

Palm Bay Public Works Stormwater Utility FAQs - 2010

What am I going to get out of the Stormwater Utility?

The revenues from this fee will be used to provide for the maintenance of the stormwater system currently funded by the General Fund.

Who owns the stormwater system?

It depends – the City owns the stormwater system that is found within public rights-of-way; some stormwater systems are individually or collectively owned by homeowner's or property owner's associations, respectively. If you have specific questions or concerns we encourage you to contact us for clarification.

What components make up the Palm Bay Stormwater System, and how many miles does it cover?

The physical components of the Palm Bay Stormwater System include approximately:

- 120 miles of canals
- 407 lane miles of street sweeping annually
- 1100 side lot ditches (700) & side lot culverts (400)
- 1400 miles of roadside swales (ditches)
- Over 12,000 culverts/pipes (we are still counting.... 6650 with 52% of area surveyed)
- 9,700 Acres of Mowing Annually
- Misc Infrastructure: Retention Ponds, Structures, Curbs, Flumes

Although Palm Bay in its entirety is almost 100 square miles in area, the current limits of the Stormwater Service Area are defined at approximately 65 Square miles. Most of the areas not included are those newly annexed area which remain undeveloped at this time. Should they be developed in the future, the impacts and serviceability would be determined at that time and the Stormwater Service Area boundaries would be adjusted accordingly.

Other programs which make up the Palm Bay Stormwater System include:

- Engineering; plans review

- Driveway and Drainage permitting
- Management of the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System and permit
- Public Education and public outreach
- Surface water quality monitoring
- Construction inspection
- Capital improvement management, design and construction
- NPDES; TMDLs; DEP audits; BMPs; other regulatory requirements and unfunded mandates
- Customer service

Will the Stormwater Utility Fee be influenced by the amount of rain we get?

The stormwater utility fee is in no way related to the amount of rainfall. The fee will fund ongoing maintenance and capital improvements on the city-maintained storm drainage infrastructure, as well as other water quality improvements, flood hazard mitigation, and City-wide stormwater programs mentioned above.

Will I still be charged even if it does not rain for a long time?

Because stormwater charges are not based upon the frequency or amount of rainfall received, the stormwater utility fee will be administered regardless of rainfall.

What are the most common complaints regarding stormwater?

- Standing water in the front swale
- Nuisance vegetation overgrowth in the canals
- Nuisance vegetation overgrowth in the front swales of vacant properties
- Pipe failures under roadways
- Dumping of trash, grass clipping, and other yard waste in swales of canals
- Occasional illicit discharges into the stormwater system

How bad are the culverts and pipes - are there any that are completely blocked, and have you estimated how many need to be replaced?

Much of the City Stormwater infrastructure is old and aging. Many of the older pipes were installed in the seventies and were metal. To date, 56% of the pipes

have been inventoried; 964 pipes have been identified as failed with an estimated replacement cost of \$16.9 million (excluding permitting and engineering costs). Of those, there are 70 that are critical that make up approximately \$8 million in replacement costs. These include pipes which have had collapsing roads and shoulders. Currently staff is prioritizing these proposed replacements for year one of the Stormwater Capital Plan and will be bringing a recommendation before the City Council for review sometime in October of 2010.

How will you decide what areas are fixed first in the \$800,000-per-year culvert replacement program?

Of the 70 critical failures that have been identified, these will be prioritized considering several concerns. Some of the criteria/questions will include: what is the current condition, what is the realistic life expectancy to total failure, are there safety issues, are there flooding issues involved, traffic counts or how much of the population does it serve, is it on a collector road, can it be detoured easily, what is the total cost, is the engineering completed, are there any permit or design obstacles to overcome, are there any utility conflicts or issues to overcome, are there any material availability issues. Once the list is prepared, it will be brought before the City Council for consideration and approval. Once approved, engineering and in some cases permitting can commence immediately.

Along those lines: Where are a couple of particularly bad ones located? Are there any areas that have problems year after year, and if so, why?

Malabar Road is a good example of a project in progress. The large culverts under the westbound lanes of Malabar Road are currently being repaired for leaks and breaches that have resulted in road failures. This is a prime concern and will cost upward of a half million dollars to repair before the entire project is complete.

Flag Drive NE is of particular concerns and presents some challenges with Florida Power and Light. We have been working with FPL to coordinate the removal of an existing failed culvert which is integral to the drainage system in this area. The challenges involve underground power supply to the neighborhood and the future location of that utility. For the time being while the engineering is in progress, this area remains barricaded.

Osmosis Drive SW is of concern, where several large culverts have collapsed under the weight of a dump truck. The collapsed culvert has been removed,

others in the same run of this canal are in similar condition and need attention, for the traffic that goes over them as well as the regional stormwater needs in the southwest part of the City.

Other areas of particular concern are those of regional significance. The on-going incremental improvements that have been made over the last few years in the Country Club and in Basin 3 (located in Northeast Palm bay) remain unfunded. Aside from the phased approach funded primarily by grant opportunities there still remains portions of each of these drainage basins that require property acquisitions and construction. We continue to pursue each and every grant opportunity but these opportunities are not as frequent as we would like for them to be.

Estimated cost of maintaining the stormwater system is \$3.5 million per year. Can you break that down for me, into approximately how much goes where (capital improvements and other expenses)? What are some of the lesser-known but important projects or tasks that money is addressing?

The base budget for the SWU is approximately broken down as follows:

Operations/Staff/Materials	3,033,315
Finance/Billing	154,336
Transfer to General Fund for Services	<u>263,245</u>
Total Operations Expense	3,450,896
Capital Improvements Budget	<u>800,000</u>
Total Estimated Expenditures	4,250,896
Projected Revenue	<u>4,363,201</u>
Projected Fund Balance (Pending Collections)	112,305

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Why will I be charged a Stormwater Fee now when I haven't been in the past?

By establishing a dedicated funding source through stormwater fees, the City can ensure that revenue required to manage and to maintain this important system is available. A fee based on impervious surface area is an equitable way to charge and collect revenues for this program. Recent federal regulations requiring a comprehensive stormwater quality management program necessitate that the City take a more active role in managing stormwater. The stormwater utility fee will enable the City to meet its responsibilities to manage the storm drain system more closely, study the contents of stormwater, seek out and eliminate illicit connections, and illegal discharges and enforce codes more strictly by having a dedicated, reliable, funding mechanism in place.

What is the advantage to the stormwater utility versus the way stormwater functions have been handled before?

Having a dedicated fund for stormwater secures a much needed core service to the community. Where these activities were previous funded by the general fund and by grant sources in the past, these sources present problems for maintain consistent program expenses. These core services in many cases are mandated by state and federal requirements and having to compete for recurring funds each year with other general fund concerns could jeopardize said funding.

Grants sources are conditional, not consistent, non-recurring and cannot be used for maintenance needs nor be bonded for additional needs. While we will actively continue to pursue these opportunities we cannot rely on them to fund our stormwater maintenance and improvements.

Fees will not fluctuate with rising and falling of property values. They will be set based upon the proposed work program presented in the budget process each year and approved by the City Council.

A lot of people have commented on how Palm Bay did OK with stormwater during past hurricanes. Why are maintenance and improvement crucial even when things look good on the surface?

This goes to the basis of any asset management whether it is stormwater systems or keeping the oil changed in your personal car. If the system is not maintained, you can guarantee failure at some point and at a greater catastrophic expense, personal injury, or property loss. If left unmaintained pipes would get clogged which will result in flooding; swales/canals/ditches left unmaintained would result in blocked waterways which will cause flooding, and pipe failures under roadways would result in dangerous collapses and potentially bodily harm to those travelling those roadways.

During Tropical Storm Fay, we experienced the greatest single amount of rainfall in the past 30 years or more. The fact that there were no catastrophic losses is a direct correlation to the efforts of the Public Works Department to maintain our waterways for the protection of all of our property concerns.

Additionally upcoming requirements mandated by the EPA through the Clean Water Act to identify impaired water bodies which includes the Indian River Lagoon, will require the City to identify projects that will reduce the amount of pollutants that enter the Indian River Lagoon. The projects can include retrofit of existing facilities, replacement of failing structures allowing erosion and sedimentation, and new capital improvement projects that may include land purchases. By having a dedicated source of revenue, such as the Stormwater Utility, it allows the City to apply for matching funds from grant programs.

Do other cities have a stormwater fee?

Yes, there are more than 140 stormwater utilities in the State of Florida. These include Orlando, Kissimmee, Cape Canaveral, Melbourne, Cocoa, Daytona Beach, Lakeland, Melbourne, Ocala, Plant City, Winter Haven, Cocoa Beach (just to name a few).

Can you tell me about any other similarly sized cities with stormwater programs similar to the new PB utility, and how they're faring?

Pt. St. Lucie is a similar sized city, however their fee is close to \$9 per month and they have a very aggressive program. They have been doing this for many years and have implemented many successful programs in their city.

Other cities in Brevard County have varying program and fees, but this is primarily due to the different configurations of their respective systems. Cocoa Beach runs an outstanding program, at \$6 per month but they have many navigable waterways, which we do not have in Palm Bay. Melbourne also has an excellent program, but their fee is \$1.80 per month, but they have lots of curb and gutter and not as many open channels as we do in Palm Bay. Several of the other cities in Brevard County utilize Brevard County to manage their programs, like West Melbourne and Malabar.* The statewide average is \$4.88 per month. Others are listed below.

Brevard County	\$3.00
Cape Canaveral	\$3.00
Cocoa	\$4.75
Cocoa Beach	\$6.00
Rockledge	\$3.75
Satellite Beach	\$4.50
Melbourne Beach	\$3.00
Malabar*	\$3.00
Titusville	\$5.71
West Melbourne*	\$3.00
Melbourne	\$1.80
Grant/Valkaria*	\$3.00
Average	\$3.71

I have detention ponds on my property that I pay to maintain. Do I still have to pay the Stormwater Fee?

Stormwater detention ponds may provide some benefits to the stormwater system by reducing the amount of stormwater runoff that enters the City’s drainage system. However, they do not completely eliminate the impacts from the stormwater runoff or the need for stormwater services from the City. The City is still required to provide services to manage stormwater runoff from larger storms than the detention pond may be designed to control, comply with new

federal and state stormwater regulations, and proactively plan and manage the operation and improvement of the City's drainage system. The City has developed a credit policy that will provide a partial fee credit to customers that own and maintain detention ponds which provide protection that meets the specific City requirements.

I see that you've put up a FAQ area on the stormwater section of the City's website. Is this in response, in any way, to questions you're receiving?

At the beginning of the process to implement the Stormwater Utility we thought it best to provide a specific website that citizens could access to get updates, information, ask questions, and let us know their concerns. We have not had much of a response but we're developing FAQs to cover items that we anticipate will be questions.

This is the web link for the Stormwater Utility site:

http://www.palmbayflorida.org/publicworks/stormwater_utility/index.html

This is the web link for the Stormwater Programs site:

<http://www.palmbayflorida.org/publicworks/stormwater/index.html>

How long has the Stormwater section been on the site? (I ask this because of those who would say that they didn't have access to any information about the change, or any notice).

The regular Stormwater section of our website has been up since at least 2007. This has and still does provide lots of information on our current plans and programs with links to contact us. The Stormwater Utility Website has been up since March 2010 updates have been provided for meeting dates and citizen could have signed up for notifications when these meetings had occurred. Additionally, updates since the approval of the Utility have been posted that include the ordinance, the rate resolution, and the service map. We hope to continue to post additional information on credits and exemptions along with the associated processes and related information on an ongoing basis.

During the study process throughout 2010 we held quite a few meetings with many stakeholder's and spoke at multiple homeowner's associations, provide

many public notices and articles in the newspaper, held several informational meetings, and discussed it at several public hearings, City Council meetings and workshops.

We, the staff of the Public Works Department, as always, will welcome the questions, concerns, and issues of the community and those we serve, and we will do our best to manage these systems to the benefit of all constituents, citizens, and property owners.

Jim Proce, Public Works Director