

## The Surface Water Management Program Q and A

The Surface Water Management (SWM) program has received many questions since its implementation in July 1, 1992. Here are some of the most frequently asked questions:

### What is Surface Water Management?

The SWM Program was implemented in 1992 to address surface water or non-point source pollution as required by the Clean Water Act. Contaminated surface water runoff has been identified as a major source of pollution in our waterways. Surface water, sometimes called stormwater, runs off areas including roads and sidewalks, roofs, and even lawns and fields. Urban runoff is often unable to soak into the ground because of impervious surfaces such as pavement and build-

ings. On its way to a natural body of water, surface water picks up pollutants such as oil and grease, soil erosion, yard debris, litter, animal droppings, and industrial and home chemicals. Surface water management programs aim to reduce the amount of contaminants that reach our waterways by controlling erosion from construction sites, reducing impacts of new development, providing adequate drainage, identifying pollutant sources, and taking action to correct and prevent them.

### Why Was the Program Implemented in The Lower Tualatin?

Federal laws require cleanup of our waterways through the Clean Water Act of 1972. In the late 1980's, several citizen

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## Calendar of Events

### Clackamas County Fair – Canby Fairgrounds

It'll be a blast!

August 15-20

Visit WES booths 6 and 7

in the Floral Arcade Section

For more information about the

County Fair call (503) 266-1136

or visit the official fair website at

[www.co.clackamas.or.us/fair/](http://www.co.clackamas.or.us/fair/)

For more information on these and

other events visit [www.co.clackamas.](http://www.co.clackamas.or.us/WES/calendar.jsp)

[or.us/WES/calendar.jsp](http://www.co.clackamas.or.us/WES/calendar.jsp)

## Online Bill Payment

Now you can pay your surface water management fee directly from your checking account. Visit [www.co.clackamas.or.us/wes/documents/payment.htm](http://www.co.clackamas.or.us/wes/documents/payment.htm) and follow the instructions. It's fast, convenient and just a link away.

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groups sued the Oregon Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) over what they viewed as a lack of enforcement to clean up the Tualatin River. This resulted in agreements requiring all jurisdictions with areas draining to the Tualatin River to develop and implement programs for river cleanup by June 30, 1993, and to provide a stable source of funding for these programs. Consequently, the Surface Water Management Agency of Clackamas County was formed as an ORS 451 County Service District to serve those incorporated areas which drain to the Tualatin River. The District also serves the City of Rivergrove.

## How Are SWM Fees Used?

SWM fees are used to fund: 1) water quality monitoring; 2) investigation of water quality, erosion and drainage issues; 3) water quality and drainage improvement projects; 4) customer service response; and 5) public education and awareness.

## Does Everyone Pay a SWM Charge?

Yes, everyone with impervious (nonabsorbent) surfaces pays a SWM fee, including homeowners, churches, schools, governments and businesses. Only unimproved properties and public streets are not charged. Public streets are designed to be part of the stormwater system and direct flow through the storm system.

## How is the SWM Fee Calculated?

The SWM charge reflects the amount of impervious surface on each site, which is a measure of increased runoff into the storm drainage system.

The monthly surface water management fee is based on the Equivalent Service Unit (ESU). One ESU equals 2,500 square feet of impervious surface. The current SWM rate is \$4 per month per ESU in the SWMACC District. Single-family residences are charged for 2,500 square feet of impervious service area or 1 ESU (shown

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# Protect Natural Resource Areas With Undisturbed Buffer Zones

One of the many responsibilities of a landowner is to protect and improve the health of their property's sensitive natural resource areas. This not only helps to preserve their investment, but also enhances the livability of their surrounding community.

Communities can benefit from healthy natural resource areas in many ways, such as increased property values, aesthetics and attractive recreational areas with thriving fish habitat, and wildlife populations for



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viewing. Natural resource areas improve water quality, minimizes erosion and flooding—all qualities that tend to attract more people to an area, leading to greater economic opportunity for everyone.

Whether you own a home or a business, it's important to become familiar with and identify any sensitive areas on your property. Sensitive areas may include wetlands, rivers, streams, sloughs, springs, creeks, drainages, lakes and ponds. One way to keep these areas healthy is to protect native vegetation and improve the natural riparian corridors by removing invasive plant species alongside waterways that act as buffer

zones between land and water habitats.

If you're considering a development project or changing the landscaping on land with a riparian zone, it's important to know and understand that there are local, state and federal rules and regulations in place requiring undisturbed buffer zones adjacent to sensitive areas. These changes may also require permits and approvals from government agencies. Buffer zones must be wide enough to protect the sensitive area and water quality.

Because of these regulations, and the importance of our natural resources, landowners are urged to learn about undisturbed buffer requirements before beginning development projects. To learn more about WES' Undisturbed Buffer Rules and Regulations, visit: <http://www.co.clackamas.or.us/wes/permit.htm> or call 503-353-4597.

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as “1.00 unit” on your billing) per month, based on this average measurement. Non-single family properties, including businesses, schools, governments and industrial areas, pay based on their measured impervious area. For example, a business with 10,000 square feet of impervious surface (4 ESUs) would be charged \$16.00 per month ( $\$4.00 \times 10,000 \text{ sq. ft.} \div 2,500 \text{ sq. ft.} = \$16.00$ ). Through this approach, properties that contribute more to the need for surface water management pay a greater proportion of the program costs.

Residential customers in SWMACC are billed for surface water management service every 6 months.

## I’m Not Connected to a Storm Water System, Why Should I Pay?

You may not be directly connected to a stormwater system, but you are provided service through the Surface Water Management Program. The services may be in the form of water quality improvements, systems that protect the area roadways

you use, or protection of your home or business from the impact of development upstream. The program is based on the premise that we all live “downstream” and we all need to be part of the funding solution that supports the program. The impervious surface approach is the fair and logical means of allocating these costs. Other questions? Please call the Water Environment Services at (503) 353-4567.

## How to Reach Us:

Customer Service and Billing Questions

(503) 353-4567

M-F 7:30 AM – 4:30 PM

Online Bill Payment

[www.co.clackamas.or.us/wes/documents/payment.htm](http://www.co.clackamas.or.us/wes/documents/payment.htm)

Community Relations and Public Information

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