

## Lancaster County Stormwater Management

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### Citizens Guide to Lancaster County Stormwater Services

#### ***What is an MS4?***

Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System (MS4) refers to a system of conveyances (man-made channels and ditches, curbs, underground storm drains, etc.) owned by a municipality, county or other public entity that is used to collect and discharge stormwater to the waters of the United States such as streams, rivers and estuaries.

#### ***Why was Lancaster County designated as an MS4?***

In 1987, amendments to the Clean Water Act obligated the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to require that urban areas regulate stormwater. The U.S. Census Bureau defines where these urbanized areas are and in 2010 it was determined that the Charlotte Urbanized Area would now include the Indian Land panhandle. All regulated communities are required to comply with the program or risk fines, penalties and loss of future federal funding.

#### ***Do other cities/counties have a stormwater fee?***

Yes, more than 38 other cities and/or counties in South Carolina and 71 in North Carolina have a stormwater utility fee. There are estimates of 2,500 utilities nationwide. Regionally the following communities have stormwater fees: Fort Mill, Rock Hill, Tega Cay, Monroe, Matthews, Indian Trail, and Mecklenburg County.

#### ***What did this mean for Lancaster County?***

The EPA and SC Department of Health and Environmental Control are responsible for oversight of all MS4 communities. Lancaster County is required to comply with the regulations set forth by these federal and state agencies through the issuance of a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit.

#### ***What is an NPDES permit?***

The Clean Water Act prohibits anybody from discharging pollutants through a point source into a water of the United States unless they have an NPDES permit. The permit will contain limits on what you can discharge, monitoring and reporting requirements, and other provisions to ensure that the discharge does not hurt water quality or human health. In short, the permit translates the general requirements of the Clean Water Act into specific provisions tailored to the operations of each entity discharging pollutants.

#### ***How did Lancaster County manage its stormwater before it was designated as an MS4?***

The County had no mechanism for funding for storm sewer system improvements other than using the general fund and this was usually done as an emergency basis.

***Where does my Stormwater Utility Fee go?***

The Stormwater Utility Fee is a dedicated fund established to pay for the tasks associated with meeting the requirements of the NPDES permit which are outlined in the County Stormwater Management Plan. Current services provided include:

- Federal and State Compliance with NPDES Permit
- Watershed Planning
- Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
- Public Education, Participation and Outreach
- Construction Inspections
- Water Quality Monitoring

***Why is there a proposal to increase the fee?***

The increased fee will allow the County to address the most pressing infrastructure repairs in the panhandle. Currently, we have identified several under-road culvert crossings which were not sized to accommodate urban runoff from upstream and frequently overtop during rainstorms. Infrastructure repairs have been identified on both county and state maintained roads.

***Why is Lancaster County proposing to fix State Roads?***

Although it may seem like Lancaster County is proposing to repair roads, what is actually being proposed is a plan to repair and replace failing storm pipes beneath the road. In order to reach the damaged, undersized or failing pipe, a section of the roadway must be disturbed and then repaired. Once the repairs or replacements are made, the affected road surface will be restored. It is not Lancaster County's intent nor its role to make road surface repairs to State roads.

***Why doesn't SC DOT make these repairs?***

According to the [South Carolina DOT 10-Year Plan](#), our most critical stormwater infrastructure projects are not scheduled to be repaired anytime soon. While we are pleased to find a number of other County road projects listed, the estimated year of construction commencement is not provided.

***Why do these repairs need to be made now?***

It is imperative that we address the ever-growing backlog of stormwater infrastructure improvements such as erosion, failing culverts and blocked inlets before they worsen into emergencies. Water quality issues resulting from pollution in our streets and streams along with decaying pipes pose a significant risk to public health and safety. In all instances, prevention is far less costly than an emergency fix. Addressing the problems before they become an emergency is an investment with an extraordinarily high rate of return. Deferred maintenance will only result in a debt burden on the next generation.

***Why is the Panhandle included in the NPDES SMS4 program and not the rest of the County?***

The EPA and DHEC used the following criteria when making the determination that the Panhandle be included in the program:

- Discharge to sensitive waters
- High population density
- High growth or growth potential
- Contiguity to an Urbanized Area
- Significant contributor of pollutants to waters of U.S.
- Ineffective protection of water quality concerns by other programs

Only the Panhandle portion of the County meets the criteria noted above.