

City of Fort Valley
Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) & Stormwater User Fee
Frequently Asked Questions

What is Stormwater Runoff? Stormwater runoff is rainfall that fall on and then drains off impervious surfaces such as rooftops, driveways, sidewalks, parking lots, roads, compacted soil, gravel, and other surfaces that don't allow rainfall to soak into the ground. The stormwater runoff then flows into the City drainage system and into our local creeks and rivers. All developed properties in the City contribute stormwater runoff to the drainage system and, in some cases, to recurring drainage problems. In addition to flooding problems, stormwater runoff washes chemicals, debris, trash and other pollutants into the drainage system and our local surface waters.

What is the City of Fort Valley's responsibility for managing the impacts of stormwater runoff? The City of Fort Valley is responsible for the management of stormwater runoff and drainage issues within the City's public drainage system. The City must undertake various activities including the cleaning of ditches and pipe systems; replacement of aging culverts and drainage structures; construction of new culvert systems to improve stormwater drainage, development regulation, and regulatory compliance. Aging infrastructure and lack of resources to implement drainage projects have driven the City's need to develop and implement a more comprehensive stormwater management program.

How is the City of Fort Valley proposing to address expanding stormwater needs? The City of Fort Valley has created a stormwater utility and adopted a stormwater user fee that will be dedicated solely to addressing stormwater management and drainage issues. The stormwater user fee provides the resources necessary for the City to deliver stormwater services to residents, businesses, institutions, and government facilities.

What is a Stormwater User Fee? A stormwater user fee is a charge for stormwater management services provided by the City to all developed properties in the City. A stormwater user fee is charged by the City for stormwater services just as a water and sewer fee is charged by the City of for water and sewer services. Under the plan proposed, the stormwater user fee revenue collected can only be utilized to fund stormwater services provided to customers within the City.

Why did the City decide to implement a stormwater user fee charge? The City has evaluated its stormwater program needs and found that additional staffing, equipment, supplies and revenue were needed in order to address flooding and water quality issues

in the City. The City has evaluated the feasibility of charging a stormwater user fee as opposed to increasing property tax millage and has determined that the user fee approach is a more equitable way to allocate the costs of stormwater services. Under a stormwater utility, the user fee is not based on the assessed “value” of a property, like ad-valorem taxes, rather it is based on the demand that each customer imposes on the drainage system and the stormwater services provided to that customer. All developed property that receives stormwater services from the City pay a user fee, regardless of their tax status. This user fee approach is very similar to water, sewer, and sanitation fees.

Do tax-exempt properties pay the stormwater user fee? The Stormwater User Fee is a fee for service, just like fees are charged for water, sewer, gas, and electricity services. It is not a tax. Therefore, all developed properties, regardless of their tax status, will be required to pay the Stormwater User Fee. Tax exempt properties produce runoff water from impervious surfaces that impact local stormwater infrastructure, like any other residential or non-residential property in Fort Valley and are an important part of the solution.

How do you calculate a stormwater user fee charge for an individual property and utility customer account? The stormwater user fee charge is based on the amount of impervious surfaces on a parcel. Impervious surface means those areas which prevent the natural infiltration of rainfall and cause stormwater runoff. Common impervious surfaces include, but are not limited to, rooftops, buildings or structures, sidewalks, walkways, patio areas, driveways, parking lots, storage areas, awnings, fabric or plastic coverings, and other surfaces such as compacted soil and gravel. The amount of impervious surface on a property has a direct correlation to the amount of stormwater runoff discharged from that property. Developed parcels with greater amounts of impervious area will have a larger impact on the City’s drainage system and will therefore be charged a higher user fee.

Are gravel and compacted soil charged at the same rate as other types of impervious surfaces? No, gravel and compacted soil would be charged at a reduced rate of 85% to account for the minor amount of superficial infiltration that can occur. This reduction factor of 85% is based on the hydrologic characteristics of these types of materials as compared to undeveloped conditions.

How would my stormwater user fee be calculated? The stormwater user fee would be based on a billing unit of 2,670 square feet of impervious surface. The billing unit of 2,670 square feet is the approximate median of impervious area on a typical single-family parcel. Single family residential (SFR) properties would be charged a flat rate of 1.0 billing unit per month. Non-single family residential (NSFR) properties will be charged a custom user fee charge based on the number of billing units associated with

the total impervious area on the property. For example, if a commercial site has 26,700 square feet of impervious surface, that customer would be charged 10 billing units per month. This methodology would be applied to all NSFR properties in the City.

$$26,700 \text{ square feet of impervious surface} / 2,670 \text{ square feet} = 10 \text{ billing units}$$

How much would customers be charged per billing unit? The City is considering a stormwater user fee rate of \$4.50 per month per billing unit, or \$54.00 annually per billing unit. Using the example above, the commercial customer with 10 billing units will receive a stormwater user fee of \$540.00 per year, which equates to a monthly fee of \$45.00 per month. A single family residential customer would pay only \$54.00 per year (or \$4.50 per month.)

Is there any way to reduce my Stormwater User Fee? Yes, stormwater utility customers can receive credits for specific activities that they undertake to reduce the impact of stormwater runoff on the City's drainage system. Both residential and non-residential customers may be eligible for credits to reduce their stormwater user fee charge by following the procedures outlined in the City's Stormwater User Fee Credit Manual, which can be found online on the City's website. A hard copy of this manual can be requested at City Hall.

What will be the billing frequency and the billing mechanism? The City is working with the Peach County Tax Commissioner to charge the stormwater user fee on the annual property tax bill. The actual date for the City to begin billing the stormwater fee has yet to be determined, but it is likely to occur in the Fall of 2021.

Summary of Stormwater User Fee Credits

The table below summarizes the user fee credits available to the SW Utility customers. Please refer to the full credit manual for further details on the various credits, policies, procedures, etc. Per City policy, the maximum user fee credit that a customer account can receive is 50%, unless otherwise approved by the Stormwater Utility Manager.

Stormwater User Fee Credit Summary				
Credit Description	Credit Term	Potential Stormwater User Fee Credit Customer Types and Amount		
		Single Family Residential (SFR)	Non-Single Family Residential (NSFR)	Stormwater User Fee Credit
User Fee Credits				
Residential GI/LID	5 years	x		20%
Low-Impact Parcel	5 years	x	x	25%
Reduced SFR Footprint	5 years	x		50%
Tree Planting	5 Years	X	X	(Up to) 20%
No Direct Discharge	5 years	x	x	(Up to) 50%
Watershed Stewardship	5 years		x	5%
Septic Tank Maintenance	5 years	x	x	10%
Non-Residential GI/LID	5 years		x	(Up to) 20%
Natural Area Preservation	5 years	x	x	(Up to) 25%
Water Resources Education Program	5 years		x	50%
NPDES Industrial Stormwater General Permit	5 years		x	30%
Reduced Impervious Area	1 Time Only		x	100%
Stormwater Facility (i.e. Detention Pond, Retention Pond) ¹				
Non-GSMM Stormwater Facility/Detention Pond	5 years		x	15 - 25%
GSMM Stormwater Facility/Detention Pond	5 years		x	50%

¹ Residential customers that are part of a larger common development (or subdivision) can collectively apply for credits related to the detention pond credit with approval from the SW Utility Manager.