



THE CITY OF ERIE

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

626 STATE STREET | ROOM 500 | ERIE, PA 16501

Stormwater Management

Frequently Asked Questions

Why is Stormwater Management important?

Stormwater management is essential to protect the City of Erie's homes and properties, community health, and the environment.

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is runoff from rain and melting snow and ice.

What happens when stormwater is not controlled?

In cities where there are not as many meadows, forests, and grasslands to absorb runoff, hard or impervious surfaces such as houses, streets, sidewalks, and parking lots cause a large amount of stormwater to flow at a more rapid pace, collecting chemicals and debris along the way and dumping it into our bay, lake, creeks, and streams. If not controlled, this stormwater runoff can overwhelm streams, causing flooding, soil erosion, and pollution.

What would the funding generated by the fee be used for?

The funding generated by the fee would be used solely for maintenance of our critical underground infrastructure, preventing our over 100-year-old deteriorating pipes from collapsing and getting the city into MS4 compliance with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP).

The Mayor's Office, the Department of Public Works, and the Department of Planning and Neighborhood Resources are proposing that \$10.5 million of the City's ARP funding be spent to shore up some of our most troublesome areas. However, this funding will fix only a fraction of the issues. The reason behind the fee is to empower us to monitor and improve our MS4 compliance and to create a long-term solution to maintaining our aging infrastructure, instead of letting problems grow monumentally for future generations.

From this fee, the City will collect approximately \$1.6 to \$1.7 million annually. Each year, with the collected amount from the fee, the City of Erie will spend approximately:

- \$300-350k on operating costs, engineer, and field supervisor
- \$420-480k on planned capital costs, mapping, technology, outreach, and compliance
- \$780-870k to be kept in reserve for future priority capital projects, as needed

How does the fee work?

The stormwater fee that is being proposed would be:

- An equitable fee that is tiered for single-family residential and based on the amount of impervious surface of every property within the City of Erie.
- Kept low for homeowners because it is shared across all property owners, including residences, businesses, nonprofits, and public entities.
- Added to the Property Tax Bills as a separate fee. The funds would go into a separate fund that would be used exclusively on MS4 Compliance and the maintenance and long-term sustainability of our aging stormwater infrastructure.

As a property owner, what is the amount of the fee I would pay?

If you are a homeowner within the City of Erie, you will fall into one of three tiers:

small, medium, or large.

- The **'Small'** tier includes about 9,600 Homeowners with 500 to 1,200 square feet of impervious area, who would pay **\$12 per year**.
- The **'Medium'** tier includes about 9,900 Homeowners with 1,200 to 1,550 square feet of impervious area, who would pay **\$24 per year**.
- The **'Large'** tier includes about 9,200 Homeowners with more than 1,550 square feet of impervious area, who would pay **\$36 per year**.

The fee for business, nonprofits, and public entities will be calculated, based on the number of billing units, with each billing unit equal to **2,136 square feet** of impervious area. Each Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) Rate per 2,136 sf = \$24 per year. For example, a nonprofit or business with 200 billing units would pay \$4,800/year, 400 billing units would pay \$9,600/year, and 800 billing units would pay \$19,200/year. These fees will remain constant for 5 years.

What is the purpose of the fee?

- Proactively replace the aging system and get the city into MS4 compliance;
- Avoid the need to issue bonds, which would then cost taxpayers more in the long-run;
- Spread the burden out over all property owners to keep fees for residents, who individually have the least amount of impervious surfaces, as low as possible.

What is MS4?

MS4 stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System. This refers to a collection of structures designed to gather stormwater and discharge it into local streams and rivers. EPA established an MS4 stormwater management program intended to improve the Nation's waterways by reducing the quantity of pollutants that stormwater picks up and carries into storm sewer systems during storm events. The DEP issues permits and manages this program and works with municipalities to monitor compliance. The City is required to:

- Implement projects and policies that reduce the discharge of pollutants.
- Inspect Private Stormwater Structures
- Dedicate staff for MS4 permit compliance
- Rehabilitate Drainage Infrastructure

Why is Erie dealing with this now?

This challenge is not unique to Erie. A majority of urban areas have implemented stormwater management fees. Wood Consulting, which has assisted many municipalities with Stormwater Management, has been working with the City of Erie. Locally, they assisted Meadville with the calculation and implementation of their Stormwater fee in 2012, and they have been working with Millcreek on their feasibility study as well.

Many streams and tributaries contribute to the stormwater system that runs through the Erie Region. The most well-known of these creeks or streams are Mill Creek, Cascade Creek, and Garrison Run. The Stormwater system itself contains additional run-off from the region; all contributing to the environmental health of Presque Isle Bay and Lake Erie. Overall, the City of Erie stormwater system consists of 500 plus miles of pipe and lines. Segments of the stormwater systems are over 100 years old, with some lines being installed in the late 1800s.

As we have seen in recent weeks, the clay pipes under our homes are crumbling. Letting the system continue to deteriorate is dangerous for property owners and is also costlier to taxpayers in the long-run.

Who Benefits?

Everyone. The City strives to keep roads free from water and debris, protect our community from damaging floodwaters, and reduce pollutants entering our bay, lake, creeks, and streams.