofs, patios, driveways, sidewalks) on Surprise's single family residences; the average residential EDU is 3,420 square feet.

For commercial property, or other developed property (non-residential), the number of EDUs would be determined by dividing the amount of impervious surface area by 3,420 square feet. That total would then be multiplied by \$2.00 to determine the over stormwater rate for that property. For example, a facility that is 10,000 square feet would pay approximately \$5.85 ($10,000 \text{ sf} \div 3,420 \text{ sf} = 2.923 \text{ EDUs} \times \$2.00 = \$5.85$).

4. Why can't the city continue to fund stormwater management the way it has been done in the past?

There are three reasons the city needs to implement the new utility. First, as regulations and associated program costs increase, it becomes unaffordable for other sources to continue to support stormwater management without impacting their primary missions. Second, the methods used to recover street and wastewater costs have little if anything to do with stormwater management. For example, it is unfair to ask those who pay wastewater bills to pay for stormwater management when their contribution of

runoff has nothing to do with their billed wastewater flows. Finally, a stormwater utility must provide annual budgets and financial reports so citizens can review its performance. The separate utility will increase the transparency of stormwater management.

5. Are there other cities that charge for stormwater management?

Mesa, Flagstaff, Oro Valley, Tucson, Peoria, and Scottsdale are among Arizona cities that charge for stormwater management services. Hundreds of public agencies across the country charge for similar pollution mitigation services.

6. How will this utility funding be used?

Funding will be put towards dedicated maintenance of the City's stormwater systems, inspection and enforcement of storm water regulations and standards, public information and education, and construction of capital storm water facilities.

7. What stormwater management activities will occur when it is not raining?

Operation and maintenance activities of the system, public education, and enforcement of ordinances to prevent contaminants from making their way into the stormwater when it does rain.

8. Does the implementation of this utility mean that my property/community will no longer flood?

If implemented, the stormwater system will be improved and maintained. This will result in better stormwater management throughout the city over time, and will assist in the reduction of some of the localized flooding the City has experienced in the past.

9. Which federal and state laws govern the management of stormwater?

Section 402 of the Clean Water Act governs the management of stormwater. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) administers the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program. The State of Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) administers Arizona's Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (AZPDES) permit program as mandated by the EPA. The permit program governs stormwater discharges associated with industrial facilities, construction activities, and municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s). The City of Surprise is considered a MS4.

10. What is a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4)?

Some cities across the country operate combined sewer systems. These sewers are designed to carry both stormwater runoff and wastewater from homes and businesses to a water treatment plant, where the water is treated prior to being discharged.

In Arizona, most municipalities operate two separate drain systems: Sanitary Sewer, which carries wastewater to a water treatment plant for treatment; and a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). The MS4 conveys stormwater runoff through drains, streets and open channels, directly discharging the water into retention basins, washes, rivers, or lakes. This water does NOT go to a water treatment plant.