

# New Albany Stormwater FAQs

## New EPA Stormwater Pollution Rules

The Federal Environmental Protection Agency has developed a program to reduce the amount of pollutants carried off by rainfall and stormwater runoff. This program requires certain towns, cities and counties to develop a program for preventing the pollution of local waterways by stormwater runoff and to submit their program for a permit to the state regulators.

*Our stormwater program focuses on:*

- Reducing flooding and drainage problems.
- Reducing pollution carried off by rainwater.
- Fulfilling EPA requirements.
- Educating and involving the public on stormwater.
- Storm construction and development practices.
- Finding a fair and equitable way to fund stormwater activities.



Courtesy USEPA

*Our natural resources is what makes southern Indiana unique. These efforts will help protect them for future generations.*

### 1. Why is a stormwater program necessary?

Polluted storm water runoff contributes to poor water quality in our streams and waterways affecting everybody's quality of life.

Polluted runoff travels through the storm sewer system via channels and pipes and ends up, untreated, in our waterways. When left uncontrolled, water pollution can result in the destruction of fish & wildlife habitat, loss in aesthetic value, threats to public health, and decreased quality of life. Stormwater can carry and deposit things like leaves, fertilizers, pesticides, pet waste, construction site runoff (which includes sediment), and other harmful urban runoff pollutants.

### 2. Who is regulated?

Thousands of communities around the country and hundreds in Indiana. In our area, this includes Floyd & Clark Counties, Clarksville, Jeffersonville, Sellersburg, Greenville, and New Albany.

### 3. What do we have to do?

The City is required to develop, submit, and implement a Storm Water Quality Management Plan (SWQMP) that identifies activities the City will perform to benefit water quality. This plan was submitted to the Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) in May of 2005. The City is currently developing strategies for implementing and financing the SWQMP and other stormwater community needs.

### 4. What is included in the City's Stormwater Quality Management Plan?

There are six areas that must be addressed in the Storm Water Quality Management Plan (SWQMP):

1. Public Education and Outreach
2. Public Participation/Involvement
3. Illicit (Illegal) Discharge Detection and Elimination
4. Construction Site Runoff Control
5. Post-Construction Runoff Control
6. Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

### 5. Who will pay for this?

Ultimately, everyone does.

The program must be paid for with local money. The City is implementing a stormwater utility user fee. See the reverse side for User Fee FAQ.

### 6. What happens if we don't comply?

The state and federal regulators are authorized to issue agreed orders, commissioner orders to cease and desist and civil penalties over \$25,000 per day.

# Stormwater Utility User Fee FAQs

For more information,

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## 1. What is stormwater and why should we care?

Like sanitary sewer services, the city operates and maintains a system of pipes and channels that drains and protects our homes and businesses from flooding. This system is costly to operate and maintain, and is facing increasing regulatory requirements from the EPA.

Stormwater is water from rain and snowmelt. As rain and snow falls to earth in agricultural and undeveloped areas, it is either absorbed or it slowly runs off and dissipates. In a growing city like New Albany, where rooftops and paved areas not only prevent the water from being absorbed but helps it run off at a much faster rate, problems arise. Stormwater can accumulate, causing nuisance flooding and possible threats to public health and safety.

Flooding is only a part of the problem. As the rain falls onto our streets and runs off, it carries with it pollutants such as gasoline, oil, and heavy metals. Pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers are washed from lawns and other green spaces. With the passage of time, these pollutants buildup in our waterways and underground drainage systems, damaging our streams, rivers and lakes.



## 2. What is a stormwater utility user fee? An alternative to higher taxes.

A user fee is a mechanism for the city to recover costs for services it must provide to meet public demands and stormwater regulations. The City is structured to recover costs fairly and equitably.

## 3. Are we the only community with a stormwater user fee? No.

Stormwater user fees have been imposed in many cities in the United States and several in Indiana. Nearby communities include the Cities of Jeffersonville, Clarksville, and Louisville.

## 4. Why do we need a stormwater user fee?

Unlike sewer and water services, there is no dedicated funding for the stormwater system. Previously, the City of New Albany has used sewer funds and general funds (taxes) to cover the stormwater system, but the city is facing increasing costs and a more fair and equitable way to fund stormwater has been explored. A stormwater user fee will provide revenue to maintain and improve existing stormwater infrastructure in New Albany as well as implementing a comprehensive stormwater quality management plan as required by the EPA.

## 5. What was the process for establishing the stormwater user fee?

The Stormwater Advisory Committee, made up of community representatives, residents, and City staff, was established to review and advise New Albany on stormwater issues. The Stormwater Advisory Committee discussed stormwater management issues, organizational issues, and funding. Various funding solutions were discussed and compared for cost of administration, equity, and ease of development. The general consensus determined that raising taxes was not desirable and that establishing a user fee was the most favorable solution to the funding problem. This was then taken to the Sewer Board and Council for consideration and action.

## 6. What are the user fees based on? The Fair Share.

The stormwater utility user fee will use the amount of impervious area to estimate stormwater runoff from properties.

## 7. What is impervious surface?

Impervious surfaces are those disturbed or hardened surface areas that either prevent or limit the natural entry of water into the soil. Rooftops, buildings, streets, parking lots, sidewalks, asphalt,



# Stormwater Utility FAQs (cont.)

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concrete, other paving, driveways, compacted gravel, patios, and artificial turf are all examples of impervious surfaces. These improvements reduce natural infiltration, which increases runoff.

## **8. How are residential fees determined? Flat Rate.**

The City has decided to follow the national model of a flat user fee (sometimes referred to as Equivalent Residential Unit, ERU or base billing rate) for residential properties. Residential properties are billed a flat fee of \$3.17 per month through Indiana American Water.

## **9. How are non-residential fees determined? Measured.**

The impervious area on non-residential property is measured and the user fee is determined based on the total square footage of impervious area. New Albany is using a rate of \$3.17 per 2,500 square feet (referenced as Equivalent Residential Unit, ERU) of impervious area on non-residential properties. The fee is based on the relative amount of runoff from a property that the City is responsible for providing drainage, conveying offsite, and managing pollution. For example, if a corner restaurant has four times the impervious area of a residential property then it pays four times the user fee.

## **10. How is the impervious surface measured? Digitized Aerial Photography.**

In order to determine how much impervious surface is on a piece of developed property, the city is utilizing Geographical Information System (GIS) or computerized maps and digitized aerial photography to measure the total square footage of the impervious surface on a piece of property.

## **11. Who has to pay? Everyone.**

All developed property within the City of New Albany will pay the stormwater service fee. These properties include houses, businesses, industry, schools, public facilities, and churches. The City made a special effort to ensure fairness and equity. This has led to a policy that everybody pays, even government buildings.

## **12. Why are churches, schools and government buildings being billed? Because this is a user fee and not a tax.**

The user fee, just like electric, drinking water, and sanitary 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, schools and government buildings 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 user fee rate structure.

## **13. What will the money be used for? Serving You.**

Some of the other major components of this program include:

- Constructing of long overdue flood protection and water quality management projects.
- Providing a higher level of maintenance to the drainage infrastructure.
- Pollution prevention by reducing illegal discharges and pollutants.
- Educating the public on stormwater quality issues.
- Increasing maintenance/repair of the city's stormwater system.
- Developing/enforcing stormwater design standards and regulations.

## **14. Why should I have to pay? I live on a hill and have no drainage problem.**

You may not have a problem, but the runoff generated from your property is contributing to problems downstream. The approach being taken through this program recognizes that everyone contributes to the problem (runoff and pollution) and everyone will share in the results (improved water quality, reduced flooding, unimpaired access to roads, etc.).

*A stormwater utility user fee will allow New Albany to meet the stormwater needs of the community in a fair and equitable way.*