

Upper Allen Township Stormwater Authority approves fee to cover rising cost of federally-mandated water pollution control projects
Average homeowner will pay \$16.50 per quarter, less than the fee in many neighboring municipalities

UPPER ALLEN TOWNSHIP, PA – Facing \$2.8 million in new federally-mandated storm sewer system projects, the Upper Allen Township Stormwater Authority has approved a quarterly fee that property owners will first see in their January sewer bill.

“In the past, we were able to cover the cost of federally-required stormwater pollution control requirements through our general fund, but the rising regulatory costs made this no longer possible,” said Township Manager Lou Fazekas. “A stormwater fee is the most equitable way to pay for these unfunded mandates that impact our entire township.”

Under the resolution approved Nov. 20, the average homeowner will pay \$16.50 per quarter. Those not connected to the public sewer will receive a standalone bill. Property owners can view their stormwater assessment by going to township’s website (www.uatwp.org) and clicking on “Stormwater Fee Information” on the homepage.

All of the revenue collected will only be used to cover expenses related to the storm sewer system.

Upper Allen’s fee for a single-family home is less than many other area municipalities using the same approach to deal with stormwater pollution control requirements. Derry Township has a \$19.50/quarter fee for a single-family residence; Mt. Lebanon’s fee is about \$24/quarter; Lower Allen Township is considering a \$19/quarter fee; Carlisle is considering \$31.50/quarter; and Lower Paxton is considering \$32/quarter.

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.

Driving the need for Upper Allen’s stormwater fee are \$2.8 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.

A township-wide survey that found the average single-family lot has 4,206-square-feet of impervious coverage, which became the basis for one ERU or Equivalent Runoff Units. The value of a single ERU is \$66 per year (\$16.50 per quarter) to cover the cost of the anticipated \$1 million annual stormwater management budget.

The Authority expects to approve at its Dec. 19 meeting an appeal system to address concerns by property owners who feel the ERU calculations for their parcel are not correct.

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've seen a steady increase in the costs associated with complying with federal regulations that are becoming increasingly stringent," Fazekas said. "We believe, as other do other municipalities, that the fairest way to address these costs is for property owners to pay a fee based on how much stormwater runoff their homes and businesses create."

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