

WHY SHOULD MY COMMUNITY CONSIDER A STORMWATER UTILITY?

What is a Stormwater Utility?

A stormwater utility (SWU) is a funding mechanism within a city, county, or special district that is used to fund some or all of the jurisdiction’s stormwater program. A SWU is similar to other utilities that charge users fees for services. In a SWU, the users are those properties that generate stormwater runoff, and the revenues collected are used to support stormwater management programs and NPDES permitting requirements. Typically, fees are based on the amount of stormwater runoff coming from properties of different sizes and uses.

Stormwater Utilities: Funding your Stormwater Program

Communities commonly fund stormwater management services via revenues from property taxes, water and sewer fees, sales taxes, or SWUs. However, SWUs offer several benefits over these other funding sources.



Predictable Annual Revenues: As opposed to sales taxes, SWU revenues are based on an established rate allowing annual revenues to be easily predicted. This in turn allows a utility the benefit of being able to develop long term capital improvement plans and move from a reactive to proactive management strategy.



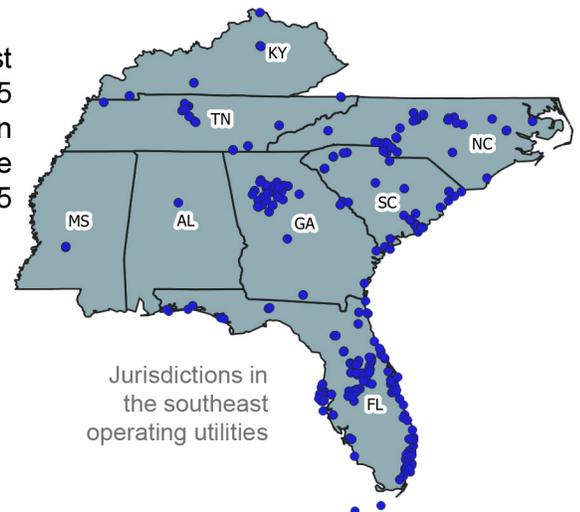
Equitable Distribution of Cost: As opposed to property taxes, a SWU distributes the cost amongst all customers based on an assessment of the amount of stormwater runoff generated from a particular property. In this way it operates as a “user pays” system. Larger properties with more pavement, roofs, and other impervious surfaces create more stormwater runoff, and subsequently pay more, while properties with lesser amounts of impervious surface pay less.



Transparency: Similar to other utility fees such as water, sewer, gas, and electricity, SWU fee revenues are used solely to address stormwater related problems such as flood control, storm drain repairs, and water quality management. This allows the public to see a clearly defined benefit directly associated with the fee.



Affordable: SWU fees are amongst the cheapest of all utility fees. According to SESWA’s 2025 Southeast Stormwater Utility Report, which relies on survey response from SWUs located throughout the Southeastern US, the average monthly SWU in 2025 was \$6.54.



Stormwater utilities are a common way for communities of all sizes to sustainably fund their stormwater programs and infrastructure.

FIND OUT MORE: WWW.SESWA.ORG



KEYS TO SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION

There are many potential benefits of implementing a SWU fee for your local community. Follow these lessons learned by the many utilities that have formed before yours.

- **RECOGNIZE** that your program is unique and identify the key drivers for implementing a SWU in your community.
- **PUBLIC OUTREACH** Engage your community, understand their concerns, and address them before bills start hitting mailboxes.
- **IDENTIFY A CHAMPION.** Find a member or members of your community that will promote your program and its benefits.
- **UNDERSTAND YOUR STATE LAWS** and model your ordinance after other successful SWUs in your State.

BENEFITS OF A STORMWATER UTILITY



City of Brunswick, GA

Our SWU was established in order to provide operating funds for our stormwater maintenance program. It has been successful in that it has allowed us to create and hire additional crew member positions and purchase several pieces of equipment which we would not have been able to otherwise.

~Garrow Alberson, City Engineer / Public Works Director



City of Concord, NC

Our stormwater utility fee has provided much needed financial stability to our stormwater program. For most of our ongoing efforts, we are no longer competing with other general fund departments and their needs. We have dedicated funding that increases with growth and new development and we have the ability now to save, spend, and/or plan out multiple years' worth of expenditures without the risk of funding being cut.

~Jeff Corley, PE, Director of Water Resources



Lancaster County, SC

Our stormwater utility has enabled us to take a proactive approach in addressing various quality of life issues for our citizens including flooding, aging infrastructure, and water quality. Explosive development in the panhandle portion of the County resulted in that area being included in what the U.S. Census classified as the Charlotte Urbanized Area. With that classification came an unfunded federal mandate that we implement a stormwater pollution prevention program in accordance with the NPDES permitting standards required by the Clean Water Act. As the land transitions from rural to urban, it is vitally important that we use every means available to protect our natural resources.

~Elizabeth Evans, Environmental Outreach – Stormwater



City of Gallatin, TN

In 2017, the City recognized the need for implementing a dedicated and transparent funding mechanism to be used solely to manage a robust stormwater program and to improve and maintain the aging stormwater infrastructure throughout Gallatin. The stormwater utility supports the City's economic development plan and protects the capacity of our water needs for drinking water, industrial, residential and recreational uses.

~Jennifer Watson, Stormwater Coordinator

