



CITY OF LATROBE

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM AND USER FEE

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Why am I getting this Bill?

In December of 2019, the City of Latrobe enacted a new ordinance establishing a Stormwater Management Program and User Fee to provide a dedicated funding source to more adequately maintain and reinvest in the City's aging stormwater infrastructure. The ordinance established an annual fee for every developed parcel in the City, regardless of taxable status, to defray the costs of the City's Stormwater Management Program.

What is stormwater, and why is it a problem in Latrobe?

Stormwater commonly refers to runoff from rain and snow/ice melt. In natural settings, stormwater is able to slowly soak into the surface or flow overland into adjacent streams and rivers. This process relies on an abundance of pervious surfaces such as grasslands, pastures, meadows, forests, lawns, and other natural landscapes. In urbanized areas, such as cities and towns, these natural surfaces are often replaced with hard or impervious surfaces such as houses, streets, sidewalks, parking lots, patios, and other similar structures. The result of this development is a reduced amount of natural area available to absorb stormwater. This means that a larger amount of stormwater ends up flowing, at a faster pace, over the hard surfaces where it tends to collect chemicals and debris along the way. When not properly controlled, stormwater can overwhelm streams, cause flooding, soil erosion and surface water pollution.

As is common in an urbanized area, the City of Latrobe has established a stormwater management system which consist of channels, catch basins, pipes, and other structures to manage the movement of stormwater. With time, these systems age and require repairs and/or replacement of our stormwater infrastructure. Currently the maintenance of the system is paid for from the City's general fund, which is mostly funded through real estate taxes. This means that tax-exempt property owners are not contributing to the system, and funding availability is directly impacted by competition for other spending priorities. The result is that funding for system upkeep has been inadequate, unstable and unable to keep pace with the growing need for system management, maintenance, and expansion. To help resolve this problem, the City has instituted a stormwater fee for property owners within the City.

What is the Purpose of the stormwater fee?

Many communities across the county are establishing a dedicated fee to provide the funds to properly maintain and upgrade stormwater infrastructure so that it functions as intended. The stormwater fee will provide a dedicated revenue and enable the City to comply with our Pollutant Reduction Plan which is estimated to cost the City \$2,000,000 over the next five year. This fee will also be used to repair existing stormwater infrastructure and maintenance of those as well.

How is a stormwater fee different from a tax?

Taxes are collected from parcel owners, based on the assessed value of their property to cover costs for a number of general government services. A fee is charged to support a specific service, such as gas, electric, water or garbage collection. The stormwater fee provides an equitable way to distribute the cost of the Stormwater Management Program, by ensuring that every property owner using and placing a burden on the system is paying. All users of the stormwater system will pay a fee based on their estimated share of publicly provided stormwater services.

How is my bill calculated?

All property owners in the City of Latrobe will be assessed the fee based upon the number of ERU's on their property. Single Family Detached parcels will be billed a flat rate of one Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU), which is based on the median amount of impervious surface on a single-family detached lot (2178 sq ft). Each single-family detached parcel will be billed \$90.00 per year, equal to \$7.50 per month. All Non-Single-Family detached parcels such as businesses, churches, apartment buildings, factories, parks, and other open spaces with hard surfaces will be billed a multiplier of the ERU value based on the actual square footage of impervious surface on the property. The billing rate per ERU is determined by the number of ERUs in the City and the annual budget for the program. The initial rate of \$90.00 per ERU per year will remain in place for the first year. City Council will review the progress of the stormwater program and re-evaluate the rate prior to adjusting the rate during the program.

How often will I be charged?

The City will issue invoices to parcel owners each year beginning on or before that last business day of January of each year. The \$90.00 per ERU will be billed on a separate invoice for single-family detached parcels and Non-Single-Family Detached parcels. The invoice shall be paid no later than March 31st of that calendar year. A late fee will be assessed in the event the bill is not paid by the designated due date.

Why base the fee on impervious surface?

In general, the more impervious area on a property has, the more runoff flows from the property, placing a certain demand on the storm sewer system and/or the stormwater services provided by the City. Billing based upon impervious surfaces is a more equitable way to determine the fee than using property value and is a widely accepted method in stormwater management programs across the country.

How is impervious surface area calculated?

The city used an aerial imagery survey performed by Gibson-Thomas Engineering to identify impervious surfaces. The area of the impervious surfaces has been calculated by using geographic Information Systems or (GIS) software.

If I have a question or disagree with my charges who should I contact?

If you have a question regarding your bill or if you think your bill was calculated incorrectly, you can contact the City of Latrobe by either calling or mailing your questions to:

**City of Latrobe
901 Jefferson Street
Latrobe, PA 15650
724-539-8548**

Can I reduce my bill?

Yes, single family detached parcels as well as non-single family detached parcels can receive credits for reducing their stormwater up to a certain percent. This can be achieved by reducing the amount of impervious surface area on the property. A tier system will be used to calculate the percentage a property owner is eligible to receive for credit. For more information on ways you can reduce stormwater runoff on your property you can contact the City of Latrobe.