

## **Stormwater Fee**

### **General Information**

The Terre Haute Board of Sanitary Commissioners and the City of Terre Haute are considering a stormwater fee in 2016. The fee provides a funding mechanism for maintaining and improving stormwater infrastructure in the Terre Haute Sanitary District, and to improve public health and safety through clean water and reduced flood hazards.

The goals of the stormwater operations program are:

1. to ensure that the community's lakes, river and streams are fishable and swimmable
2. to identify flood control projects that enhance public health and safety
3. to comply with Phase II of the Clean Water Act

### **Quick Clean Water Act History**

1972 - Focused on wastewater treatment facilities

1987 - Phase I required entities that serve 100,000 people or more to apply for a permit for stormwater runoff. This included Indianapolis

1994 - Report to Congress stated that stormwater discharges from non-Phase 1 sources remain significant causes to water quality impairment

1999 - Phase II - entities less than 100,000 people regulated. This included Terre Haute, Seelyville, West Terre Haute, Indiana State University and unincorporated Vigo County. There is no federal or state funding for this program and it is our responsibility to meet the federal requirements.

### **State Legislation**

Rule 13 or 327 Indiana Administrative Code 15-13-1 outlines our clean water responsibilities. 22 Indiana counties are required to implement Phase II of the Clean Water Act.

There are approximately 100 communities around the state the charge a stormwater fee.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. What will the fee pay for?**

Primarily, the fees from will be used to fund the Sanitary District's Long Term Control Plan, a federally mandated series of projects that will clean up the Wabash River. Additionally, it will be used to maintain and improve the existing stormwater systems that we have in place. Thompson Ditch Dam, Lost Creek and Thompson Ditch are all maintained by the Sanitary District. Mowing and debris removal of culverts and drainage ways are also a large part of the maintenance paid for by the Sanitary District. Practices will be put in place and maintained to reduce pollutants that drain into our lakes and streams. These practices help us comply, through the clean water program, with the Clean Water Act.

### **2. Why should I have to pay? I don't have any drainage problems or a storm sewer.**

You may not have a problem, but the runoff from your property can contribute to downstream flooding and water quality problems. A responsible approach recognizes that everyone contributes to runoff and that everyone shares in the results (better road drainage, cleaner water, and reduced flooding). This fee will generate enough revenue to allow the Sanitary District to do capital improvement projects again, like were done in the past.

### **3. Doesn't the Sanitary District already have funding in place for stormwater issues?**

Historically, money from property taxes has provided funding for stormwater operations. However, these funds have been reduced dramatically at the same time that our federally mandated Long Term Control Plan needs to be funded. Unfortunately, we are having to do much more with less funding.

### **4. How is the stormwater fee determined?**

The greater the hard surface area, the greater the fee. For each single residential unit less than 1025 sf, the monthly fee is \$4.00/month. For homes between 1025 and 1375sf, the cost will be \$6.00/month. For homes between 1375 and 2200sf, the cost will be \$12.00/month. For homes greater than 2200, the cost will be \$18.00/month. The Sanitary District is using the Vigo County Assessor's information for this calculation.

For most everything else, the hard surface area has been measured for each parcel. The greater the hard surface area, the greater the fee. The area of impervious surface is divided by an Equivalent Residential Unit of 3100 sf. And that multiplier is used to determine the amount of fee to be assessed. For example, a commercial owner with 18,300sf of impervious surface will have 6 ERU's( $18,300/3100=6$ ). Their monthly fee will be \$36.00/month( $6 \times \$6.00$ ).

## **5. Is there a way to reduce my stormwater fee?**

Not yet, but credits are being studied by the Sanitary District. Practices that encourage rain and runoff to soak into the ground or that store water such as detention ponds are being considered because they can help offset the increased runoff from hard surfaces.

## **6. What is stormwater runoff?**

Stormwater runoff is water from rain or melting snow that runs off into receiving streams and lakes instead of seeping into the ground or evaporating. This runoff is not normally treated in any way before it enters lakes and streams. It does not go to a wastewater treatment plant.

## **7. What is combined stormwater?**

Combined stormwater is rainwater or snow melt that drains into the same pipe that is used to handle sanitary sewage. Once this water falls into the same pipe it needs to be treated. Handling this combined stormwater is the purpose of the \$120 million Long Term Control Plan.

## **8. What problems can runoff cause?**

The biggest problem from runoff is the dirt, debris and trash that wash into the combined storm sewers into the creeks, lakes and Wabash River. Separated storm sewers also have these problems, only to a lesser degree. Runoff laden with soil causes culverts to clog and ditches to fill with sediment. Dirt from erosion covers fish habitats and fertilizer in runoff causes too much algae to grow.

The amount of stormwater can also be a problem too. When rain falls on hard surfaces like roofs and driveways, it cannot seep into the ground, so it quickly runs off to lower areas. A parking lot sheds 16 times more water from a one-inch rainfall than a meadow.

## **9. Who oversees Stormwater Operations?**

Stormwater operations are overseen by the Sanitary District. The five member board is comprised of four Mayor appointments, two democrat and two republican, as well as the city engineer.

## **10. What is the clean water program?**

The City of Terre Haute is regulated under the Clean Water Act. That means we are required to have a program that addresses public awareness, public participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, sediment and erosion control practices for construction sites, long term clean water practices such as ponds and rain gardens, and setting a good example with city projects.

## 11. How can I make a difference?

Preventing pollution from entering water is more affordable than cleaning polluted water. Here are some ways to make a difference:

- a) Avoid fertilizing lawns or use slow-release lawn fertilizer with low or no phosphorus and follow label directions to avoid applying too much. Runoff from fertilized lawns can cause algal blooms in downstream ponds.
- b) Minimize herbicide and insecticide use. Follow label directions and avoid application when rain is in the forecast for the next 24 to 48 hours. Use landscaping that does not require heavy use of herbicides, insecticides, or fertilizer.
- c) Wash vehicles at a car wash or in your lawn (avoid car washing in driveways where soap can easily run off into storm drains).
- d) Have septic systems periodically checked and pumped.
- e) Fix oil and antifreeze leaks from your vehicles.
- f) Make sure that lawn areas are vegetated and stable (not eroding). Plant trees.
- g) Clean driveways and garages with a broom as opposed to hosing them down.
- h) Pick up pet waste and dispose of it in a waste receptacle.
- i) Reduce, reuse, and recycle. Avoid dumping used oil, soapy water, paint, or other liquid wastes down storm drains.
- j) Avoid putting lawn waste near ditches or creeks.
- k) Install practices such as rain gardens that filter runoff and promote infiltration. Permeable pavers can be used on top of open-graded stone to create driveways and sidewalks that allow rain to soak into the ground. Allow downspout water an opportunity to soak into the ground (at least a few feet away from the foundation) instead of connecting it directly to a storm drain or street gutter.