

Stormwater Management and the Changing EPA Regulations

Key Facts and Information



What is Stormwater Runoff?

Stormwater runoff is rain or snow-melt that flows over the ground.

Where does it go? Some stormwater is absorbed through surfaces such as lawns, farms and woods and eventually discharges into bodies of waters including ponds, rivers and wetlands. However, a large amount travels across impervious surfaces such as parking lots, driveways and rooftops and enters the storm drains. Eventually this water ends up flowing into natural bodies of water, including Beaver Brook and the Merrimack River.

What is the concern? Stormwater is not only water. It carries many pollutants that it comes into contact including animal feces, chemicals, fertilizers, oils and sand. This has been determined to have a detrimental affect on natural bodies of water including the Merrimack River. Stormwater can also cause nuisance flooding and can potentially cause Public Health and Safety concerns.

What does the Town of Dracut do? The DPW, along with several other departments, maintains the present stormwater system. Activities include repairing damaged lines, cleaning out culverts, street sweeping and maintaining catch basins. It is important to note the system is aging and will require more work and resources to maintain.

What are these “Coming EPA Changes”? The Environmental Protection Agency(EPA) has determined that stormwater is a significant source of pollution and has changed its stormwater permitting to reflect this. The Town must comply with the new standards beginning on July 1st, 2017. These are federal requirement throughout the United States. Failure to comply will result in significant fines. More challenging, this is a unfunded mandate and municipalities will receive very little federal or state funding.



A permit for rain water? Yes, the EPA requires municipalities, among others, to apply and maintain their National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit. This is part of the Clean Water Act created in 1972. This permit for Dracut is specifically for *Stormwater Discharges from Small Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems*(MS4).

How are municipalities dealing with the costs? The most logical option is to create a stormwater utility, similar to electric or water bills. The utility would be separate from the revenues in general funds ensuring a dedicated revenue source for stormwater management. Property owners would be assessed a fee based on various factors such as size, number of units, commercial, etc. Again, this is an unfunded federal mandate and there will be little outside funding to offset these costs.



Can't the Town absorb the costs?

The requirements are significant and include various tasks and programs. The town must update its mapping and the evaluating of the entire stormwater system. The town must implement an illicit discharge program, and conduct outfall water samples. More significant expenses include cleaning catch basins, inspecting and maintaining the present system, street sweeping and more staff. As noted, some of these activities take place but will have to be done on a much larger scale to comply with the new permit regulations.

How much will this cost residents?

The fees will vary depending on the property but a typical single family residential homeowner will pay roughly \$6 to \$8 dollars per month. Fees for larger properties and business will be based on how much impervious surfaces (parking lot, roofs etc) that they have.



Where will the money be spent?

Dracut has over 430 drainage outfalls, 77 miles of drain pipe and 160 miles of public streets. The Town also has 1,125 culverts, 3,800 catch basins and 135 detention ponds. This network must be maintained, inspected, sampled and repaired on a regular basis. Street sweeping, catch basin cleaning, public education and outreach and capital improvements would also be paid by stormwater fees.

For more specific information on Stormwater visit the Town's DPW website at
<https://www.dracutma.gov/public-works-dpw>

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