

PORTAGE COUNTY STORM WATER DISTRICT RESIDENTIAL FAQ

What is a storm water district?

A Storm Water District is a vehicle to implement and fund public services related to storm water quality management. A Storm Water District will operate in a similar fashion as an electric or water utility. The district will be administered and funded separately from the revenues in the general fund, ensuring a dedicated revenue source for the expense of storm water quality management. User fees will be collected from property owners in return for storm water management services provided by the district.

The Portage County Board of Commissioners is considering a Storm Water District to implement and fund the requirements mandated by the Federal and State government in the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Permit for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems (MS4). The Storm Water District would be limited to the unincorporated townships of the county.

Why does Portage County need a storm water district?

The United States EPA has issued storm water regulations that require small urban and urbanizing areas (including Portage County) to control and regulate storm water runoff. Portage County is required to initiate storm water quality actions without federal or state funding to support implementation of this program.

What types of services will be funded?

The Storm Water District will fund services directly related to the administration of the NPDES Phase II program, as required by Ohio Revised Code Chapter 6117.

Some of the items that may be funded by the district include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Costs associated with the BMP measures outlined in the Storm Water Management Plan.
- Construction of replacement or new storm water projects.
- Financial assistance for septic system replacement projects.
- Identification and mapping of sensitive areas for protection and use restriction.
- Field inspection and enforcement of Portage County storm water design standards and regulations.
- The purchase of specialized equipment necessary for storm water system maintenance.

Solving flood control problems is not included in the Storm Water District's primary objectives.

When will the user fee become effective?

The Portage County Board of Commissioners anticipates the user fee will be included on the February 2010 property tax duplicate.

What are the user fees based on?

All residential properties will be charged a flat rate.

What is the flat rate?

The flat rate will be \$3.00 or less per month per residential unit.

What is a residential unit?

As defined in the resolution creating the Storm Water District, a residential property means a developed property that serves the primary purpose of providing a permanent dwelling unit to a single family. A multi-family building will be charged the residential unit rate for each unit in the building.

Who has to pay?

All properties in unincorporated Portage County will pay the fee, as allowed by ORC 6117.

Are we the only community with a storm water user fee?

No, storm water user fees are not new. Many communities in Ohio have already adopted a storm water user fee.

Why doesn't the general fund cover this work?

The Portage County General Fund has provided minimal financing for storm water projects. The General Fund does not have adequate funding to support this program.

How will the user fee be billed?

The storm water user fee will be included as a separate line item in your property tax duplicate.

Isn't this just another tax?

No, it is a user fee based on each property's contribution to storm water runoff in Portage County.

Can the County enact the Storm Water District without a vote?

Under Ohio Revised Code Chapter 6117, counties are allowed to set up a user fee for water, sanitary sewer and/or storm water by a vote of the Board of Commissioners. A referendum or vote of the people is not required under this law.

How can we be sure that the money raised will be used for storm water quality improvements and not diverted to other projects?

All of the funds raised by the utility will go into a storm water "Enterprise Fund." Under state law, money in enterprise funds can only be used for their intended purposes.

How will the Storm Water District affect new developments?

All new development will still be required to follow existing local rules and all state and federal regulations. Existing regulations require developers to build, at their expense,

storm drain systems, storm water detention facilities, and water quality basins to manage the runoff generated by their developments. Once a lot is developed, that lot will be subject to the same storm water fee as existing lots.

Who do I call if I have additional questions about the storm water utility or how my fee was calculated?

Mickey Marozzi has been designated Portage County Storm Water Coordinator by the Board of Commissioners. He can be reached at the County Engineer's Office (330) 296-6411.