CITY OF Salem AT YOUR SERVICE
Public Works Department

Salem's Stormwater Utility Fact Sheet

STORMWATER RUNOFF

In a natural setting such as a forest, rain falls on trees and soaks into the soil. In a developed area, rain often falls onto hard surfaces such as roads and rooftops that prevent the water from soaking into the ground. The water runs off of these impervious surfaces creating "stormwater runoff."

Impervious surfaces such as rooftops, roads, highly compacted soils, and parking areas prevent water from infiltrating into the ground. These impervious surfaces cause more water to run off faster than runoff from undeveloped landscapes. High stormwater flows can threaten property, public health and safety, and environmental quality. High flows and flooding are only part of the problem. Stormwater runoff from all sizes of storms can contain sediment, gasoline, oil, pesticides, bacteria, and other pollutants. These pollutants are then carried into our creeks, wetlands, groundwater, and the Willamette River, negatively impacting water quality. In Salem, stormwater and wastewater are not combined, so collected stormwater is conveyed and discharged directly into local waterways rather than the wastewater treatment plant. The City of Salem provides stormwater services that are designed to help address the problems associated with flooding, conveyance, and water quality.

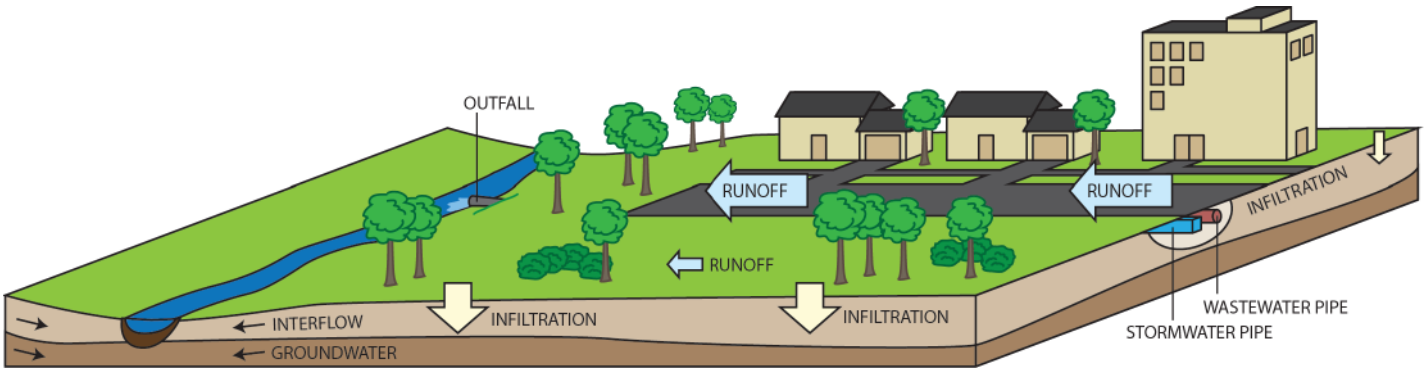

Figure 1. Typical stormwater runoff pattern showing more runoff and less infiltration from developed surfaces.

STORMWATER MANAGEMENT PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The City of Salem provides its residents with stormwater services within an area that comprises more than 48 square miles and 13 urban watersheds. Salem's stormwater collection system consists of more than 85 miles of open channels and ditches, 90 miles of waterways, 420 miles of pipe, 900 detention basins, and 22,000 storm drainage structures. The Public Works Department provides stormwater services through a variety of activities and projects including: stormwater system operation and maintenance, stormwater quality monitoring, public education and involvement, flood response, street sweeping, stream cleaning, spill response, municipal regulations, stormwater quality complaint response, facility inspections, capital projects, and much more. In the past 20 years, the importance of managing urban stormwater runoff has become clearer and Salem's citizens have become increasingly aware of the adverse impacts of stormwater runoff. State and federal regulatory requirements for the City's stormwater programs have also grown substantially in the past two decades.

Si necesita ayuda para comprender esta información, por favor llame 503-588-6211.
If you need help understanding this information, please call 503-588-6211.

TRANSITIONING STORMWATER PROGRAM FUNDING

Historically, Salem's stormwater services have been funded as a portion of the wastewater rate, which is calculated by water usage rates during the winter. However, water and wastewater usage rates have no relationship to the impacts of a property on stormwater. Beginning in late 2009, the City began working on a proposal that would decouple stormwater funding from the City's wastewater fees to more closely link the stormwater fee to the impact of the ratepayer on the stormwater system. On December 6, 2010, the Salem City Council approved creation of a stormwater utility and implementation of a stormwater rate.

As part of the City Council's decision the stormwater fee would be initially implemented on January 1, 2013. The stormwater fee will then be phased in over four rate cycles taking three years to complete. During the phasing in period, ratepayers will see adjustments that decrease their wastewater charges as the new stormwater fee is incorporated into the billing statement.

CALCULATING THE STORMWATER FEE

The new stormwater fee has two components:

- The first component is based on the amount of impervious surface of each ratepayer's property. Impervious surface is directly related to stormwater flow running off of a property.
- The second component is a base charge that will be paid by all ratepayers regardless of the amount of impervious surface. This base charge supports stormwater programs such as dispatch services, street sweeping, account maintenance, and includes the impervious surface area of public streets.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR RATE CREDITS

Rate payers who are not single family residents may request a reduction in stormwater fees if:

- There is a stormwater facility on the property that provides water quality treatment for stormwater runoff.
- There is a flow control facility that reduces the volume and/or rate of runoff leaving a property.

Stormwater impacts can also be reduced by a treatment facility that removes pollutants from stormwater through mechanical, biological, or other means. Single-family residential ratepayers are not eligible to receive a credit because the high cost of administering the program would not be justified by the small reduction in rates.

Figure 2. Overview of typical stormwater system in Salem.

PUBLIC OUTREACH AND STAKEHOLDER INVOLVEMENT

An extensive public outreach effort was conducted during the 12-month process leading up to the December 2010 Council vote. The initial proposal to establish a stormwater rate was endorsed by the Water/Wastewater Task Force, the citizen advisory body for the Public Works Director, at its December 17, 2009, meeting. City staff then met with the public more than 60 times during 2010. City staff met with neighborhood associations; the Salem Area Chamber of Commerce; government agencies; trade associations, business organizations, and individual corporations; and civic groups, citizen boards, and committees. Two work sessions were conducted for the City Council during 2010 and the public hearing spanned two Council meetings.

The City continues to work with the community in order to implement the new utility and associated fee. City staff will ask for feedback regarding the accuracy of the impervious surface area estimates and request that ratepayers notify the City of on-site stormwater facilities that might qualify the ratepayer for a stormwater rate credit.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For additional information, including answers to frequently asked questions, please visit our website at:

http://www.cityofsalem.net/stormwaterutility

For additional information about the stormwater utility, contact Zach Diehl or Mike Gotterba at the Salem Public Works Department at 503-588-6211 or zdiehl@cityofsalem.net or mgotterba@cityofsalem.net.