

Upper Allen Township considering stormwater fee to cover rising costs of federal and state regulations

Recent stormwater management permit includes \$2.5 million in projects over next five years to meet pollution control guidelines

UPPER ALLEN TOWNSHIP, PA (September 12, 2018) – The Upper Allen Township Stormwater Authority today held the first of two public hearings on establishing a stormwater fee to cover the increasing costs associated with meeting federal and state regulations.

Upper Allen is facing \$2.5 million in new storm sewer system projects over the next five years to meet the pollution control requirements under the Township’s five-year National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit received in June. Complying with all the regulations is expected to cost \$1 million annually.

The next public meeting is scheduled for 6:30 p.m. on October 2 and the Authority anticipates approving the fee later this year. It’s estimated the average homeowner would pay \$15 per quarter and that the first fee would appear as a separate charge in the January 2019 sewer bill. Property owners not connected to the public sewer would receive a standalone bill.

“The rising cost of meeting these ever-stricter regulations governing the runoff carried by storm sewer systems is falling squarely on the municipalities that own and manage these systems,” said Township Manager Lou Fazekas. “A stormwater fee is the most equitable way to pay for these unfunded federal and state mandates that impact our entire Township.”

Upper Allen is not alone in deciding a fee based on how much runoff a property generates is the fairest way to pay for implementing stormwater regulations; Hampden and Derry townships are among municipalities that recently approved stormwater fees. Lower Allen, Susquehanna, Lower Paxton, Lower Swatara townships, as well as Mechanicsburg and Carlisle boroughs are considering it.

Fazekas said that unlike property taxes, which exempts nonprofits, a stormwater fee treats all owner equally according to the amount of impervious coverage on their property. Impervious coverage includes rooftops, driveways, patios, parking lots and other man-made structures.

A township-wide analysis found the average single-family lot has 3,800-square-feet of impervious coverage, which became the basis for one ERU or Equivalent Runoff Units. Further

calculation using publicly available state and county aerial and geographic mapping, tax parcel records and land cover data determined there are 16,513 ERUs in the township.

The value of a single ERU would be set at roughly \$60 per year (\$15 per quarter) to cover the cost of the anticipated \$1 million annual stormwater management budget. All of the revenue collected would only be used to cover expenses related to the storm sewer system.

Upper Allen's permit requires the township to reduce sediment and pollution levels in runoff that is carried by its storm sewer system into the Cedar Run and Yellow Breeches creeks, as well as their tributaries.

The township's municipal separate storm sewer system, or MS4 system, covers 78 miles of Township roads and includes almost 47 miles of storm pipe; 2,539 inlets, such as the grated inlets at curbside; and 131 outfalls, where the system drains into creeks or streams. It is separate from the sanitary system, which carries waste to the sewer treatment plant.

Stormwater runoff is a concern because when rain or melting snow drains from streets, parking lots, sidewalks and other paved areas, it picks up contaminants such as spilled fuel, oil, fertilizer and pesticides. Many of the projects included in Upper Allen's permit entail planting trees and vegetation along waterways to filter out sediment and pollutants.

"We looked at how much impervious coverage is on every property in the township," Fazekas said. "We wanted to make sure we had the fairest method for owners to pay according to how much stormwater runoff their buildings and other structures generate."

For more information on Upper Allen Township's proposed stormwater fee and the Stormwater MS4 Program, go to www.uatwp.org and click on "Stormwater Fee Information."