

# West Chester Borough Stream Protection Fee (SPF) Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

December 2016

The Stream Protection Fee (SPF), adopted by Borough Council in July 2016, will fund the Borough's stormwater program which helps to manage the impacts and associated costs from impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff including maintenance and repairs to the Borough's storm sewer system. This fee will be paid by all Borough property owners – including the University, nonprofits, and even government-owned properties – and every property owner is charged in the same way (described below). The fee is based on the amount of hard (impervious) surfaces on a property, therefore larger properties with more impervious area are charged a higher fee than smaller properties with less impervious area.

### How does the Borough's existing storm sewer system work?

The Borough's storm sewer system was originally built over 100 years ago to help direct rainwater (stormwater) away from buildings and structures and consists of 23 miles of pipes, 865 inlets, 53 outfalls, and 163 manholes. These pipes work using gravity to carry stormwater downhill and discharge it into the nearest stream, often with no control of quantity or quality. Replacements and other maintenance activities are needed to keep the Borough's storm sewer system functioning properly. The storm sewer system is physically separate from the wastewater system, which carries raw sewage to the Borough's two sewage treatment plants.

### What is stormwater runoff? Why is stormwater runoff a problem for the environment?

Rainfall that lands on an impervious surface (i.e. streets, sidewalks, driveways, parking lots, compacted soil/gravel, and building rooftops) and doesn't soak into the ground turns into stormwater runoff.

As stormwater flows across the land, it picks up oil, litter, pet waste, sediment, and other pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus and carries them directly to local streams through the storm sewer system. Runoff also accelerates stream flows, which increase scour and erosion of stream beds and stream banks, thereby elevating sedimentation, destroys aquatic habitat, and elevates aquatic pollutant concentrations and loadings such as sediments, nutrients, heavy metals, and pathogens. These impacts to water quality are regulated by federal and state laws. The Borough is required by those laws to address the quantity and quality of stormwater runoff before it enters our local streams – Goose Creek, Taylor Run, Plum Run, and Blackhorse Run.



Approximately 49% of West Chester is covered by impervious surfaces such as parking lots, buildings, and roads.

### What are the effects of large amounts of stormwater runoff? Why should I be concerned?

In urbanized areas like the Borough, stormwater runoff can create a number of problems including:

- Flooding
- Eroded streambanks which can expose buried utilities and affect adjacent properties
- Polluted streams and creeks and degraded wildlife habitat
- Stressed storm sewers, especially in older systems like the Borough's
- Legal and financial penalties for the Borough if stormwater permit obligations are not met

### What is the Stream Protection Fee (SPF) Program? What will the funds be used for?

The SPF is a stormwater management assessment fee that creates a dedicated funding source to pay for the operations and maintenance necessary to meet federal and state stormwater mandates (such as street sweeping, cleaning stormwater inlets, etc.). The SPF also funds necessary capital improvement projects related to stormwater, such as green infrastructure projects, streambank restoration, and pipe/culvert repairs. The SPF is a program authorized for local communities by the Commonwealth and the fee will only fund stormwater related projects and activities.

Prior to the 2016 budget, stormwater management was funded by the General Fund or through infrequent grants. However, funding was very limited due to financial pressures and the desire not to raise taxes. As of 2017, the General Fund budget will no longer include stormwater related activities, as they will all be funded by the SPF.

## Who will be charged the Stream Protection Fee (SPF)? How is the SPF determined?

Similar to a water or sewer fee, all property owners will be charged the SPF fee based on their property's contribution to stormwater runoff. The fee amount is directly related to the amount of impervious area on a property. The SPF rate is calculated based on the Borough's total costs of managing and treating stormwater runoff and the amount of impervious area in the Borough.

## How exactly is the fee calculated?

Stormwater fees are based on the amount of impervious area on each property. The more paved surfaces and buildings, the more a property owner pays. Properties are distributed into Tiers based on the amount of impervious area on their property, as determined from aerial mapping data provided by Chester County. Tier 1 through Tier 5 pay a flat monthly fee, and Tier 6 properties pay based on the actual amount of impervious area at a rate of \$6.70 per 1,000 square feet of impervious area per month.

A property owner can file an appeal if they disagree with the charge, either regarding the measurement of impervious area or their Tier category.

### Stream Protection Fee Rate Structure:

SPF rates are grouped into Tiers based on the amount of impervious area in a parcel.

<u>Tier</u>	<u>Impervious Area/Parcel</u>	<u>Monthly Fee*</u>
1	0-1,000 square feet (ft <sup>2</sup> )	\$3.35
2	1,000-1,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	\$8.38
3	1,500-2,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	\$11.73
4	2,000-2,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	\$15.08
5	2,500-3,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	\$18.43
6	> 3,000 ft <sup>2</sup>	\$20.10 and up

\*The base rate has been set at \$6.70 per 1,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of IA per month. Tiers 1-5 are charged a flat fee as shown above. Tier 6 properties are charged based on actual impervious area. The monthly fee is multiplied by 12 to determine annual costs.

## How can I can reduce my Stream Protection Fee?

The Borough has developed a stormwater credit and rebate program to incentivize property owners to manage their stormwater on site and reduce impervious area on their property. A non-residential property owner can receive a credit for managing stormwater and residential property owners can qualify for a rebate in addition to a credit related to how much impervious area is managed.



A property owner can reduce their SPF bill by installing stormwater management features on their property such as vegetated roofs, rain barrels, and permeable pavers.



For more information, contact:  
[spf-program@west-chester.com](mailto:spf-program@west-chester.com)  
(610) 696-5282

<http://www.west-chester.com/469/Stream-Protection-Fee>