

Stormwater Fees

Purpose of the Fee

A stormwater fee has been enacted to provide resources for an unfunded federal program that protects streams and lakes from pollution. The money raised by this fee will only be used on this stormwater program. There is no planned increase or change in the rate.

Background

The Environmental Protection Agency required Shelby County to get a permit for discharges of stormwater from its storm drainage system. The storm drainage system consists of all gutters, ditches, inlets, pipes, detention ponds, headwalls, and other such system components that transport rainwater to the State's lakes, streams and rivers.

This permit requires Shelby County to perform control measures to prevent pollution and other contaminants from entering area streams and lakes. Since the permit was required and came with no corresponding funding from the State, the Stormwater Permit has been called an unfunded mandate. Shelby County has been performing the required tasks using personnel and money from the general fund, which primarily comes from individual resident taxes.

Payment Structure

The following stormwater payment rates should generate approximately \$700,000 that covers about 42,000 properties, 310 square miles, 4,000 miles of open ditches, 300 miles of storm drainage pipes, all County-maintained ponds, and 14,000 structures (such as inlets, manholes, and headwalls):

- \$1.50 for improved residential lots and individually-metered apartments
- \$2.50 for all improved non-residential lots

Why is a fee needed?

On August 31, 2010, the state issued a new, more rigorous permit that requires the county to perform many more tasks, such as sampling and doing in-stream assessments of the waters of the state. It also includes many time- and cost-intensive requirements for public education and illegal discharge detection. Again, these tasks will be required with no funding given by the state or federal government.

To increase the general tax rate to pay for these tasks may not be effective, because the money within the general fund can be used for any government operation. To make sure that the money raised to prevent pollution and regulate discharges into stream and lakes, Shelby County set up a dedicated stormwater fund. This ensures that all of the money raised can only be used for the stormwater program items.

What does the fee pay for?

This fee pays for items such as:

- Annual expenditures (such as development of adult and grade school educational messages, pamphlets, and educational materials; stream clean-up events; system mapping; construction enforcement; illegal discharge detection; in-stream sampling and visual assessments; roadside trash pickup; and employee training and education)

- Capital improvement projects (such as regional flood controls, wetland restoration, stream-side buffer establishment, groundwater monitoring ordinance, and subdivision reviews or environmental studies)
- This fee also pays for two full-time equivalent staff members and a little overhead.