



Stormwater Utility Frequently Asked Questions



Q. What is impervious surface area?

A. Impervious surface area is any surface that does not readily absorb water and impedes the natural infiltration of water into the soil. In terms of the ordinance, it means the number of square feet of horizontal surface covered by buildings and other impervious surfaces. Common examples include roofs, driveways, parking areas, sidewalks, patios, decks, tennis courts, and concrete or asphalt streets. Graveled, graded or compacted surfaces are also considered impervious.

Q. What is stormwater runoff?

A. Stormwater runoff is the water that flows off roofs, driveways, parking lots, streets and other hard surfaces during rain storms. Stormwater runoff is also the rain that flows off grass surfaces and wooded areas that is not absorbed into the soil. The runoff that is not absorbed into the ground pours into ditches, culverts, catch basins and storm sewers.

Q. Why is stormwater runoff a problem?

A. As precipitation falls on agricultural and undeveloped areas, it is primarily absorbed into the ground or slowly runs off into streams, rivers or other water bodies. However, development resulting in rooftops and paved areas prevent water from being absorbed and create a faster rate of runoff. This development often causes localized flooding or other water quantity or quality issues. In addition, stormwater can carry harmful pollutants, cause flooding, erode topsoil and stream banks and destroy habitats.

Q. Why is stormwater runoff MY problem?

A. Our homes, driveways and related features contribute to the barriers that are created. As a result, the rainwater collects and has nowhere to go and hence, create nuisance flooding on Town roads, etc. The Town continues to clean existing stormwater components and make improvements that will allow for the conveyance of rainwater and the reduction of flooding conditions

Q. What is stormwater pollution?

A. Water from rain either seeps into the ground or “runs off” to lower areas, making its way into the Estero Bay area. On its way, runoff water can pick up and carry many substances that pollute water. Examples of common pollutants include fertilizers, pesticides, pet wastes, sediments, oils, trace metals, grass clippings, leaves and litter. Stormwater polluted runoff can be generated anywhere people use or alter the land, such as farms, yards, roofs, driveways, construction sites, and roadways.

Q. How do these pollutants effect the environment?

A. Nutrients can cause large algal blooms which ultimately reduce the water quality by releasing toxins or reducing the dissolved oxygen of the water. This can cause large fish kills and hazardous conditions for humans. Suspended solids can also make the water appear cloudy which is harmful for plants which rely on the sun for energy.

Q. What is a stormwater system?

A. A stormwater system is a network of arranged components that work together to provide flood control and treat stormwater before releasing excess water to local waterways. Stormwater systems collect water and move it away from buildings and roads generally by gravity. The water is then allowed to sit for as long as possible to allow the water to percolate back into the ground, for solids to settle out of the water, and for the nutrients to be removed from the water by natural processes.



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Q. What are the components of a stormwater system?

A. Components of a stormwater system include but are not limited to the following. Swales, ditches, culverts, stormwater pipes, control structures, gutters, catch basins, infiltration basins, and retention and detention ponds.

Q. Who owns the stormwater system?

A. Stormwater system components are generally owned by the Town with exception to the following: Individual property owners who have stormwater systems on private property and properties and roads owned by other government agencies. The library and Estero Boulevard are not owned by the Town of Fort Myers Beach.

Q. What is the Town's responsibility for storm water?

A. The Town is responsible for managing all aspects of storm water within its jurisdiction. The Town operates and maintains drainage facilities that are located within the public right-of-way or public easements. The Town is also responsible for the water quality of natural waterways within its jurisdiction as designed by the State and EPA. The Town is obligated to comply with regulations set by the EPA through the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES). The Town does not maintain facilities that are located on private property or that fall under the jurisdiction of other governmental jurisdictions.

Q. What is a stormwater utility?

A. A stormwater utility collects fees, like other utilities, to provide its services at a level expected by the customers. The services included in a stormwater utility include maintaining and improving the components of the stormwater system to ensure that public health and safety is preserved.

Q. How does the Town currently pay for its storm water services?

A. Storm water services are currently funded from revenue derived from property taxes collected by the Town. Stormwater must compete for these funds with other Town services such as parks, roads, fire, etc. Due to the high demand on the General Fund over the past several years, the Town has not been able to set aside enough funds to adequately address all the Town's stormwater needs. Although the Town has done a good job managing the existing program on a limited budget, the backlog of storm water projects has grown.

Q. Hasn't the Town always maintained the stormwater system? Why am I being charged now?

A. Prior to Town incorporation, the original development of the island did not adequately account for stormwater runoff. When the Town incorporated, it agreed to take over the stormwater system. Although the Town has done a good job managing the system with limited funds, the system needs to be properly maintained including regular cleaning and upgrades. To properly maintain the system, the Town needs additional funds.

Q. Why is there a stormwater fee instead of a tax?

A. A property's value does not affect runoff, so property taxes are not the most equitable way to pay for stormwater services. For example, a high-rise building and a shopping mall may have similar value and pay similar property taxes. However, the shopping center produces more runoff because of the amount of parking and rooftops. The fee system ensures the shopping center pays a higher stormwater fee than the high rise.



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Q. Is the stormwater fee tax deductible?

A. Verify with your accountant, however, as understood, the Internal Revenue Service does not recognize these fees as being tax deductible.

Q. Are tax-exempt properties also exempt from the stormwater fee?

A. No, because it is a fee – not a tax. Taxes are based on the value of the property. The stormwater fee is assessed based on the amount of impervious surface on the property (i.e. hard surfaces such as roofs, driveways and parking lots), which is directly related to the amount of runoff the property produces. The runoff generated by these impervious surfaces contributes to pollution and flooding problems and, therefore, all property owners should pay their share of the costs.

Q. How was the stormwater utility developed?

A. The Town retained a consultant to evaluate the system and make a recommendation. The consultant conducted a review of operating costs, needed improvements, and evaluated the impervious area at residential, commercial and general properties to create a standard for the fee. The findings were presented to the Town Council and approved through the Public Hearing process.

Q. How are the fees determined?

A. Fees are determined based on the amount of impervious area at each property. To compare properties to a standard an equivalent residential unit (ERU) was established. Fees are based on how many ERUs each property has.

Q. What is an ERU?

A. An ERU is equivalent to 4,414 square feet of impervious area. This number was established by taking a statistical average of the impervious area found at a single family home within the Town of Fort Myers Beach.

Q. What is the fee and how is it collected?

A. The monthly fee per ERU is \$19.98 and can be paid in person at the Town Hall or the payment can be mailed in.

Q. What does the fee cover?

A. A stormwater master plan was prepared to determine the current condition and recommend improvements. The fee covers capital costs to cover the necessary improvements, State Revolving Fund Loan, ongoing operation and maintenance, reserves, management and regulatory compliance.

Q. How long will the fee be collected?

A. The fee will be collected for a minimum of 25 years. However, according to the ordinance, the fee will be recalculated at least once every fiscal year. Also, the base rate will be reevaluated at least once every three fiscal years.

Q. Can the fee be used for any other programs?

A. No the fee is dedicated to the stormwater management program.

Q. If I rent, who is responsible for the fee?

A. Any agreement between the renter and landlord is at the discretion of those parties. The fee will be sent with the water bill, therefore whoever receives the water bill is subject to pay. However, the property



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owner is ultimately responsible to pay the fee. The Town has the authority to place a lien against the property.

Q. What if I do not pay the fee?

A.. The Town has the right to place a lien on the property if payment is not received.

Q. When will the fee take effect?

A. The fee will take effect March 1, 2016.

Q. Why do property owners with private stormwater systems have to pay?

A. Many of the roads and amenities within the Town are served by the stormwater utility. Therefore, anyone who owns property within the Town is benefiting from the stormwater system.

Q. How do I seek a reduction in fee?

A. If you believe that a calculation error occurred while calculating your fee you must submit to the attention of the Director your: Name, Address, Drawing showing impervious area and calculations, and a summary of the error or justification for adjustment.

Q. When will my street be addressed?

A. There are many stormwater projects which need to be completed on the island. Some projects are under construction right now. Stormwater projects will continue concurrently with potable water improvements. If there is a drainage problem in a residential neighborhood, a resident can contact the Town and report the issue. The issue will be logged, inspected and a course of action will be developed.

Q. How do I resolve a drainage problem at my house?

A. Contact the Town and request a site visit. If the problem is associated with the Town's system, the Town will investigate improvement alternatives. If the problem is associated with private development, the owner will be responsible.