



Stormwater Utility

Frequently Asked Questions

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

The fee that the City is charging recovers the costs of stormwater management. The city currently provides stormwater and pollution mitigation related services, such as street sweeping, regulatory compliance, and capital improvements; previously this was done with funding 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.

2. How was the stormwater utility fee 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 system.

The stormwater rate is \$2.75 per equivalent dwelling unit (EDU) per month. All single family residences in Surprise would pay that amount.

Commercially developed property would pay \$2.75 times the number of EDUs on the property. The number of EDUs would be determined by dividing the amount of impervious surface area by 3,420 square feet – the average amount of impervious surface area on Surprise's single family residences

3. 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.

4. 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.

5. 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.

6. 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 stormwater when it does rain.

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

It means that the stormwater system will be improved and maintained. That 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.

8. 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 an MS4.

9. 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 the 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.