

Cold Spring Stormwater Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Do you own your home/business or do you rent/lease?

A: Only residents and businesses who own property located in the incorporated area of the City of Cold Spring will be assessed a stormwater service charge. No tenant will be required to pay this fee unless this fee is specified in your rental or lease agreement.

Q: I am a resident. What is the billing information for me?

A: All residential property owners will be charged a rate of \$4.50 per month, which will appear on your property tax bill. This rate is based upon an average amount of "hard surface areas" such as driveways and roofs, found on residential properties in the City of Cold Spring. Using aerial photography through the use of a computer mapping software program, the average residential property in Cold Spring has 3,000 square feet of hard or "impervious" surface area, based on the average of measuring approximately 400 randomly generated residential parcels. Using stormwater jargon, the 3,000 square feet of impervious surface is referred to as an Equivalent Residential Unit or "ERU". Each residential property will be assigned a flat rate and 1 ERU.

Q: I am a business/non-residential property owner. How is my bill calculated?

A. The impervious areas for all non-residential properties (all properties except single-family and duplex properties) were measured using aerial photography through use of a computer mapping software program. Total calculated impervious area square footage is divided by 3,000 sq. ft. (1 "ERU"). The resultant number is multiplied by \$4.50 and the result is the property's monthly stormwater fee.

Q: I live in an apartment. Will I have to pay?

A: No. The owner of the apartment building or complex will receive the stormwater bill for their entire property. The property owner could, however, pass part of that cost along to you depending on the terms of your rental or lease agreement.

Q: What is impervious area?

A: Impervious area is any hard surface including gravel that does not allow stormwater to be absorbed into the ground. Impervious areas include rooftops, parking lots, driveways, sidewalks and gravel surfaces.

Q: I live in Campbell County. Does this impact me?

A: Only residents and businesses located in the incorporated area of the City of Cold Spring will be assessed a stormwater service charge from the City of Cold Spring.

Q: I own a single family home, when will I begin paying?

A: The charges will first appear on your October, 2013 property tax bill (payment due December 31, 2013) for October, November and December 2013, and then will appear there annually in future years.

Q: Will tax-exempt, non-profit organizations like schools, churches and hospitals be charged for stormwater?

A: Yes. Much like these organizations now pay for water and sanitary sewer services, they will pay a user fee based on their contribution to the stormwater system.

Q: Why can't we just use existing general fund money to cover stormwater costs?

A: The tax money currently collected for general fund services is needed to meet the day-to-day operation and staffing for the City.

Q: Will the current \$4.50 rate change?

A: The current rate is approved and set for 2013 and 2014. Rate increases must be approved by the City Council and will be reviewed annually. The rate will be reviewed again in 2014 for 2015. Assuming no unforeseen EPA regulatory compliance requirements, it is anticipated that stormwater program "start-up" costs will diminish over time (potentially year 3 and forward) and thus provide the opportunity for future rate reductions during the annual stormwater fee review.

Q: Why is the amount of hard surface area used to calculate the rates?

A: Hard surface areas are used because they prevent water from being absorbed into the ground. Hard surfaces create more runoff and increase the rate (water flow) at which stormwater drains from an area.

Q: What if I don't agree with the City's calculation of the amount of hard surface area I have on my property?

A: You may request a meeting with a GIS technician to review your measurement information if you desire.

Q: Why does Cold Spring need a stormwater program fee?

A: Cold Spring currently has no dedicated funding source to address stormwater quality regulations and flooding and drainage issues within the City. The City needs the dedicated funds to perform preventative maintenance, capital improvements that may be required by the EPA and to meet the federally unfunded mandate from US-EPA referred to as the Kentucky Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (KPDES) Phase II Stormwater regulations, which are part of the Federal Clean Water Act passed by the US Congress in 1972. This program is managed and enforced by the Kentucky Department of Water (KDOW):

A comprehensive program is needed to:

- Improve the water quality of local rivers and streams

- Reduce flooding

- Improve stormwater drainage

- Address the inflow and infiltration problems

Ensure that the City is in compliance with tough, new unfunded mandates and regulations required by the US-EPA and KDOW

The current budget only allows for minor stormwater emergency repairs. It does not provide the required funds for preventative maintenance, capital improvements or enforcement of the unfunded mandate from the EPA referred to as the KPDES Phase II Stormwater regulations, which are part of the Federal Clean Water Act passed by the US Congress in 1972.

Q: I don't remember voting on this tax. How can the City do this without a vote?

A: This is not a tax. This is a user fee just like your water and sewer user fee. Under State Law, cities are allowed to set up a user fee for water, sanitary sewer and/or stormwater by a vote of the City Council. City Council unanimously ratified this program and related fee on September 23 and 30, 2013.

Q: How can we be sure that the money raised will be used for stormwater improvements and not diverted to other projects by the City?

A: All of the funds raised by the program will go into a stormwater "Enterprise Fund." Under state law, money in Enterprise funds can only be used for their intended purposes.

Q: How much money does the City expect the stormwater program to collect?

A: The program will generate approximately \$250,000 per year.

Q: What issues will be addressed first when the stormwater program is implemented?

A: The City will first work to ensure that it is in compliance with the new, strict Federal and state unfunded mandate regulations.

Q: How will the money collected for the stormwater program be used?

A: A majority of the funds will be used to comply with the new unfunded Federal and state water quality regulations known as the KPDES Phase II water quality regulations. The remaining funds will be available for minor operations and maintenance projects. Current annual stormwater related expenses are projected to be approximately \$280,000 per year for the next two years or so. Such expenses include "startup" consulting fees to assist in EPA/State regulatory compliance. This also includes "startup" purchase of: software, GIS data access costs, and communication and educational materials. It is anticipated that part-time help will be needed for ongoing administration of the program.

Q: How does stormwater affect the environment?

A: One of the reasons the City is implementing the stormwater program is to meet tough, new US-EPA regulations. In addition to flooding, poor storm drainage also causes water pollution. Uncontrolled run-off contributes to erosion, which causes sediment build-up in our streams and rivers. Stormwater also picks up a lot of things on its way to area streams and rivers – litter, road salt, lawn or garden chemicals, and more. Backyard mechanics who drain oil, antifreeze or gas into the storm sewer pose a threat to the environment.

Q: How will the new program help the environment?

A: The stormwater program will provide funding for public education to inform the citizens and will help reduce pollution in the City. The new program will also fund testing and strict enforcement of current regulations on erosion and pollution control measures.

Q: I have been receiving and paying a stormwater bill from SD1. Aren't you charging me twice?

A: No. The City of Cold Spring was a member of the Northern Kentucky Sanitary District until October of this year (2013). The City has decided to begin handling the stormwater program on its own. SD1 will not be billing our residents for stormwater charges beginning October 1, 2013. That coincides with the changeover to the City billing stormwater charges. These charges will appear on your next property tax bill from the City. You will not be paying a stormwater charge to the City and to SD1.

Q: What will happen if I don't pay the new stormwater charge from the City?

A: Since the charges will appear on your annual property tax bill, the unpaid amount can eventually become a lien on your property.

Q: My bill at SD1 is past due. Since the City is now doing the billing, can I send that money to the City?

A: No. Any bills that you received from SD1 must be paid to SD1. If you send the money to the City, your account will show a credit balance and the overpayment will eventually be sent back to you. We do not have any billing records from SD1 to know if a previous bill has not been paid or not. You must pay the past due amount to SD1.