

Arlington County Stormwater Utility Community Advisory Group March 30, 2022

Questions and Comments

Doesn't most of the rain off my roof go into my lawn? While a lot of rain does end up on the lawn, not all of it soaks into the ground. Once the lawn area is saturated, much of the runoff still runs off into the storm system, carrying pollutants and debris with it. Using Impervious Area (IA) to determine a property's impact on the system may not be perfect, it is considered a best practice nationwide for being the most accurate and fair way to determine a property's contribution to the storm system.

My general concern is that the county is going to a lot of trouble to institute a system which will have a very little impact on incentives, but will penalize non-profits and low rise apartments. Thank you for expressing that concern. The intent of the stormwater utility is to create an equitable system that provides sufficient funding for the stormwater program.

Does the IA calculation account for properties with a lot of tree canopy, which helps minimize runoff? Can assessed rate be lower with certain amount of tree canopy coverage? Tree canopy or tree planting would likely be addressed in a credit program as opposed to adjusting the impervious area calculation for the property.

Impervious area is not the best measure of stormwater. When designing stormwater management facilities, the area is divided into impervious, lawn, forest. Lawns do not absorb a lot of stormwater. Thank you for the comment.

What is a MS4 Permit? MS4 stands for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) and it specifies what actions a permit holder must take to protect its water ways from pollutants in stormwater. [Arlington MS4 Permit.](#)

Will the stormwater utility fund maintenance and operation of the county stormwater management system and the county Capital Improvement Program will fund capital improvements to that system? No, both O&M and capital improvements to the stormwater system will be funded by the stormwater utility.

How are properties like dog parks (Shirlington for instance) handled since they contribute significant pollution to 4 Mile Run? It depends on who owns the property. If it's a County-owned property, it may be subject to an MS4 permit, so there would be programs, policies for pet waste pick up (for example), and education around that. Any new parks that are built now include stormwater management as part of the design. If the dog park was owned privately, they would need to manage that on their own.

Could we have some opportunity to discuss credit concepts in the July meeting? Yes, we will.

Are there any estimates of the amount of impervious surfaces owned by the County - streets etc? Yes, the overall County imperviousness is 43% and we do have some breakdowns of how much is buildings, roads, parking lots, etc. We can include some of that data in future meeting presentations. Some roads are not in parcels so may require a different process to estimate the area. DES Transportation division may have more data on roads and sidewalk as well.

What is the total amount of impervious surface in Arlington as a percentage of total land?

Approximately 43%

Is there any way for committee to communicate with staff between meetings? Yes, SUCAG members can reach me or Aileen by email. You have Aileen's email and mine is svillegas@raftelis.com

I believe there are 21 VAMSAs in Virginia, 19 have stormwater utilities, Fairfax City working to establish one and so is Arlington. Do these 21 VAMSAs represent the entire state? No, the 21 VAMSA jurisdictions do not represent the entire state, but do include a majority of the State.

In many large developments, there are typically stormwater management requirements developers need to meet. Typically these are met through onsite SWM facilities. If these facilities are deemed private and the developer agrees to maintain them. How would the utility fee be assessed on these properties? For a property with stormwater management facilities, the impervious area would be calculated based on GIS, the same as all other properties in their property class. The stormwater facilities could be considered as part of the credit program.

Professionally, I think Stormwater utilities are a good way to fund stormwater programs. In Arlington, I am concerned that there is a big shift from commercial high-rise properties to single family homes and non-profits and garden style apartments. A large contributor to stormwater runoff is the road and transportation infrastructure. Most residents use this infrastructure so we may want to consider that. Thank you for your comment.

Do we expect the revenue to stay the same, or increase to help with upgrading the aging system?

We do anticipate that over the next 10 years, we will be considering rate increases for substantial needs to improve the stormwater system. For the initial analysis, we had to choose one budget year and a specific amount for making the estimates.

It seems like the large commercial corridors will pay less under this new scheme even though they have a lot of impervious area, is that because their property values are so high? Yes, and also because many of those properties have tall structures, with narrow roofs, as opposed to shorter, longer structures with a lot of rooftop and ground coverage.

Does this go to a public vote at some point or how is it decided? This will go before the County Board for a vote early next year.

I wanted to clarify possible increase. For SFH, for the "mythical" typical homeowner, the current tax impact is estimated at \$130, but varies depending on the home you own. The phase 2A feasibility study estimated 1 ERU, which most single family homes would be charged, at \$188.15. Please note these numbers will change as the rate model and structure, and future budgets are finalized.

How is the current fee billed? It is paid as part of your real estate tax bill. The utility fee would be billed in this way as well. The current fee is 1.7 cents per \$100 of assessed value. With the Sanitary District Tax, the fee varies based on the assessed value. Although the average charge is \$130, some homes pay more and some pay less. Under the utility, many homes will be charged a flat fee of one ERU.