

City of Onalaska

Stormwater Utility Narrative

Narrative 1

The City of Onalaska has been issued a Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination Permit (WPDES) for stormwater discharges to the water of the State of Wisconsin. To meet the requirements of the WPDES permit, the City Council formed the Stormwater Utility. The Stormwater Utility's responsibility includes maintenance and repair of the stormwater collection network, which includes catch basins, storm sewers, storm discharge outlets, and stormwater detention ponds. The Stormwater Utility's responsibilities also include the following functions that were transferred from the General Fund, the maintenance and management of street sweeping, public education, leaf pick up, and enforcing construction site erosion control standards.

Narrative 2

Until 2010, the costs of expansion, operation, and maintenance of the City's stormwater management system were paid for by property taxes through the General Fund. Increasing pressures on the general fund caused by rising municipal costs and reduced revenues from the State of Wisconsin will likely make the General Fund a less reliable source for stormwater management funding. In 2006, the City of Onalaska was issued a Wisconsin Pollution Discharge Elimination Permit (WPDES) for stormwater discharges to the water of the State of Wisconsin that requires the City to implement stormwater regulations as administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR). To meet the requirements of the WPDES permit, the City Council formed the Stormwater Utility. The Stormwater Utility charges a fee as a means of addressing stormwater management funding needs without placing an additional burden on property taxes. Unlike property tax funding, user charges under a stormwater utility are established in proportion to the relative amount of stormwater runoff "generated" by an individual property.

The goal of the Stormwater Utility is to provide a stormwater drainage system with adequate capacity to accommodate major storms while maintaining the quality of stormwater discharged into receiving streams. The Stormwater Utility provides for the collection and conveyance of stormwater within the City through the use of public streets, catch basins, storm sewers, detention/retention basins and greenways. The system is comprised of over 54 miles of storm sewers, 2,500 drainage structures, 22 detention/retention basins, and greenways. The Utility serves all properties within the City and the cost of operation and maintenance is supported through user fees, which are due and payable quarterly on the combined City utility bill.

The Stormwater Utility program also provides funding for sweeping the City streets, routine maintenance of catch basins and storm sewers, and repairs to the stormwater collection system. This program also includes maintenance and erosion control activities for the City-owned detention/retention basins and enforcement of the City's erosion control ordinance. In addition, development plans will be reviewed for postconstruction compliance with the City's Stormwater Management Ordinance.

Narrative 3

The City of Onalaska is required to comply with the Stormwater Phase II Final Rule implemented by the United States Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) under the Clean Water Act. This rule requires the City to implement stormwater regulations as administered by the Wisconsin Department of Natural

Resources (WDNR). The City of Onalaska, a Phase II Urbanized Area, is required to apply for a Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit.

The City received the General Permit to Discharge under the Wisconsin Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (WPDES) Permit No. WI-S050075-1 in January 2006.

The General Permit requires:

1. Public Education and Outreach
2. Public Involvement and Participation
3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
4. Construction Site Pollutant Control
5. Postconstruction Stormwater Management
6. Pollution Prevention
7. Stormwater Quality Management
8. Annual Report

The Onalaska City Council passed a Stormwater Ordinance to implement the stormwater requirements. The Stormwater Utility will provide funding to comply with regulations to manage stormwater quantity and quality. This will include mapping, construction, operating and maintaining the system, and providing management services such as public education and illicit discharge detection.

Narrative 4

STORMWATER UTILITY

WHAT IS A STORMWATER UTILITY?

The Stormwater Utility is a public utility organized as a separate enterprise similar to the City's Water Utility or Sewer Utility. Assets owned by the Utility include storm sewers, greenways, detention basins, and equipment used for managing the storm drainage system. The Utility is given the responsibility to provide for the public needs in the area of stormwater management and comply with federal and state laws. The Utility charges fees for operation and maintenance of facilities and for Capital Improvements. The Utility works to solve current drainage problems, prevent future problems, and repair, maintain, and enhance those facilities already constructed.

HOW MUCH DOES IT COST AND WHO PAYS THE UTILITY?

Revenues generated by the Utility shall come from ALL developed parcels within the City of Onalaska including tax exempt properties with the exception of land being used for agriculture and public right-of-right. Prior to the formation of the Utility, stormwater management was paid for entirely by the parcels that paid property taxes. The stormwater utility charge is based on an "Equivalent Runoff Unit" or ERU. An ERU is defined as the average impervious area of a single-family residential home. Impervious areas include surfaces such as rooftops, parking lots, driveways, and sidewalks. Typically, there is a greater amount of runoff generated from impervious areas than vegetated areas.

In Onalaska, the average impervious area for a single-family residential home was determined to be 3,188 square feet. Therefore 1 ERU = 3,188 square feet. The utility charge per parcel is calculated adding (3) components:

1. A Base charge of \$7.84 a year per ERU.

2. An Operation and Maintenance charge of \$23.96 a year per ERU.
3. A Capital and Debt Service charge of \$19.15 a year per ERU.

All three billing components are shown on your billing statement. City Engineering has estimated that the “typical” Onalaska homeowner will pay \$50.95 annually.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION OR DISCUSS MY BILL?

1. You may contact the office of the City Engineer at (608) 781-9537, any business day between 8:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M., for additional information on the Stormwater Utility, or to discuss specifics of your billing.
2. You can also initiate discussion via e-mail to mfeuerhelm@cityofonalaska.com.