



TOWN OF HUDSON
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
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FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: STORMWATER AND STORMWATER UTILITY

Table of Contents

1. What is stormwater runoff?	3
2. What is an impervious surface?	3
3. What is Stormwater Infrastructure?	4
4. Why is stormwater runoff a problem?	5
5. What can I do to prevent stormwater pollution?	5
6. How is Hudson's Stormwater Infrastructure Maintained?	6
7. What can I do if I notice inappropriate dumping into or foul odors emanating from storm drains?	6
8. What funds are currently used by the Town to maintain stormwater infrastructure?	6
9. For what purposes will the Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund revenue be used?	7
10. How will this new initiative be funded/What will this cost the home/business owner?	7
11. What properties will incur a fee?	8
12. What are the benefits?	8
13. How are other Towns complying with this mandate?	9
14. What was the evaluation to support the Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund?	9
15. Is this a tax?	9
16. Do I have to pay this fee?	9

INTRODUCTION

Hudson like many towns / cities in Massachusetts faces new updated federal and state mandates to reduce the amount of polluted stormwater runoff it discharges into waterways. Complying with these mandates will ultimately result in cleaner bodies of water (i.e., ponds, lakes, and streams). In order to comply with these mandates, the Town will need to increase its investment in the stormwater infrastructure. Since 2003, the Town has been complying with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) permit to discharge stormwater under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase I Program which was established in 1990 and updated to Phase II in 2003.

Compliance has not resulted in the reduction of widespread water pollution. As a result, the EPA has issued a new permit with much stricter and greater requirements for New England.

NPDES Phase II permit was established in 2003 and finalized modifications were issued in 2016: The new permit's goal is to reduce the pollutants to the maximum extent practical to protect water quality.

The current level of funding is not sufficient to meet the minimum permit requirements and to keep up with needed capital projects.

Compliance with this permit is mandated and will require an investment by the Town. Here is some background and frequently asked questions about Stormwater.

1. What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that “runs off” across the land instead of seeping into the ground. Stormwater runoff occurs when rain or snowmelt flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces like driveways, sidewalks, and streets prevent stormwater from soaking into the ground.

2. What is an impervious surface?

Developed areas such as parking lots, buildings, roadways and other hardened “impervious surfaces” exist around Town. When it rains, water runs off these impervious surfaces and picks up pet waste, oil, sand, fertilizers, and other pollutants. The water then flows into stormwater infrastructure underground which discharges via an outfall directly into the nearest stream, river or lake.

3. What is Stormwater Infrastructure?

Stormwater runoff is collected through streets and curbing, and typically captured by catch basins, manholes, drainage pipes, and eventually to outfalls or discharge points. These systems discharge into local waterways, which are themselves a critical part of Hudson's stormwater system.

In Hudson, Stormwater is collected through 3,500 catch basins and runs through 1,490 plus manholes, 71 miles of pipe, over 30 detention basins, 100+ culverts and 220 outfalls or discharge points. These systems discharge directly into local waterways, which are themselves a critical part of Hudson's stormwater infrastructure system.



Catch Basin – Picture above



Outfall – Picture above

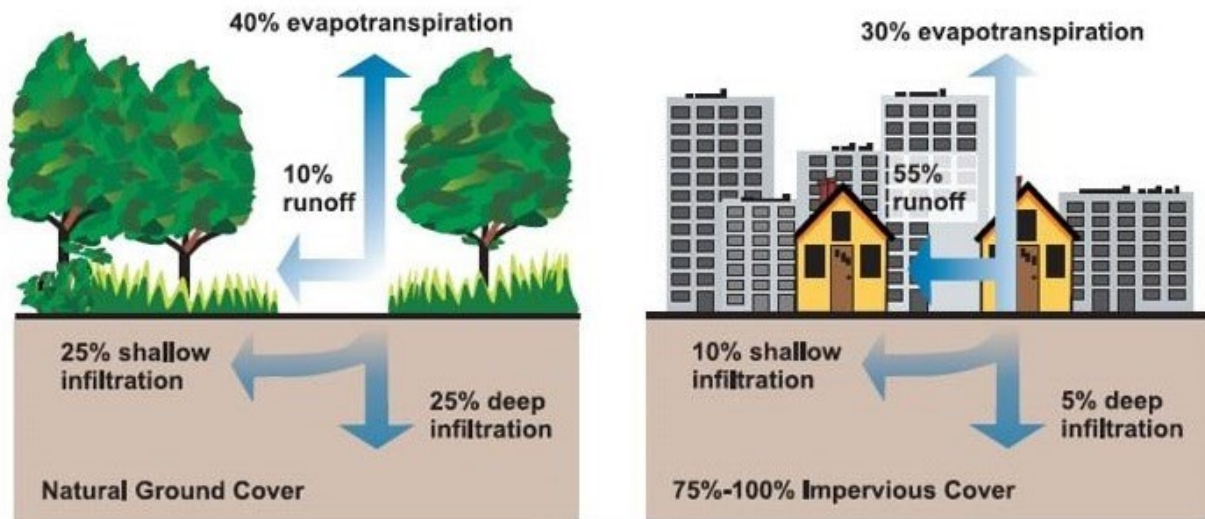


Culvert – Picture on the left

4. Why is stormwater runoff a problem?

Quality: As stormwater flows over driveways, roofs, streets, and sidewalks it picks up debris, chemicals, dirt and other pollutants. Stormwater can flow into a storm sewer system or directly into a lake, stream, river or wetland. Anything that enters a storm sewer system is discharged untreated into the water bodies we use for swimming, fishing, and providing drinking water. Polluted runoff is the nation's greatest threat to clean water.

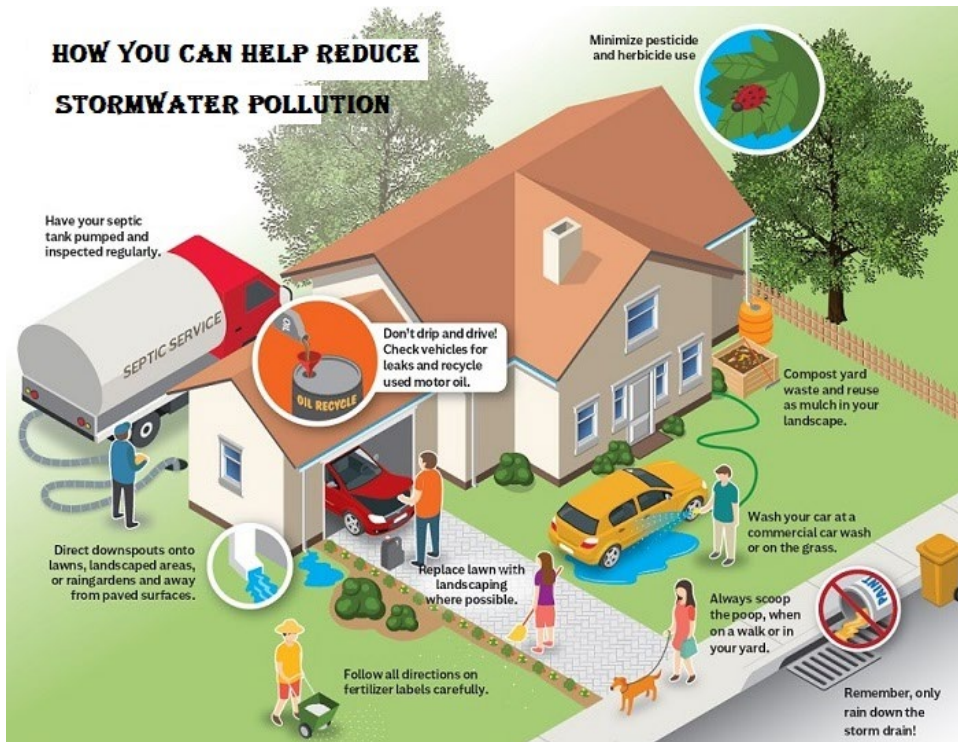
Quantity: As more land is developed, more stormwater runoff is generated, the underground drain infrastructure installed decades ago under the streets does not have the capacity to hold / transfer the higher volumes safely into streams and rivers. Potentially causing ponding / flooding in areas.



Source: EPA

5. What can I do to prevent stormwater pollution?

By practicing healthy household habits, homeowners can keep common pollutants like pesticides, pet waste, grass clippings, and automotive fluids off the ground and out of stormwater. Adopt these healthy household habits and help protect our lakes, streams, rivers, and wetlands. Remember to share these habits with your neighbors!



6. How is Hudson's Stormwater Infrastructure Maintained?

Hudson currently maintains its stormwater system by conducting annual street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, ongoing inspection and repair of pipes, manholes, culverts and catch basins as well as working with property owners to prevent discharges on private property.

7. What can I do if I notice inappropriate dumping into or foul odors emanating from storm drains?

Call the Department of Public works at 978-562-9333.

8. What funds are currently used by the Town to maintain stormwater infrastructure?

The Department of Public Works (DPW) manages the Town's stormwater program. Tax revenue collected for the General Fund pays for the DPW budget, including staff time, maintenance, repairs, and large projects. Funding for stormwater competes with other local priorities such as education and public safety. The more stringent requirements of the Phase II permit are beyond normal DPW functions.

Under the provisions of the Clean Water Act, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) requires the Town to develop a stormwater management program that reduces the discharge of pollutants to our stormwater drainage system and waterways. The Town is required to be in full compliance with the program specified in our NPDES. These additional requirements and tasks imposed by the EPA / DEP compliance standards need dedicated funding annually. A Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund provides a dedicated and adequate source of funding for the costs of managing our stormwater (drainage) system as required by the EPA.

9. For what purposes will the Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund revenue be used?

By state law, all Enterprise Fund revenue must be appropriated only for expenditures relating to the Enterprise Fund, and cannot be transferred to the General Fund. To maintain its permit compliance, the Town must undertake additional responsibilities to control pollution in stormwater. Some of these responsibilities include:

- Creation of a detailed drainage system map showing the area draining to each outfall
- Creation of a Storm water Manager
- Increased street sweeping and cleaning of catch basins
- Detection and removal of illicit discharges of pollutants to the drainage system
- Planning, construction, and maintenance of stormwater management structures
- Sampling and testing of stormwater
- Purchase and maintenance of specialty equipment
- Development of good housekeeping practices and pollution prevention plans for Town properties and infrastructure
- Permit administration and reporting including annual reports to the EPA

10. How will this new initiative be funded/What will this cost the home/business owner?

While Hudson like many towns in Massachusetts is required to incur these increased costs, it does have choices about how to fund them. Stormwater management costs have been escalating for Massachusetts municipalities due to new regulations and aging drainage systems. The town has compared stormwater funding alternatives across the state and proposed creating a Stormwater Utility, with input from town departments, town committees, and the public. Spring Town Meeting may establish an Enterprise Fund for FY2024 for Stormwater Management Operations. Beginning in July 2023, property

owners will see an additional line on their Water/Sewer bill for Stormwater. This is called the Stormwater Utility.

11. What properties will incur a fee?

In the proposed fee structure, the fee will apply to all parcels that have impervious cover greater than 500 square feet. This will include residential and commercial properties as well as nonprofit and tax-exempt properties. Municipal properties are not included. Single and two-family houses that have an impervious area between 500-5000 square feet will be billed a quarterly flat fee of approximately \$25. Residential properties between 5000-10000 square feet will be billed a quarterly flat fee of approximately \$35. Typical commercial properties or any properties that have big parking lots OR higher than 10,000 square feet of impervious area will pay proportionally higher rate.

Credits may be offered in FY2026 for those who take care of their stormwater by infiltrating it or treating it prior to discharging to a wetland, waterbody or municipal system. Further information will be available for these credits in FY2026.

12. What are the benefits?

An enterprise fund allows the Town to collect and apply revenue specifically to stormwater management costs. Funds can accumulate for future capital projects and cannot be used for any other purpose. An enterprise fund improves transparency by tracking revenues and expenditures. Enterprise funds are growing in popularity and the state recommends them as an accounting mechanism for stormwater management.

The Town will meet all the terms and requirements of EPA's new permit.

- This will improve the quality of our waters, making them more swimmable, drinkable and fishable.
- We will develop a Stormwater Management Master Plan for long-range planning.
- The Town will provide regular drainage maintenance to instill a proactive approach, rather than a reactive approach. E.g. of Reactive approach – Chestnut St Failed culvert, Temi Rd Failed Culvert and road closures. Main street bridge structure failure and road closures.
- Long range planning of drainage projects will be more cost-effective by prioritizing.

13. How are other Towns complying with this mandate?

Stormwater utilities are common across the country. Many Massachusetts communities have implemented or authorized a stormwater utility including Ashland, Belchertown, Braintree, Bellingham, Chelmsford, East Longmeadow, Reading, Newton, Gloucester, Fall River, Longmeadow, Millis, Milton, Pepperell, Shrewsbury, Yarmouth, Westfield, Westford, Chicopee, and Northampton. Some others have raised their taxes for all property owners. According to an independent survey conducted, the majority of Stormwater utilities use actual and / or effective impervious area as the user fee basis to understand the stormwater run-off contribution from any property. This is the most fair and equitable method and not surprisingly 92% of the survey respondents reported using impervious area as the basis for fees.

14. What was the evaluation to support the Stormwater Utility Enterprise Fund?

The funding mechanism is an annual fee on developed private properties. This includes residential and commercial properties, private educational, nonprofit, utility, and other tax-exempt properties. Developed property indicate that users of the property also use municipal properties, which include streets, sidewalks, and parking lots. Undeveloped property and conservation land (without impervious surfaces), as listed in the land use codes, are the only categories of public or privately-owned properties that are not assessed a stormwater fee.

15. Is this a tax?

No, this is a utility fee for services provided, not unlike the water and sewer utilities. The Stormwater fee developed using the Utility is fair and equitable. Properties with more impervious surfaces pay their fair share. The more the impervious surface, the more the run off and eventual load on the drainage infrastructure.

16. Do I have to pay this fee?

Yes, failure to pay the Stormwater fee may result in a lien on your property.

Additional details regarding the MS4 Permit can be found at this location:

<https://www.epa.gov/npdes-permits/massachusetts-small-ms4-general-permit>

<https://www.townofhudson.org/departments-public-works/pages/stormwater-ms4-permit>

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