

Surface Water Utility

Frequently Asked Questions



What is surface water?

Surface water is runoff from a rainstorm or melting snow. City landscapes - unlike forests, wetlands, and grasslands that trap water and allow it to filter slowly into the ground - contain great areas of impermeable asphalt and concrete surfaces that prevent water from seeping into the ground. Because of this, large amounts of water accumulate above the surface. This water will run off before eventually entering into our lakes, rivers and streams.

Why is it important to manage surface water?

The City needs to manage surface water to protect people's homes and properties, the environment, lakes, streams & rivers. If this is not done, surface water will cause flooding, erosion and pollution. Heavy rains that flood streets and yards can result in property damage. Surface water runoff also picks up pollutants and debris from streets, parking lots & yards, carrying them into our lakes, rivers and streams.

What will a Surface Water Utility pay for?

- Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit through the NPDES program
- Local, State, and Federal licensing requirements
- Operations and maintenance of surface water system
- Inspections and testing of surface water system
- Sediment removal
- Drainage system repair
- Storm sewer replacement and upsizing
- Construction of ponds and other storm water treatment infrastructure
- Planning, education, studies

How will the fee be calculated?

Fees will be based on how a property is used. All residential lots will be charged the same flat fee of \$2.00 per month. The surface water fee for each parcel classified as 1 is the single-family residential fee. The fee for classifications 2, 3 and 4 is the single-family residential fee multiplied by the utility factor. The fee for classifications 5, 6, 7 is calculated as follows: fee for single-family residential multiplied by the utility factor multiplied by the acreage of the parcel. For properties classified 5, 6, or 7 with less than 42% impervious surface the fee shall be adjusted by multiplying the fee by the percentage of impervious surface and then dividing by 42%.

Table 1: Surface Water Utility Factors

Class	Land Use	Utility Factor	Monthly Fee
1	Residential	1.0	\$2.00
2	Duplex/Triplex	.5	\$1.00
3	Apt or Townhome – separate utility accounts	.25	\$0.50
4	Manufactured Home	.25	\$.50
5	Apartment Building – single utility account	2.6	\$5.20 per acre
6	Commercial or Industrial	2.6	\$5.20 per acre
7	Public/Quasi Public Institutions	2.6	\$5.20 per acre

The formula is illustrated below:

Classes 1-4

Fee = Base Fee X Utility Factor

Classes 5-7 with Greater than 42% Impervious Surface

Fee = Base Fee X Utility Factor X Acreage

Classes 5-7 with Less than 42% Impervious Surface

Fee = Previously Calculated Fee X (Percentage Impervious Surface/.42)

How has the City paid for surface water related costs in the past?

Funds for administrative, maintenance, and permit related activities have been funded through the City's General fund and Sanitary Sewer fund.

Why do I have to pay another tax?

The surface water utility is not a tax. The surface water utility is considered by many to be a fair and equitable method of funding surface water related infrastructure because it charges based on the amount of surface water runoff contributed to the City's surface water system. This fee will also be charged to properties that contribute substantially to surface water runoff but do not pay property taxes such as Schools, Churches, City, State and Federal properties.

I have a small residential lot. Why is my fee the same as a larger lot?

A sampling of various residential lots within the City determined that the typical lot size was approximately 1/4 of an acre and approximately 38 percent of the lot was impervious surface. Various lot sizes and locations within the City were reviewed and the lot size and impervious fraction were found to be insignificant in terms of variations in the amount of surface water runoff. It would also be excessive and expensive to precisely determine the size and impervious fraction of the more than 2,700 residential lots in the City. Therefore, all residential lots will be charged the same base residential fee.

When can I expect to begin paying this fee?

The surface water utility fee will be implemented on January 1, 2014. Property owners will begin seeing the fee on their February utility bills.

I don't believe the surface water utility fee that I am being charged is correct. What can I do?

The fees were based on parcel information in City and County governmental informational system databases. If the property ownership information or parcel size are incorrect or has recently changed, please contact City Hall. The amount of impervious surface that has been assigned to your parcel was delineated on a recent air photo. maps showing these delineations are maintained at City Hall for review and discussion.

Who do I contact for more information?

For additional information on the surface water utility, please contact Mark DuChene, City engineer, at 507-835-9716 or markd@ci.waseca.mn.us.