

# Stormwater Utility Program

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff is the water that flows off of roofs, driveways, parking lots, streets, and other hard surfaces during rain events and snowmelt. The water that flows off of grass surfaces and wooded areas that is not absorbed into the soil is also considered stormwater runoff. Rainwater and snowmelt not absorbed into the ground flows into ditches, culverts, and the stormwater system. It does not receive any treatment to remove pollutants before entering our rivers and streams.

### What is impervious area?

Impervious area is covered by hard surfaces such as buildings, pavement, compacted gravel, or other features that prevent, restrict, or impede the passage of stormwater into the underlying soil.



### Why does Jamestown need to manage its stormwater runoff?

Stormwater runoff management is essential to protect the quality of the waterways we use for drinking water supplies, recreational activities, and for the environment. Stormwater management also ensures heavy rainfall or rapid snowmelt does not risk public safety or private property due to flooding or erosion.



## **Why is a Stormwater Utility Rate necessary?**

The City of Jamestown is adopting a Stormwater Utility Rate to fund the City's Stormwater Program. A Stormwater Utility Rate is a rate for service based on the total property area or size, the land use, and the amount of impervious area on a property that causes stormwater to run off rather than soaking into the ground.

## **Why is Jamestown adopting a Stormwater Utility Rate?**

The primary benefit to implementing a Stormwater Utility Rate is to fairly distribute the cost of the community's stormwater services across all properties based on the property's contribution to stormwater runoff. These services include everything from cleaning stormwater, oxbows, and ponds, to street sweeping, plowing, street maintenance, and infrastructure management.

## **How did Jamestown previously pay for its stormwater services before the utility was created?**

Prior to the creation of Jamestown's stormwater utility rate, stormwater initiatives were mainly funded through the operating budgets of the Water, Sanitary Collection, and Street Departments. Some properties are tax-exempt; therefore, charging a rate to all property owners is more equitable than funding stormwater maintenance with property taxes through the General Fund.

## **How much funding will Jamestown's Stormwater Utility collect annually?**

The stormwater utility rate will be structured to generate adequate revenue for the maintenance of the community's stormwater system and eventually help fund projects to improve the stormwater infrastructure system. It is anticipated that the utility will generate approximately \$500,000 per year.

## **How did the City determine the monthly Stormwater Utility Rate for each property?**

All parcels inside the City are subject to a stormwater utility rate calculation based on parcel size and impervious area, measured as number of Equivalent Residential Units (or ERUs) assigned to the property. One ERU is equal to the average impervious area of a residential lot in the City of Jamestown (see figure above). Each property is charged a base fee and a fee per ERU. No property shall be assigned less than 1 ERU or more than 90 ERUs. All residential, agricultural, and vacant properties are assigned 1 ERU. All other property types in the City are assigned ERUs based on total impervious area by land use type.

## **Who is responsible for paying the city utilities owed on a property?**

Like other city utilities, the stormwater utility will be charged on the utility bill. The property owner is ultimately responsible to pay city utilities accrued and owed.

## **Do other North Dakota cities have stormwater utilities and charge a Stormwater Utility Rate?**

Eight other communities in North Dakota currently have a stormwater utility rate.