

City of Lewiston Storm Water Utility



An Important Message about the Storm Water Utility

(Updated for Fiscal Year 2018)

From the City of Lewiston's Department of Public Works

City of Lewiston
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Dear Resident

During the 2006-2007 budget deliberations, the City Council decided to adopt a Storm Water Utility as a way to continue the work required to meet federal mandates for storm water while simultaneously creating a funding mechanism that more fairly distributes the cost of this program and provide tax relief to residents of Lewiston.

The storm water utility fee is based upon the amount of run-off generated from a property. Residential properties generate less run-off than parcels with large parking lots, but residential property taxes were paying 53% of the costs of these services, while tax exempt properties paid nothing.

The storm water utility corrected this inequity and reduced the City's mil rate. At that time, if the \$1.9 million in requirements were paid for with property taxes, it would have cost \$1.27 per \$1,000 valuation. A typical single family home in the community valued at \$80,000 would pay an additional \$102 in property taxes toward these services. With the Storm Water Utility today, this same home pays \$60.

We hope you find the following information helpful and informative.

Sincerely,

*David A. Jones, P.E.
Director, Public Works*

WHY DO WE NEED TO DO THIS WORK?

Federal mandates require this work. Storm water runoff is one of the largest contributors to water quality violations in urban and urbanizing areas of Maine. According to the US EPA, polluted storm water runoff is a leading cause of impairment to the nearly 40% of surveyed U.S. water bodies which do not meet water quality standards (US EPA, 1995). Federal environmental mandates as part of the Clean Water Act require the City to obtain permits to meet the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4) Phase II program and address Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs).

The NPDES MS4 Phase II program requires the City to address 6 minimum measures including: (1) Public Education & Outreach (Think Blue campaign); (2) Public Participation & Involvement (household hazardous waste collection, No Name Pond Volunteer Monitoring); (3) Illicit Discharge & Detection (storm sewer ordinance, outfall inspections); (4) Construction Site run-off (inspections and permits); (5) Post Construction Run-off Control (Best Management Practices Manual for developers & planners), and (6) Pollution Prevention and Good Housekeeping. This last one is where the big costs are including catch basin cleaning, inspection and maintenance of storm structures (pipes, catch-basins, ditches, culverts, etc), street sweeping, employee education, hazardous material storage and disposal.

The EPA, Maine DEP and the City entered into an agreement on a Clean Water Act Master Plan in 2000 setting a schedule to address all CSOs during a 15 year period. Much has been done to separate storm water from sewers to eliminate the overflows to the river that occur during periods of heavy rain, but much still remains to be done. The Gully Brook separation and CSO storage facility are two examples of projects being done to satisfy this requirement.

HOW WAS THE STORM WATER UTILITY ESTABLISHED?

Presentations of the idea of a Storm Water Utility were first given to the City Council in 2001. This is not a new idea as there is already a utility established like this in Augusta and there are nearly 2000 of these nationwide. During the budget deliberations in the winter/spring of 2006, the City Council was looking to provide tax relief for citizens of the City and this program was suggested as an idea. In March 2006 and continuing through June, the City Council conducted a series of budget & public hearings that resulted in a vote to approve the establishment of a storm water utility and approval of City Ordinance Section 74-300 which provides the legal requirements to establish the utility. More public meetings have been held since that time to deal with implementing policies.

WHAT ARE THE FEES?

The fees are based upon the amount of impervious surface present on any given property. City Ordinance Section 74-303 defines impervious surface as “...those areas that prevent or impede the infiltration of stormwater into the soil as it entered in natural conditions prior to development. Impervious areas include, but are not limited to, rooftops, sidewalks, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, storage areas, compacted gravel surfaces, awnings and other fabric or plastic coverings, and other surfaces that prevent or impede the natural infiltration of stormwater runoff which existed prior to development.”

The Storm Water Utility Fee Schedule and Credit Policy is a City Policy adopted by the City Council. It establishes the user fees to be paid by properties in the City of Lewiston.

BASE RATE – There is a base rate of \$60 per year for the first 2,900 square feet (SF) of impervious surface on a parcel of property. Properties with less than 2,900 SF of impervious surface will be charged the minimum \$60 fee. Properties with no impervious surface will not be subject to a fee.

SINGLE FAMILY HOMES, MOBILE HOMES AND DUPLEX RESIDENTIAL PROPERTIES - The City determined the average amount of impervious surface area of a single family home in the City is 2,900 SF. For mobile homes in mobile home parks, the average amount of impervious surface is 2,800 SF and duplex residential properties average 4,350 SF. Single family, mobile homes and duplex residential parcels generally are uniform throughout the City. To minimize administrative burdens and expenses: Single family home and mobile home properties will be charged a flat rate of \$60.00 per year. Duplex residential properties will be charged a flat rate of \$90.00 per year.

OTHER PROPERTIES - Properties other than single family homes and duplex residential properties will be charged a flat fee of \$60.00 per year if the impervious surface area is 2,900 SF or less. In addition to the \$60.00 base rate, parcels having more than 2,900 SF of impervious surface will be charged \$0.0616 for every square foot of impervious surface exceeding the 2,900 SF base amount. For example, if your business has 4,000 SF of impervious surface on the property; your fee would be:
$$\$60 + (4,000 - 2,900) \times \$0.0616/\text{SF} = \$127.76/\text{year}$$

For most properties, the amount of their storm-water fee will be less than what it would have cost if property taxes were used to pay for these services. This is primarily because the tax-exempt properties are contributing while they were not under the property tax funding. There are also credits available to properties if the properties meet specific criteria.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFO?

City ordinance Section 74-300 has a lot of good information about the storm water utility. The City’s Storm Water Utility Fee Schedule and Credit Policy also provides specific information about fees and credits. You can also visit the City’s website at www.lewistonmaine.gov where more information will be posted frequently. Also, feel free to call us if you have any questions.

YOU CAN HELP

Here are some ways that you as a resident can help to address the City’s Storm Water Utility requirements and reduce the costs to rate payers:

- Do not dispose of items such as oil, pet wastes or other materials on the ground where it can find its way into catch-basins or ditches. Currently, storm water is not required to be treated and as a result, whatever goes into catch basins ultimately ends up in the river and streams.
- Do not litter! Volunteer for a community clean-up and remove litter in your community. Litter clogs storm drains, ditches and culverts requiring them to be cleaned more frequently.
- Clear catch-basin grates, culverts and ditches near your home of leaves in the fall, snow and ice in the winter and sand in the spring. Leaves, snow and ice can block stormwater from entering catch-basins and culverts creating a flooding issue. Winter sand used on driveways and roads can be washed into the storm drainage system when spring rains occur. This sand can clog catch-basins and culverts and needs to be removed. Any help you as a resident can provide by removing this sand before it reaches these structures saves the City time and money.
- Reduce or avoid adding any impervious surface on your property. Converting old compacted gravel areas to gardens not only helps stormwater be absorbed into the ground, but also improves the appearance of your property.