

City of Dahlonega

Stormwater Management Program & Stormwater User Fee

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Stormwater Runoff? Stormwater runoff is rainfall that drains off rooftops, driveways, sidewalks, parking lots, roads, and other surfaces that prohibit rainfall from soaking into the ground. The stormwater runoff then flows into the City drainage system and into our local creeks and rivers. All developed properties in the City contribute stormwater runoff to the drainage system and, in some cases, to recurring drainage problems. In addition to flooding problems, stormwater runoff washes chemicals, debris, trash and other pollutants into the drainage system and our local surface waters.

What stormwater services are provided by the City of Dahlonega? The City of Dahlonega is responsible for the management of stormwater runoff and drainage issues within the City's public drainage system. The City must undertake various activities including the cleaning of ditches and pipe systems; repair of aging culverts and catch basins; and construction of new infrastructure to improve stormwater drainage. The City has performed a survey of flooding issues throughout the City and identified more than \$3 million of in critical capital drainage projects. Aging infrastructure, a lack of resources to implement important drainage projects, and State and Federal regulatory requirements have driven the City's need to develop and implement a more comprehensive stormwater management program (SWMP).

How is the City of Dahlonega proposing to address expanding SWMP needs? The City of Dahlonega is considering the creation of a stormwater utility and adoption of a stormwater user fee dedicated solely to addressing stormwater management and drainage issues. The stormwater user fee will provide additional resources to help fund the City's stormwater program. These resources, as well as other funding sources are needed in order to expand the level of service provided to residents, businesses, institutional and government customers as it relates to stormwater.

What is a Stormwater User Fee? Common in many states and found in over 60 jurisdictions in Georgia, a stormwater user fee is a charge for stormwater management services provided by the City to all developed properties in the City. A stormwater user fee is similar to water and sewer fees, which are monthly charges for the customer's use of the City's water and sewer system. Under the proposed plan, the stormwater user fee revenue collected can only be utilized for the provision of stormwater management services to customers, just as water and sewer fees are used only to fund water and sewer operations and projects.

How does the City determine the stormwater user fee charge for an individual property? The stormwater user fee charge will be based on the amount of impervious surfaces on a parcel. Common impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, rooftops, buildings or structures, sidewalks,

walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, storage areas, awnings, fabric or plastic coverings, and other surfaces such as compacted soil and gravel. The square footage of impervious surface on a property has a direct correlation to the amount of stormwater runoff discharged from that property. Developed parcels with greater amounts of impervious area will have a larger impact on the City's drainage system and SWMP and would therefore be charged a higher user fee.

How is my stormwater user fee calculated? Stormwater user fees will be calculated using a per unit area approach (e.g. "x" dollars per 1000 square feet per month). The City has calculated fees individually for each property using \$1.50 per 1,000 feet of impervious area for all developed properties in the City, regardless of land use or type of ownership. This is in line with similar fees for many jurisdictions across the state.

Why did the City decide to implement a stormwater user fee charge? The City has evaluated the feasibility of charging a stormwater user fee as opposed to increasing millage rates and has determined that the user fee approach is a more fair and equitable way to allocate costs of SWMP services. Under a stormwater utility, the user fee is not based on the assessed "value" of a property, rather it is based on the demand that each customer imposes on the drainage system and the corresponding SWMP services provided. All developed properties that receive stormwater services from the City pay a user fee. This user fee approach is very similar to water, sewer, and sanitation services.

Will there be any way to reduce my Stormwater User Fee? Yes, both residential and non-residential customers may be eligible for credits to reduce their stormwater user fee charge. The credits will be based on specific activities that the customer undertakes with regard to their property to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff into the City's drainage system. The City is in the process of developing the procedures for obtaining credits, which will be outlined in the City's *Stormwater User Fee Credit Manual*.

What is the proposed billing frequency and the billing mechanism? The City anticipates charging stormwater user fees on the City's monthly utility bill beginning in January 2021. If you do not currently receive a utility bill from the City, you would receive a stormwater-only utility bill effective January 2021.

Who do I call if I have additional questions? Contact Mark Buchanan, Director of Public Works/City Engineer, with any questions at (706) 482-2712.