



Q1: Why does Lino Lakes need a Storm Water Utility?

The Lino Lakes Storm Water Utility (SWU) will fund Operations and Maintenance (O&M), necessary to effectively manage Lino Lakes' storm water system. Both State and Federal (NPDES) requirements related to storm water continue to increase. This fund will help ensure requirements continue to be met and that the City storm water management system continues to function as designed for water flow, flood protection, and water quality.

Q2: What is NPDES? And why do we have to do this?

The National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) is the enactment of the Clean Water Act. Phase II of the program applies to cities over 10,000 persons. It is a federally mandated program with specific requirements that the City must meet. The permit contains limits on what you can discharge, monitoring and reporting requirements, and other provisions to ensure that the discharge does not hurt water quality or people's health. The cost of implementing this program locally is borne by the City.

Q3: Why can't we just pay it from General Funds?

The City's General Funds are under increased pressures for funding for a variety of essential services, including public safety, parks, road reconstruction etc., just to name a few. There are not enough funds available to satisfy all the needs.

Q4: How is the storm water utility fund going to improve the community?

Funds generated from this utility will be used to protect, restore, and in some cases enhance storm water quality within the city.

Q5: Why is the SWU the "most fair and equitable" method

The SWU is based upon the principal of "Users Pay". The more you discharge, the more you pay. In addition, all property types will pay including tax exempt properties. Since all types of properties contribute to the storm water infrastructure, all types should pay.

This will decrease the burden on homeowners, business and industrial uses since the tax exempt properties will be paying their share.

Q6: Can Lino Lakes use the SWU and is it authorized by State Statute?

Yes, the SWU is authorized by State Statute, Chapter 444.075.

Q7: Why should I pay if I don't drain into a drainage system?

The SWU covers the costs for mandated planning and permit tasks that affect every parcel in the City. It also pays for O&M of the storm water management system that serves the public streets, which are necessary to access the parcels throughout the City. The fee does not cover the cost of an improvement that would benefit a specific property.

Q8: Why are the existing City Departments not capable of handling this need?

The utility is a financing method, not an agency; the Director of Public Services will be the administrator of the program. The utility will be the responsibility of the Public Services Department. A utility is defined as service charge based on a property's contribution of water to a drainage system. In addition, the City will be using the same billing system it does for water and sanitary sewer customers. This significantly reduces billing costs and the Citizens currently using water and sewer will not need to write a separate check for just the storm water utility.

Q9: Is the utility really necessary?

Rainfall causes the need for an adequate drainage system. Infrastructure that serves the City and land uses, including rural, create volumes of runoff and associated pollutant loads that the City is required to mitigate. To address water quantity (flooding) and water quality issues, a utility or user charge is necessary to finance the cost of the programs.

Q10: Why do we pond storm water runoff today instead of just letting water runoff as fast as possible into ditches, storm sewers, rivers, and lakes like we did for years?

Conveyance and pre-treatment of surface water runoff allows Lino Lakes to take a proactive rather than reactive approach to managing storm water runoff. As the City develops, runoff increases as well. The use of conveyance systems and ponding not only provides for the protection of property (flood control), but the reduction of peak flow rates. It also reduces the cost of installing storm sewer systems and ditch/culvert systems to carry the runoff from point A to point B.

Additional benefits of storm water ponding include storm water protection and ground water protection. The use of storm water ponds can prevent pollutants associated with storm water from being carried downstream to lakes and wetlands thereby enhancing downstream water quality. By keeping water on the land rather than letting it drain away, infiltration of storm water can help to recharge the ground water levels.

Q11: Will there be a charge on vacant land?

No. Under the proposed policy vacant (undeveloped and non-impacted) land will not be charged.

Q12: How do I figure out what my charge will be before I get my first bill?

One of the goals of the SWU utility was to create a fair and equitable billing method that is easy to understand and we are confident we have accomplished that.

Single family homes, duplexes and townhomes have a fixed quarterly fee of \$12.00.

Apartment buildings, commercial, institutional and industrial properties are based on a quarterly fee of \$175 per acre of impervious surface.

Q13: What does impervious surface mean?

Impervious surface means a hard surface that restricts water from infiltrating into the soil. This includes but is not limited to gravel, roads, driveways, parking areas, sidewalks and trails, patios, tennis courts, basketball courts, swimming pools, building roofs, covered decks, and other structures.

Q14: I want to decrease what I pay? How can I do that?

One of the basic premises of the SWU is that “users pay” and that the more you use....the more you pay. Correspondingly, there is an opportunity for commercial, industrial and institutional property types to pay less by utilizing storm water best management practices known as “BMPs”. The city is adopting a policy for BMP credits.

SWU fees may be adjusted for non-residential properties that have onsite, privately maintained BMPs subject to certain criteria and have a storm water facilities maintenance agreement in place with the City. A maximum 25% credit is available per property.

Q15: Charging the School District property and City land the Storm Water Utility Fee is an extra cost to taxpayers. Why was this done?

If these parcels were not charged a fee, the costs would be shifted to the remaining parcels and their fees would increase. The idea behind a storm water utility is that all users contribute to cover the costs.

Q16: Is there an appeal process related to the storm water utility rate for my property?

Commercial, institutional and industrial parcels that demonstrate impervious coverage is different than what is reflected by a given fee can appeal the charge. This can be done with a map showing the existing impervious coverage on a given parcel.

Adjustments to the utility fee cannot be made retroactively.

Q17: Can the SWU funds be used for something else?

No. The SWU funds will be placed in an “Enterprise Fund” which has strict accounting rules that allow for the funds to be only used for Storm Water related projects and programs.

Q18: How are rates approved?

The Storm Water Utility Fee Rates and Structure may be modified based on the storm water needs of the City. Adjustments to the Storm Water Utility Fee Rates and Structure can only be made by the City Council. The fee will be reviewed annually as part of the City’s budget process.