



Roanoke Stormwater Utility – Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is there a Stormwater fee? We already pay taxes, why do we need a new fee?

Like all other urbanized areas in Virginia, Roanoke is bound by law to proactively keep Stormwater pollution from entering creeks, streams, and the Roanoke River as well as clean up those waterways within City limits. The resources needed to operate and maintain the Stormwater drainage system, and to comply with legal requirements and citizen expectations, amount to several million dollars annually. Without a dedicated source of funding, meeting these important community needs would compete for funding with schools, public safety, and other critical local government services.

The Stormwater utility fee is a fair and balanced approach to meet these needs, and is modeled after similar programs that have been successfully operating for a decade or more in many other Virginia communities. The new fee will provide a source of revenue that cannot be re-allocated for purposes other than Stormwater. The fee will be dedicated to three objectives: capital stormwater projects, water quality improvement, and increased maintenance of stormwater infrastructure.

2. How will paying this fee benefit me?

Projects completed as a result of this fee will:

- Reduce flooding of roadways and private properties.
- Improve water quality in our creeks, streams, and the Roanoke River.
- Improve maintenance and inspection frequency of existing systems to help protect citizens and businesses.

The Stormdrain system collects and consolidates Stormwater from hillsides, rooftops, parking lots, streets and more, effectively removing the hazards that would otherwise come from localized flooding. This allows for the continuity of traffic, commerce, and emergency services. By upgrading and applying modern technology and simple common sense pollution prevention measures, the Stormwater that leaves the Stormdrain system enters our region's waterways slower and cleaner, improving water quality. All of these factors add up to improved livability and greater community welfare. Let's face it, no one wants to live or locate a new business where the streets routinely flood and the river is not clean.

3. What is an "impervious surface" and why is my pool/deck/gravel driveway considered to be impervious?

By definition impervious surfaces are areas of the landscape that impede infiltration of rainfall and result in an increased volume of surface runoff. As a simple rule, human-made surfaces that are not vegetated will be considered impervious. Impervious surfaces include roofs, buildings, decks, or pools, as well as any concrete, asphalt, compacted dirt or compacted gravel surface.

Specific to Gravel Driveways:

- Gravel + Vehicles = Compacted Surface = Stormwater Runoff
- Gravel driveways, parking lots, or other high-use areas become compacted over time which prevents infiltration of rainwater into soils.
- As a result of this compaction, Gravel driveways become sources of erosion and sediment transport during even minor rain events.

Specific to Decks:

- Gaps between deck boards concentrate Stormwater runoff. As this concentrated runoff picks up energy during the fall to the surface below, it becomes a potential source of erosion and sediment transport.

Specific to Swimming Pools:

- Different from a pond or landscape water feature, swimming pools are usually covered for the winter months.
- Pools are also drained at various times of year. This drained water has potential impacts on our Stormdrain system, creeks, streams and ultimately the Roanoke River.
- Other Virginia localities also include swimming pools as impervious surfaces including Virginia Beach, City of Suffolk, and Loudon County.

4. How much will it cost?

Your fee is determined utilizing the City of Roanoke's computerized GIS mapping system. Technicians have evaluated each property to determine the total impervious surface area, that is, the area of each property that sheds water during a storm. For billing purposes, the fee is based on each 500 square feet of impervious area identified, rounded to the nearest whole number. That rounded whole number is the parcel's billing unit.

- Year one (7/1/2014-6/30/2015): Approved Fee = 30 cents per billing unit of impervious surface (Average Residential parcel has 3200 sq ft = \$1.80/month.)

- Year two (7/1/2015-6/30/2016): Approved Fee = 60 cents per billing unit of impervious surface (Average Residence parcel has 3200 sq ft = \$3.60/month.)
- Year three (7/1/2016-6/30/2017): Approved Fee = 90 cents per billing unit of impervious surface (Average Residence parcel has 3200 sq ft = \$5.40/month.)

5. How will the fee be billed?

- The fee will be added as a separate line item to your Real Estate Tax bill that comes out each spring and fall.
- The fee became effective July 1, 2014. The fall payment is due each October and spring payment is due each April.
- For many property owners, real estate taxes are paid through their mortgage escrow. Those owners will not receive a bill directly, but likely will see a subsequent adjustment in their escrow payments to offset the Stormwater Utility fee.
- For condominiums with a Home Owners Association (HOA), the fee will be billed directly to the HOA.

6. How do I correct the impervious area measurement shown on my bill?

- Fill out a Stormwater Utility Fee Adjustment application which is available online at: <http://www.roanokeva.gov/documentcenter/view/3013>
- You can also request a hard copy by sending an email to Stormwater@roanokeva.gov or calling 853-5900.

7. How can I apply for a utility fee credit (discount)?

The process for receiving a credit is fully explained in the Stormwater Utility Fee Credit Manuals which are available on the www.roanokeva.gov/Stormwater website along with application forms and instructions. Hardcopies of these manuals are also available upon request by calling 853-5900 or emailing Stormwater@roanokeva.gov. Summary of the process is below:

- Determine if your property is either: 1. Single-family residential property or 2. Multi-family, commercial, industrial, institutional, etc.
- Read the applicable Credit Manual for your property to see if you may qualify for credit.
- If you qualify for credit, fill out a Credit Application and attach all information as required in the Credit Manual.
- Submit the complete application package to the Department of Planning, Building, and Development for review.
- Please contact Karl Kleinhenz for questions about the application or credits by emailing him at karl.kleinhenz@roanokeva.gov or by phone at 853-5647.

8. My water stays on my property; it doesn't flow to a Stormdrain. Am I exempt? No. Even if Stormwater does not flow directly to the street or into a Stormdrain, all runoff accumulates pollutants such as oil and grease, chemicals, nutrients, heavy metals, and bacteria as it travels across land. Both the quantity and the quality of runoff need to be managed before discharge into our creeks, streams and the Roanoke River. Also, as noted above, the Stormdrain system allows for the continuity of traffic, commerce and public safety in the event of a storm. Further, the removal of pollutants from our waterways is necessary for the long term health and vitality of our community. Everyone benefits from those conditions regardless of how runoff may be directed on their personal property. Although it may appear that your property does not generate Stormwater runoff, development of any kind creates more runoff than if the property were vacant and undeveloped.

9. Why are churches and non-profits being charged? How will they be billed if they do not receive a tax bill?

Every property in the City that contributes runoff is being charged the utility fee. This includes city owned properties. A separate Real Estate bill having only a Stormwater utility line item will be sent to any property owners exempt from paying Real Estate taxes.

10. Does the City of Roanoke have to pay the fee? Yes, City properties are also required to pay the Stormwater fee. Locations such as City Hall, Libraries, the Courthouse/Jail, and other city owned parcels with development on them are subject to the utility fee. Only streets and alleys are exempt.

11. Will vacant lots be charged a fee? No, but they must be completely undeveloped. Any buildings, driveways, parking areas, and related improvements, even if abandoned, are considered development and may be used to derive a Stormwater fee.

12. What happens if I don't pay my bill? As with any other City bill that goes unpaid, penalties, interest, and fees will apply – up to and including a debt notice or lien being placed on your deed record.

Roanoke Stormwater Utility Contact Information:

Stormwater Division Email: Stormwater@roanokeva.gov
 Stormwater Division Website: www.roanokeva.gov/Stormwater
 Stormwater Division Main Phone Line: (540) 853-5900
 Utility Fee Payment Information: (540) 853-2561
 Utility Fee Credit Information: (540) 853-5647
 Impervious Surface Measurements: (540) 853-5900

