

## The City's Infrastructure

Approximately two-thirds of the City of Richmond is served by a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4). This mixture of underground storm sewer systems and open channels are separate from the sanitary sewer system.

The central portion of the city, which encompasses the other one-third, is served by a Combined Sewer System (CSS). The Department of Public Utilities operates and maintains the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) system.

The drainage system includes man-made components (ditches, pipes, inlets, catch basins, and ponds) and natural components (streams, flood plains, wetlands) that control the quantity of flow and enhance the quality of stormwater.

There are approximately 22,000 catch basins, 600 miles of ditches and 180 miles of separate storm drainage pipe in the city. Annual maintenance includes cleaning catch basins and ditches and repairing storm drains.



## Stormwater Management Program Objectives

- Protection of people and property from flood hazards
- Prevention of infrastructure failures
- Improvement of water quality by the reduction of non-point source pollution
- Prevention of stream bank erosion
- Collection, conveyance and treatment of stormwater in the combined sewer system



## FOR MORE INFORMATION

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THE CITY OF RICHMOND



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**STORMWATER**

**What You Need  
to Know**

## Why Richmond Needs a Stormwater Utility

Anyone living in Richmond knows the problems a heavy rainfall or severe thunderstorm can create. Roads become impassable and standing water remains long after the storm passes.

Although extremely destructive flooding is rare, less severe storms can result in public safety hazards, health risks and environmental threats.

The City of Richmond Department of Public Utilities took over management of the City's Stormwater Management Program in June 2007.

Past and present funding sources for stormwater management in the city are inadequate to address the critical need areas of stormwater runoff. Historically, money from the City's General Fund has provided limited funding for stormwater operations. However, the General Fund is needed for many other City services and the current level of funding is inadequate to maintain the existing stormwater system and fund the necessary improvements to address drainage problems and reduce pollution to the James River, its tributary streams and creeks.



## What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater runoff is precipitation from rain or snow that does not soak into the ground. Impervious surfaces such as driveways, parking lots, roads, sidewalks, streets and roofs prevent stormwater runoff from naturally soaking into the ground.

### The Issues:

- **Flooding** – Stormwater runoff from intense rainfall can at times exceed the carrying capacity of the stormwater piping system, creating a backup in the system, flooding of roads, yards and basements.
- **Pollution** – When rain falls, stormwater flows across impervious surfaces such as roadway pavement, driveways, parking lots and rooftops. It mobilizes contaminants and animal waste, and picks up chemicals such as oil, pesticides, trash and sediment and transports it all to bodies of water.
- **Water Quality** – Stormwater runoff is a leading cause of nutrient contamination, leading to algae blooms and low oxygen levels, which can result in fish kills.
- **Soil Erosion** – Uncontrolled stormwater rapidly increases the amount of water flowing into a stream, which, over time, can wash away stream banks.

## How Will It Be Financed?

Users would be charged a fee for the service of controlling stormwater runoff from their property in order to protect water quality in our rivers and streams, just like the fees paid for water and sewage treatment, natural gas, and other vital utility services such as electricity and telecommunications.

### Benefits of a Stormwater Utility

The stormwater utility is needed to provide a proactive, strategic and customer service driven approach to stormwater management that will produce increased benefits and improved services to residents and business owners. In addition, the funds will be used to implement a comprehensive stormwater quality management plan as required by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Dedicated funds for stormwater management will provide:

- Enhanced public safety and health
- Resources to help mitigate flooding
- Increased maintenance actions
- Resources to meet existing and future regulatory requirements
- Synergy with the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) program

As with any new program, it will take time for the full effect of the stormwater utility to be realized. However, substantial improvements in maintenance services and better drainage should be visible shortly after implementation of the utility.

## Who Pays for Richmond's Stormwater Utility?

All owners of developed properties that contribute to stormwater runoff and pollution will be charged a fee under the stormwater utility. This includes residential properties, commercial and industrial properties, non-profit organizations, schools, churches, and parking lots within the Richmond City limits.

### How the Fee is Calculated

- The fee is based on an Equivalent Residential Unit or ERU.
- An ERU equals 1,425 square feet of impervious area. It was determined by calculating the median impervious area of all residential parcels within the City of Richmond.
- Single Family Residential parcels pay a flat fee, which varies based upon the amount of impervious area they have. (Please see enclosed rate insert.)
- The fee for Non-residential and Multi-Family Residential is based upon the number of ERUs a parcel has, times the rate for an ERU. (Please see enclosed rate insert.)
- Non-residential properties are eligible for partial credits that meet defined criteria.
- Undeveloped properties are exempt.
- State law does not provide adjustments based on income levels, or credits for residential parcels.