

### Summary:

Capital Region Water (CRW) is restructuring rates to charge a stormwater fee on impervious surfaces within the City of Harrisburg to control runoff and combined sewer overflow events, repair aging infrastructure, and meet federal and state clean water requirements.

### Background:

City Beautiful H<sub>2</sub>O is Capital Region Water's program to restore and beautify our neighborhoods through community greening. We will be investing millions of dollars to repair aging infrastructure, reduce combined sewer overflows, control backups onto streets and into basements to improve the quality of local waterways, and protect public health and safety. This investment will be approximately \$315 million over the next 20 years.

Capital Region Water explored various funding alternatives with the goal of creating an equitable approach that considers the financial capability of City residents. It is recommended that Capital Region Water restructure rates and adopt a stormwater fee, a dedicated funding source for the necessary improvements. The stormwater fee will be based on the amount of stormwater each property generates. The amount of stormwater generated is determined by the area of impervious surfaces (e.g., asphalt, concrete, buildings) on each property. This means that a parking lot that is 80% impervious pays a larger fee, while a residential property that is 40% impervious pays a smaller fee. This model equitably distributes the cost of stormwater management so that the properties with the most impervious surfaces, which generate the most stormwater, pay the highest fees.

### Frequently Asked Questions:

#### **What is a stormwater fee?**

A stormwater fee is an assessment of the amount of stormwater runoff from an individual property. The fee is based on impervious surfaces. It is the most equitable approach to address stormwater issues because it is connected directly to the cause of the runoff pollution.

#### **Why do we need a stormwater fee in Harrisburg?**

The Community Greening Plan (2017) asked the community how we should pay for the cost of stormwater management to help us meet state and federal clean water requirements. Most respondents (86%) preferred a fee based on the amount of stormwater generated, citing that this method more equitably distributes the cost of stormwater management so that the properties with the most impervious surfaces, as a measure of stormwater runoff, pay the highest fee.

#### **What is the problem with stormwater runoff?**

About 60% of Harrisburg's sewer pipes are part of a combined sewer system, where polluted stormwater runoff and sewage are conveyed in the same pipe for treatment. In wet weather, stormwater flows exceed

system capacity, discharging the mixture into Paxton Creek or the Susquehanna River. In addition to the combined system, Capital Region Water is also responsible for the portion of the stormwater-wastewater system that is separate. The entire system (combined or separate) requires stormwater management practices to comply with regulatory requirements.

### **Why can't existing infrastructure handle this problem?**

Approximately 80% Harrisburg's collection system was installed before 1940, meaning most of the city's stormwater infrastructure is over 80 years old. The age of this infrastructure --- coupled with decades of deferred maintenance --- has resulted in a number of structural and operational deficiencies. Nearly 40% of Harrisburg's sewer and stormwater infrastructure now needs to be repaired or replaced.

### **How much will the fee cost me each year?**

The fee was proposed at about \$6.15 a month for most residential customers. Larger properties would pay about \$6.15 a month per 1,000 square feet of impervious areas that generate the majority of stormwater. However, Capital Region Water has since proposed a three-year phased-in approach to the stormwater fee -- 40% in the first year, 70% in the second year, and 100% in the final year.

### **How is the fee determined?**

The stormwater fee is based on the amount of stormwater generated by the area of impervious surface (e.g., asphalt, concrete, buildings, etc.) on each property. Capital Region Water employed the most advanced, sophisticated technology to develop an interactive map that zeroes in on impervious surfaces subject to the assessment. View your property on the fee finder map:

[www.capitalregionwater.com/stormwater-fee](http://www.capitalregionwater.com/stormwater-fee)

### **When will the fee take effect?**

The stormwater fee will be phased in over the next three years. Ratepayers will pay 40% of the fee in 2020, 70% of the fee in 2021, and 100% of the fee in 2022.

### **How do I appeal the fee or seek a discount?**

Homeowners who believe the fee was assessed incorrectly based on impervious surfaces may appeal. Capital Region Water is also introducing rate reduction incentives and credits for property owners who proactively manage or reduce stormwater on their property through best management practices.

### **How much revenue will the stormwater fee generate?**

The fee will raise more than \$5 million annually for stormwater operations and projects as part of the larger City Beautiful H<sub>2</sub>O Program, which totals approximately \$315 million in investments over the next 20 years to improve our infrastructure.

### **What kind of projects will the stormwater revenue finance?**

Work has already begun on numerous projects throughout the city to repair aging infrastructure. Capital Region Water also is transforming vacant lots into green spaces, installing raingardens in community parks, and building street-level planters that also calm traffic while managing stormwater. Projects for 2020 include green stormwater infrastructure in the South Allison Hill and Camp Curtin neighborhoods of

Harrisburg as well as city park improvements at Fourth and Dauphin streets. A portion of 2020 street sweeping costs will also be covered by stormwater fee revenues.

**Was the public involved in the decision-making process to introduce a stormwater fee?**

The Stormwater Fee Proposal and Implementation Plan was unveiled in June 2019. Capital Region Water held three public hearings and participated in dozens of community meetings over the course of four months. Nearly 100 residents and businesses submitted comments.

**Where do I go to learn more about the stormwater fee?**

Details about Capital Region Water's City Beautiful H<sub>2</sub>O Program and related Stormwater Fee Proposal and Implementation Plan, including all supporting documents, presentations and reports, can be found at [www.capitalregionwater.com/cbh2o](http://www.capitalregionwater.com/cbh2o).