



Water Quality Program Rate Study - FAQ

1) Why has my bill increased?

The Water Quality Fee has increased in order to maintain the current level of service based on the recommended funding amount determined by the City's consultant team.

2) Who made the decision to increase the fee?

On May 21, 2018 the Chattanooga Stormwater Regulations Board voted to recommend the increase to the City Council. On May 29, 2018 the City Council voted to adopt the year 1 rate increase as part of the FY 19 Budget.

3) Why is the fee increase needed?

It has been 10 years (2008) since the last water quality fee rate study was performed and 5 years (2013) since the last rate increase. Since that time the average cost of material and labor has increased. Therefore, it costs more money to provide the current level of service provided to City residents and to meet the requirements of the State issued stormwater permit. Minimum water quality measures are required by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation (TDEC) and the Federal Government as part of the Tennessee Water Quality Control Act of 1977 and the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program. Some of the minimum measures addressed in the City's permit include, but are not limited to: 1) Public Education & Outreach, 2) Public Participation & Involvement, 3) Illicit Discharge Detection & Elimination, 4) Construction Site Runoff Control, 5) Post-Construction Runoff Control, and 6) Pollution Prevention/Good Housekeeping. The water quality fee funds programs and positions whose purposes are to reduce and prevent pollution, provide guidance for construction/industrial activities, and control flooding through the construction and maintenance of stormwater infrastructure (e.g., roadways, curbs, inlets, pipes, ditches, water quality units, detention facilities, etc).

4) Do I get more service for my money with the increase?

The fee increase is needed to maintain the current level of service the City provides and meet the State and Federal Government required minimum measures. No additional programs/services are currently planned.

5) Are there any exemptions, assistance, or discounts available?

TCA 68-221-1107 provides an **exemption** for users that do not discharge - directly or indirectly - into a municipally owned stormwater system. If a property is in the upstream drainage area of any City owned/maintained stormwater infrastructure (culvert, pipe, ditch, etc.), then that property is not eligible for an exemption.

The City is partnering with United Way to provide **assistance** for seniors participating in the City's property tax freeze program. Applications for assistance with the water quality fee are available from the City Treasurer's Office, 101 East 11th Street, Room 100. For more information, call 423-643-7262.

Chattanooga City Code provides a **discount** for multi-family and non-residential users who can demonstrate a reduction in stormwater runoff through engineered controls that infiltrate, evapotranspire, or capture and reuse stormwater to prevent it from leaving the site as surface runoff. The City refers to this as Stay-On-Volume (SOV). Upon submitting an application with supporting documents, users may qualify to receive up to a 70% reduction in their fee. Please see the City's Credit & Incentive Manual on the City's website for more information.

6) How is the fee calculated?

The current Water Quality Fee is based on measured impervious surface. The method determines actual impervious surface from high-quality aerial photography and color infrared imaging. In 2008, the impervious area of a random sampling of 396 single-family and two-family residential properties was measured; the average residential impervious area was determined to be 3,200 square feet. This area is referred to as an Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) and is the base for all other billing rates. ERUs are only charged as whole integers using conventional arithmetic rounding. One ERU is billed \$126.49 per year. All single-family and two-family properties, as well as condominium units, are charged 1 ERU per year. All other properties having impervious area are billed for the actual amount of impervious area measured on their site.

7) Is stormwater a problem?

It can be. The volume of runoff from an impervious area (roadway, parking lot, etc.) is greater than that from an undisturbed green space (forest, field, etc.). The increased volume of stormwater flows to our small creeks and streams and overloads them causing stream bank erosion. This can lead to property loss and damage of nearby utilities. In addition, the runoff of stormwater in developed areas carries pollutants such as trash, oil, grease, bacteria, heavy metals, increased sediment loads, and increased temperatures into the very waters that Chattanooga uses for recreation and drinking water supplies.