



Chelmsford Stormwater Utility

F.A.Q.

Chelmsford is facing **new federal mandates** to reduce the amount of polluted stormwater runoff it discharges into waterways. Complying with this federal mandate will ultimately result in cleaner bodies of water (i.e., ponds, lakes, and streams). In order to comply with this mandate, 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 Phase 2 Program. 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. Compliance with this permit is mandated and will require an investment by the Town.

BACKGROUND

What is Stormwater?

Stormwater is water from rain or melting snow that “runs off” across the land instead of seeping into the ground. The runoff usually flows into the nearest stream, creek, river, lake or ocean. The runoff is not treated in any way and can become polluted.

What is Polluted Stormwater Runoff?

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 gutters and storm drains which discharge directly into the nearest waterway. Polluted stormwater runoff is the single largest source of pollution to Chelmsford’s ponds and waterways.

What Is Stormwater Infrastructure?

Stormwater is collected through our 4,500 catch basins and runs through 800 plus manholes, 95 miles of pipe, over 50 detention basins and 650 outfalls or discharge points. These systems discharge directly into local waterways, which are themselves a critical part of Chelmsford’s stormwater system.

How is Chelmsford’s Infrastructure Maintained?

Chelmsford 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.

WHAT STAGE ARE WE AT IN TERMS OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE NEW GUIDELINES?

Chelmsford's Past Stormwater Budget

The costs associated with stormwater management are currently spread across many town departments. The majority of Chelmsford's stormwater management activities are carried out by the Department of Public Works (DPW).

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

While Chelmsford is required to incur these increased costs, it does have choices about how to fund them.

Article 14 of the 2017 Spring Town Meeting was approved; this established an Enterprise Fund for FY2018 for Stormwater Management Operations.

Beginning in July 2017, property owners will see an additional line on their Sewer bill for Stormwater.

What properties will incur a fee?

The fee will apply to all parcels that have impervious cover. 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 will be billed an **annual flat fee of \$40**. Some multifamily complexes and all non-residential properties are assessed an annual fee based on a tiered structure of impervious area which runs between \$250-\$8,000.

Credits may be offered in FY2019 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 FY2019.

What are the benefits?

- 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.
- Long range planning of drainage projects will be more cost-effective by prioritizing.

How are other Towns complying with this mandate?

Stormwater utilities are common across the country. Many Massachusetts communities have implemented or authorized a utility including Reading, Newton, Gloucester, Fall River, Yarmouth, Westfield, Chicopee, Northampton and Milton. Other local municipalities are at various planning or development stages.

For more information regarding Stormwater, click on the link below.

<http://www.townofchelmsford.us/375/Stormwater>