

PORTAGE COUNTY STORM WATER DISTRICT NON-RESIDENTIAL FAQ

What is a storm water district?

A Storm Water District is a vehicle to implement and fund public services related to storm water quality management. A Storm Water District will operate in a similar fashion as an electric or water utility. The district will be administered and funded separately from the revenues in the general fund, ensuring a dedicated revenue source for the expense of storm water quality management. User fees will be collected from property owners in return for storm water management services provided by the district.

The Portage County Board of Commissioners is considering a Storm Water District to implement and fund the requirements mandated by the Federal and State government in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Permit for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4). The Storm Water District would be limited to the unincorporated townships of the county.

Why does Portage County need a storm water district?

The United States EPA has issued storm water regulations that require small urban and urbanizing areas (including Portage County) to control and regulate storm water runoff. Portage County is required to initiate storm water quality actions without federal or state funding to support implementation of this program.

What types of services will be funded?

The Storm Water District will fund services directly related to the administration of the NPDES Phase II program, as required by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 6117.

Some of the items that may be funded by the district include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Costs associated with the BMP measures outlined in the Storm Water Management Plan.
- Construction of replacement or new storm water projects.
- Financial assistance for septic system replacement projects.
- Identification and mapping of sensitive areas for protection and use restriction.
- Field inspection and enforcement of Portage County storm water design standards and regulations.
- The purchase of specialized equipment necessary for storm water system maintenance.

Solving flood control problems is not included in the Storm Water District's primary objectives.

When will the user fee become effective?

The Portage County Board of Commissioners anticipates the user fee will be included on the February 2010 property tax duplicate.

What are the user fees based on?

The storm water user fee is based on the amount of impervious area contained on each parcel. Impervious area can be directly related to the amount of storm water runoff generated from the parcel.

What are impervious areas?

Impervious areas are hard surfaces that are resistant to the infiltration of storm water runoff. Examples include: pavements, concrete, sidewalks, driveways, compacted gravel, buildings, etc.

What is an ERU?

ERU stands for Equivalent Residential Unit. One ERU is equal 5,800 square feet.

What is the fee for each ERU?

The fee for each ERU is \$3.00 or less per month.

What is non-residential property?

Non-residential property means property other than residential property. Such property shall include, but not be limited to, commercial properties, industrial properties, parking lots, hospitals, schools, recreational and cultural facilities, hotels, offices, churches, and public properties excluding roadway rights-of-way.

How are ERUs calculated for other developed property?

The County used digital orthophotos (aerial mapping) to determine the impervious surface area for each developed property. Where parcels were developed after the aerial photos were taken, engineering plans were used to calculate the impervious area. This total square footage was then divided by 5,800 square feet to calculate the total ERU for that property. The minimum utility fee for any property is one ERU. The ERU will be rounded to the nearest 1/10th of one ERU.

For example, if a developed (non residential) property has 10,000 square feet of impervious area, the property will be charged 1.7 ERU ($10,000/5,800=1.7$).

Therefore, the total storm water user fee charged to this property would be \$5.10 ($1.7 \text{ ERU} * \$3.00/\text{ERU} = \5.10) per month.

What about agricultural property?

Agricultural properties will be charged a flat rate of 1 ERU per parcel. Most impervious surfaces on agricultural parcel are disconnected which allows storm water runoff to be treated through infiltration versus other types of development where the impervious surfaces are directly connected to storm sewer and other conveyance systems. Many agricultural property owners will pay more than 1 ERU through ownership of multiple parcels.

Who has to pay?

All properties in unincorporated Portage County will pay the fee as permitted under ORC 6117.

Are we the only community with a storm water user fee?

No, storm water user fees are not new. Many communities in Ohio have already adopted a storm water user fee.

Why doesn't the general fund cover this work?

The Portage County General Fund has provided minimal financing for storm water projects. The General Fund does not have adequate funding to support this program.

How will the user fee be billed?

The storm water user fee will be included as a separate line item in your property tax duplicate.

Isn't this just another tax?

No, it is a user fee based on each property's contribution to storm water runoff in Portage County.

Can the County enact the Storm Water District without a vote?

Under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 6117, counties are allowed to set up a user fee for water, sanitary sewer and/or storm water by a vote of the Board of Commissioners. A referendum or vote of the people is not required under this law.

How can we be sure that the money raised will be used for storm water quality improvements and not diverted to other projects?

All of the funds raised by the utility will go into a storm water "Enterprise Fund." Under state law, money in enterprise funds can only be used for their intended purposes.

How will the Storm Water District affect new developments?

All new development will still be required to follow existing local rules and all state and federal regulations. Existing regulations require developers to build, at their expense, storm drain systems, storm water detention facilities, and water quality basins to manage the runoff generated by their developments. Once a lot is developed, that lot will be subject to the same storm water fee as existing lots.

Who do I call if I have additional questions about the storm water utility or how my fee was calculated?

Mickey Marozzi has been designated Portage County Storm Water Coordinator by the Board of Commissioners. He can be reached at the County Engineer's Office (330) 296-6411.