



Charleston County News Release

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Stormwater Utility Bills will be Mailed on Thursday, Nov. 1

Federal laws require local ordinances to treat stormwater runoff and avoid polluting waterways.

The 2007 Stormwater Utility bills will be mailed on Thursday, Nov. 1, to residents who live in unincorporated areas of Charleston County and to residents of four other communities that have agreements with the County to administer their stormwater management programs.

The following four municipalities have passed ordinances that authorize the Charleston County Public Works Stormwater Division to administer their stormwater management programs:

- City of Isle of Palms
- City of Folly Beach
- Town of Sullivan's Island
- Town of Lincolnville

The 2007 residential bills for the unincorporated areas and the four municipalities listed above will be \$36 per household. For all non-residential properties, fees will be calculated using the commonly accepted rate for Stormwater fees known as the Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU).

Residents who do not live in the unincorporated areas of the County (or within the four municipalities that have agreement for Charleston County to administer their stormwater management programs) should check with the municipality or public service district in which they live regarding any stormwater fees.

In addition to administering the stormwater program for four municipalities, Charleston County sends stormwater bills out for the city of North Charleston, even though the city has its own program. Residents living in North Charleston who receive bills will be sending a check to Charleston County, and then the county will forward the checks to the city. Consolidating such services saves tax dollars and eliminates the need for additional offices and personnel in multiple locations.

The town of James Island recently sent a letter asking Charleston County to administer its stormwater management program. This is one of the items on County Council's Nov. 1 Finance Committee meeting agenda. If Council votes to undertake the program for the town, the County will add the town to its list for the 2008 program, not 2007.

For questions or to appeal the bill amount, contact Charleston County's Stormwater Management Program:

- By phone at (843) 202-7639
- By e-mail at stormwater@charlestoncounty.org
- By mail at:

Charleston County Public Works Department
Attn: Stormwater Management
4045 Bridge View Drive
North Charleston, SC 29405-7464

- Appeal online through a stormwater fee appeal form (direct link: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/index2.asp?p=/departments/PublicWorks/StormwaterFee.htm>).

To view the Charleston County Stormwater Utility Fee Ordinance, go to www.charlestoncounty.org and see "Ordinances" on the right-hand side menu within the County Council section (direct link: <http://www.charlestoncounty.org/Ordinances/1500-1599/1518%20Stormwater%20Management.pdf>).

In 2006, the Charleston County Stormwater Division:

- Processed over 3,300 appeals
- Began the mapping and inventory of stormwater drainage systems
- Conducted five Stormwater Management public information sessions
- Presented regulation information to engineers and developers (a technical manual will soon be available online for engineers, builders and developers)

Background:

- 2006 was the first year that Charleston County Government implemented its Stormwater Management Program.
- The program is a result of federal regulations that require unincorporated county areas and municipalities to provide stormwater management to regulate runoff from all properties and activities that have the potential to pollute local water systems.
- The fees collected fund the operations, maintenance and capital improvements of the federally-mandated and newly implemented Charleston County Stormwater Management Program, which was created in 2006 as a division within the Charleston County Public Works Department.

Why is there a need for stormwater management?

"Due to construction and growth in the county, stormwater that used to be absorbed into the ground is now funneled away by roofs, driveways, parking lots and roads," said Chuck Jarman, Manager of the Charleston County Stormwater Management Program.

The stormwater system, which consists of gutters, catch basins, storm sewers, retention basins, drainage ditches and stream channels, carries stormwater away from development and into area water supplies to prevent flooding and environmental damage.

"We have seen dramatic growth along coastal areas, and stormwater management can no longer be addressed solely by building larger pipes and drains," Jarman said.

Harmful entities in runoff include, but are not limited to, construction site erosion, pollution from dumping in creeks and rivers, oil leaks from cars and trucks onto parking lots and streets, and pet waste.

"The stormwater runoff system must be looked at from a regional perspective," Jarman said. "All properties, regardless of their location in a watershed, have an impact on water resources. The stormwater system is intended to prevent flooding and environmental degradation, thereby improving the water quality in Charleston County."

History and Additional Information on Stormwater Management:

History of Stormwater Management

- In 1972 Congress passed the Clean Water Act (CWA) in an attempt to eliminate pollution from the nation's waters (wetlands, rivers, lakes, streams, etc.).

- To monitor discharges into the waters, industries, treatment plants, and other “point” source dischargers had to apply for a National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Permit. The NPDES Permit required industries to follow rules, regulations, and standards for controlling pollution in their discharge.
- In 1985, a review of the effectiveness of the CWA showed that it had little effect on eliminating pollution.
- In 1987, Congress passed an amendment to the CWA that required “non-point” sources, such as overland runoff from construction sites, parking lots, yards, rooftops, and streets to be regulated as well.
- Many counties and municipalities across the nation are now required to obtain a NPDES Permit and abide by rules, regulations, and standards to monitor runoff that enters the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4), including Charleston County.

Utility Rate Structure for Charleston County

- Charleston County’s Stormwater Utility is self-supporting, just like the cities’ water and sanitary sewer utilities.
- Revenue collected from the Stormwater Utility Fee is used solely for stormwater management.
- The fee pays for the operations, maintenance, and capital improvements of the County’s Stormwater Management Program.
- The Utility also works to solve drainage problems, prevent future problems, and repair, maintain and enhance drainage facilities.
- In addition, fees collected from the Stormwater Utility are used to implement the NPDES Stormwater Regulations.

Billing for Charleston County’s Stormwater Management Program

- For billing efficiency, most residential properties will be billed a flat rate, which is based on pervious and impervious measurements of average residential properties.
- Under Charleston County’s Stormwater Utility Rate structure, residential properties will be billed \$36 dollars annually.
- For all non-residential properties, such as commercial properties, the fees will be calculated using the commonly accepted rate unit for stormwater utilities known as the Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU). This is a descriptive value based on the total gross land area and the amount of impervious surface.
- Managing stormwater through a utility allows the costs associated with the requirements of the NPDES Permit to be spread among the users in a more equitable manner.

Function

- Pervious surfaces are surfaces that allow rain to seep into the ground, whereas impervious surfaces block absorption.
- Rainwater that lands on areas covered by impervious surfaces, such as roofs, driveways and sidewalks, has to go somewhere. In these instances, stormwater runs off these hard surfaces and enters the County’s stormwater system, which collects the runoff from urban drainage basins and roads through gutters, catch basins, storm sewers, retention basins, drainage ditches and stream channels.