

Understanding Howard County's Stormwater Remediation Fee

Stormwater runoff originates during precipitation when water flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces such as streets and rooftops increase runoff by preventing water from soaking into the ground. Water running over impervious surfaces can pick up sediment, chemicals, debris, and toxins which are carried to local waterways. These pollutants prevent waterways from being fishable and swimmable.

In 2012, the State of Maryland passed the Watershed Protection and Restoration Program (HB-987) which mandates that counties subject to a certain municipal stormwater permit institute a stormwater remediation fee. The purpose of the charge is to manage pollution carried by stormwater into local waterways.

The collected charges are placed in a *dedicated fund* and used to finance projects that treat polluted stormwater. Examples of these projects include, but are not limited to, street sweeping, storm drain cleaning, stormwater facility inspection, maintenance and upgrades, tree planting, water quality monitoring, watershed planning, and stormwater educational programming. The stormwater remediation fee is similar to fees for other public services such as sewer, drinking water, and state highways.

Who has to pay the Stormwater Remediation Fee?

The stormwater remediation fee applies to the nine largest counties in Maryland (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's) and Baltimore City, which are federally required to treat stormwater runoff. Residents, businesses, and institutions in these areas are all required to pay the fee. The fee structure is established independently by each county/city and differs across the State.

What does the Stormwater Remediation Fee look like in Howard County?

Residential properties will pay:

- \$15 for owners of townhouses and condominiums;
- \$45 for owners of homes on lots up to one-quarter acre;
- \$90 for owners of homes on lots larger than one-quarter acre;
- \$15 per unit for an apartment complex.

Commercial, industrial, and institutional properties will pay:

- \$15 per 500 square feet of impervious surface.

Hardship exemptions

- **Residential** - 60% credit if income is less than two times the poverty level.
- **Commercial**- If the fee is greater than 20% of the total tax bill, a commercial property owner eligible for an exemption will pay a fee equal to 20% of tax bill for the property. If the fee is greater than \$1,000 after the 20% adjustment and the owner proves financial hardship, the fee will be \$1,000. For FY14 only, if the fee is greater than \$10,000, exempted commercial properties owners will pay 50% of the fee or \$10,000; whichever is greater.
- **Non-profit**- 100% of the fee is waived if a non-governmental organization (NGO) implements a county-approved treatment plan. Need-based grants are available to help offset the cost of implementing practices. If an NGO does not agree to a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), or later opts out of the partnership, then the fee is calculated at the regular rate.
- **Agricultural Assessed**- If property has a Howard County Soil Conservation District Conservation Plan, or if the owner has signed MOU with the County agreeing to a conservation plan, the property owner will pay the \$90 residential rate. Agriculture properties without a conservation plan will pay \$15 per 500 square feet of impervious surface.

Credits/Reimbursements

- **Residential**- A flat 20% credit is awarded to residential property owners provided that minimum impervious area treated as follows: \$15 fee – 250 sq ft; \$45 fee – 500 sq ft; \$90 fee – 1,000 sq ft. The credit application charge is \$75, and is refundable if the credit is granted.
- **Commercial**- If a property owner has a Site Development Plan (SDP) dated after 1/2003, and certifies that all functioning Stormwater Management systems are in place, the owner will receive a 50% credit off the base fee. For other commercial properties, additional impervious area treatment under MDE design manual standards is credited by sq ft treated x .5.
- **Non-profit**-Nonprofit properties that are not covered by an MOU agreement are given a percentage credit equivalent to the stormwater treated on-site.

The County provides one-time reimbursements for costs incurred for the construction or implementation of additional stormwater practices on all properties. The practices accepted, the minimum criteria required, and the reimbursement rates will vary and are defined by County Council Resolution.

What can you do to help address stormwater runoff pollution?

Among other practices, residents can install rain barrels, rain gardens, and porous pavers, and practice Bay-wise landscaping to help in the fight against stormwater runoff. Always remember with stormwater - **slow it down and soak it up!**



Rain Garden



Rain Barrel

Additional Resources

Maryland Department of the Environment
Stormwater Fee FAQ:

<http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Maryland/Pages/StormwaterFeeFAQ.aspx>

Howard County Stormwater Remediation Fee
webpage:

www.cleanwaterhoward.com

House Bill 987 (HB-987)

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?ys=2012rs%2fbillfile%2fhb0987.htm>

Contact Amanda Rockler (arockler@umd.edu, 240-393-8346), Watershed Restoration Specialist for Howard, Montgomery and Frederick Counties, to answer your questions about the fee and what you can do to reduce stormwater runoff on your property.

Please note: This factsheet is intended to provide an overview of the stormwater remediation fee at the time of publication. For more information please go to:
<http://livegreenhoward.com/water/stormwater/>

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