

Town of Scott

Storm Water Utility

Frequently Asked Questions

The Town of Scott has implemented a storm water utility. The storm water utility will provide a dedicated source of revenue for the Town to improve, operate and maintain the storm water management system. Currently expenditures for storm water management have come from the Town's general fund (i.e. property taxes) and/or from special assessments. The utility will reduce or eliminate the need to levy taxes for these projects and will instead apply the charges proportionally to those people who contribute to storm water runoff and receive benefit from storm water management.

What is storm water?

Storm water is rain or snowmelt that does not soak into the ground, but instead runs off impervious surfaces such as streets, parking areas, rooftops and other developed land and either flows directly into nearby streams or travels there through drainage systems, such as curbs and gutters, inlets, storm sewers, ditches, detention ponds and channels.

Why can storm water runoff be a problem?

Storm water runoff can cause problems in two main areas – one relating to water pollution and one relating to flooding. As storm water runs over the land surface, it can pick up anything on the ground surface, such as oils, greases, fertilizers, pesticides, lawn debris, soil, and litter and carry these pollutants untreated into the nearest roadway ditch, storm drain inlet or water body. Storm water runoff can also contribute to flooding. As more and more areas become developed, more land surface becomes impervious as it is compacted or covered with streets, driveways, rooftops, parking lots etc. Increased impervious cover decreases the amount of rainfall that can naturally infiltrate into the soil and increases the volume and rate of storm water runoff. These changes lead to more frequent and severe flooding of waterways.

What is a storm water utility?

The Town of Scott Storm Water Utility is a public utility organized as a separate enterprise. Assets managed by the Storm Water Utility include storm sewers, culverts, detention basins, ditches and equipment used for managing the storm drainage system. The Utility is given the responsibility of providing for the public needs in the area of storm water management and compliance with federal and state laws. The Utility charges fees for operation and maintenance of facilities and for capital improvements. The Utility works to solve current drainage problems, prevent future problems, as well as repair, maintain, and enhance those facilities already constructed.

What does the Storm Water Utility fee pay for?

The Town of Scott was issued a Storm Water Discharge Permit from the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) relating to the operation of the storm water conveyance systems within the Town's municipal boundary. The Storm Water discharge Permit is an **Unfunded Mandate** stemming from the Federal Government's enactment of the Clean Water Act onto the States and ultimately onto local municipalities. In order to comply with the requirements of the permit, the Town will undertake numerous administrative, planning, maintenance and construction efforts to improve the Town's storm

water drainage systems and storm water quality management programs. The Storm Water Utility will finance these additional costs for the Town.

How much will this cost me?

The storm water fee per household in the Town of Scott is estimated to be \$3.75 per month, or approximately \$45.00 per year. The average household storm water utility charge in Wisconsin is \$47.26 annually. The storm water fee will appear on your next tax bill as a separate fee.

How are the Storm Water Utility fees determined?

The fee structure for the Utility is based on the Equivalent Runoff Unit (ERU) method. An ERU is the average amount of horizontal impervious (non-water absorbing) area per single family property within the Town. One (1) ERU is defined as 4,250 square feet of impervious surface. With this method all single family residential properties are charged a uniform fee of 1 ERU. The actual amounts of impervious surfaces are then calculated for all non-residential properties and the appropriate number of ERU's is charged accordingly. If any residence has farming activities, then it is considered non-residential and the fee is calculated accordingly.

Why do residents have to pay this fee?

All properties within the Town contribute storm water to the Town's drainage system. Runoff must be safely transported by the Town's drainage system to prevent flooding of structures and roads. The Town's Storm Water Utility District revenue will also be used to fund the administration, planning and maintenance of the Town's storm water drainage systems and management programs to reduce urban pollution in storm water runoff. This applies to all properties in the Town – including the Town owned properties and other non-taxable properties such as churches and schools.

How can I reduce my monthly fees?

Non-residential property owners who install and maintain storm water management devices (such as detention ponds) that reduce the Town's cost providing storm water service may apply for a reduced rate for managing their own storm water. However even if a property were to generate no runoff, there would still be a reduced fee applied to the property for the costs associated with maintaining public roads and public properties that also generate storm water runoff.

What surfaces are considered to be impervious?

Impervious surfaces are considered to be solid, covered or compacted surfaces that prevent rainfall from infiltrating back into the ground, thus leading the rainfall to run off these surfaces in greater quantities, at higher velocities with an increased pollutant loading. Examples of impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to: driveways, rooftops, patios, porches, sidewalks, parking lots, loading docks, compacted gravel, athletic courts and private roads. In general, commercial, industrial and institutional properties that have larger buildings, larger parking lots, etc., will equate to multiple ERU's and have larger fees.

How was the impervious area for each property determined?

The impervious area for each property was calculated using the Brown County 2005 aerial photograph of the Town. To further capture any new development that was not shown in the year 2005 aerial, all building permits were obtained and reviewed from the years 2005 through 2009.

Why is my gravel driveway considered impervious surface?

Gravel and compacted clay driveways do not allow rain to soak into the ground at the same rate as in undeveloped areas. They also contribute particulates the runoff which does occur.

Is the Town charging us for rain?

While the Storm water Utility is in place to manage the pollution carried by storm water runoff, the fee is in no way related to the amount of rain that falls. The fee is in place to fund the ongoing maintenance and capital improvements to the entire public storm drainage infrastructure, as well as other water quality improvements and flood hazard mitigation programs.

Isn't this just another tax?

No, the fee is similar to the routine water and sewer fees currently paid by all contributing customers. This fee, by incorporating tax-exempt properties, actually reduces the overall cost to taxpayers. The storm water fee is based on the percentage of impervious area on a parcel and applies to both taxable and non-taxable properties.

Don't my taxes pay for stormwater management already?

Stormwater management is currently paid from the Town's general fund (i.e. property taxes). However, the tax-based funding is insufficient to fund the new level of stormwater management activities. Stormwater management activities will cease to be funded by the general fund and will be entirely funded by the stormwater utility.

How will fees be spent?

It is estimated that the Town will need to spend between \$120,000 and \$150,000 per year to adequately fund stormwater management. The fee will cover construction and maintenance of the stormwater conveyance system (curbs, gutters, ditches, pipes, etc.), stormwater pollution prevention activities (street sweeping, educational programs for regulatory compliance, etc.), staff, equipment, and management of the utility.

Are there any properties exempt from the fee?

Yes. Public road and railroad rights-of-way are considered part of the stormwater conveyance system, and will be exempt from the stormwater utility fee.

Is this Storm Water Utility fee going to eventually go away?

It is not anticipated that this fee will be eliminated in the near future, as the DNR requirement for water quality will be getting even more stringent. However, the fees may vary from year to year based on the Town's Storm Water Utility Budget and the actual amount of water quality projects that need to be performed.

How does the Storm Water Utility benefit the residents?

When storm water flows across driveways, parking lots, lawns and streets, it can pick up pollutants such as oil that leaks from vehicles, tire and brake lining wear, pesticides on lawns, leaves, etc. The storm water utility fees will pay for practices to help improve water quality and reduce flooding. A storm

water utility also assures that there will be funding for the Town to pay for all storm water services it must provide.

Can I appeal this Storm Water Utility fee?

If you are a residential property owner that has been charged one (1) ERU, you are not eligible to appeal this user fee. Requests for adjustment of the user fee, including requests for Storm Water Utility Credits shall be limited to non-residential properties. Non-residential properties that meet the criteria outlined below may be eligible for a Storm Water Utility Adjustment:

1. Properties that can demonstrate that the actual amounts of impervious surfaces are not representative of existing conditions.
2. Properties which take mitigating steps to improve the quality of storm water discharge by implementing best management practices (ie. detention basin, infiltration basins, etc.) that reduce the average annual loading of total suspended solids from existing development and are designed and/or implemented in accordance with current WDNR requirements.
3. Properties that are internally drained.

Any non-residential customer who believes that their property is eligible for a Storm Water Utility Adjustment, may, within thirty (30) days of payment, submit a Request for Adjustment/Credit Form (available at the Town Hall and on Town webpage) to the Town. The customer requesting the adjustments may be required, at his/her own expense, to provide supplemental information to the Town Chairman or designee, including, but not limited to, survey data approved by a Registered Land Surveyor (R.L.S) and engineering reports approved by a Professional Engineer (P.E.). Failure to provide such information may result in a delay of the process or a denial of the adjustment request.

Do other communities have storm water utilities?

Yes. As of May 14, 2009, there are 64 Wisconsin communities (including Green Bay, Bellevue, Allouez, De Pere, Howard and Hobart) that have active storm water utilities. Storm water utilities are particularly common among communities that, like the Town of Scott, must comply with the new WDNR NR 151/216 requirements.

Why aren't nonprofits exempt from the fee?

All developed properties contribute to the problems and costs associated with stormwater management. The fee, based on the amount of impervious surface on a property, is the most equitable method of distributing the cost. Non-profits are not exempt from paying for other utility services like electricity or water and in the same way will not be exempt from paying the stormwater fee.