

## City of Meadville, Pennsylvania

The City of Meadville, Pennsylvania provides stormwater services to properties throughout the City. Stormwater expenditures and revenues are accounted for in dedicated Stormwater Enterprise Fund.

*The City implemented its stormwater use fee in **the Fall of 2012**, becoming the first City in Crawford County, Pennsylvania to implement a Stormwater User providing dedicated funding to maintain and reinvest in the City’s aging stormwater infrastructure.*

<p><b>System Profile:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ MS4: 100% of the service area</li> <li>■ Service Area: 4.5 square miles</li> <li>■ Population: 13,388</li> </ul>	<p><b>Financial Profile:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Annual Stormwater Utility Revenues: \$1.0 Million</li> <li>■ Monthly Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) Rate = \$7.50 per ERU</li> <li>■ One ERU = 2,660 Square Feet of Impervious Area</li> </ul>
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Meadville is the only MS4 community in Crawford County, Pennsylvania and must comply with the associated permit requirements. In addition, the City has extensive stormwater assets including over 30 miles of pipe or culverts, 1,200 inlets, a high hazard dam and multiple flood protection projects. With much of its system aging, the estimated replacement costs of Meadville’s stormwater assets are roughly \$500 - \$750 Million. The French Creek, a nationally recognized high-quality creek which supports more fish and freshwater mussels species than any other creek in the state, flows through the City.

### What are the City’s Key Drivers for Stormwater User Fee?

- Maintain the existing system’s capacity and integrity
- Ensure compliance with regulatory requirements
- Protect the French Creek
- Address flooding concerns
- Provide funding for the City’s stormwater priorities

**Key Benefits to the Community**

- Dedicated funding for stormwater activities
- Enhanced capital expenditure to address aging infrastructure
- Increased equity of cost recovery from all properties
- Defensible impervious area-based funding mechanism
- Decreased dependence and pressure on general fund tax revenues

### What costs are recovered via fees?

- Stormwater System Operation & Maintenance
- MS4 Compliance and Floodplain Management
- GIS Mapping, Infrastructure Assessment & Replacement
- Education and Outreach
- Program management including stormwater billing, credits/appeals and customer service

### Fee Methodology and Impervious Area Determination

- The Stormwater User Charge is based on a property’s impervious area, which is expressed in terms of Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs). One ERU is equivalent to 2,660 sq. ft. of impervious area, which is based on the average impervious area of single-family residential parcels in the city.
- **Residential Parcels:** Each residential parcel is billed a uniform flat fee per ERU.

- **Non-Residential Parcels:** The City bills non-residential parcels based upon the measured amount of impervious area. The total impervious area per non-residential parcel is divided by the ERU value of 2,660 square feet, to determine total billing units.

### Rate Structure

- A single-family residential property is assessed a uniform flat fee based upon one ERU.
- The monthly charge for each non-residential property including multi-family residential is calculated based on the parcel's ERUs and the monthly ERU rate.
- The fees are billed annually via a separate stormwater billing system. Customers may make quarterly payments. The City offers a discount if a customer pays their stormwater fee in full within 30 days of the billing date.

### Credit Program

The purpose of the stormwater credits program is to enable non-residential parcel owners to seek reduction in stormwater charges, if specific onsite stormwater management measures meet the City's credit program criteria.

- Water Quality Credits – up to 15 percent (max credit)
- Volume Control Credits – up to 15 percent (max credit)
- Peak Flow Credits – up to 40 percent (max credit)

*Total maximum credit that a property can obtain is 40%.*

The overall amount of credit is capped based upon the City's stormwater budget and credit may be adjusted for each customer depending on the level of enrollment and approved credits associated with the program.

### Public Education and Involvement

During the implementation of the Stormwater Utility Fee the City engaged in the following outreach activities:

- Four Stormwater Advisory Committee (SAC) meetings and Three Separate Credit Program Advisory Committee Meetings
- Multiple public education and outreach sessions including a meeting with top potential stormwater rate payers, general public education sessions and presentations at City Council Meetings
- Coverage by the local newspaper throughout the process
- One-on-one meetings with large impervious area non-residential customers

### Challenges and Success Factors

Meadville began evaluation of a dedicated stormwater fee in 2011 following series of rainfall events which resulted in infrastructure failures, highlighting the need for increased investment in stormwater. As with many rust belt communities, local revenues were already strained. The City had only raised taxes 3 times within the past 20 years and were already near allowable maximums. Property values had not been reassessed County-wide in decades and 40% of properties within the City are exempt from real estate taxes. These factors were further compounded by a declining population and the gradual loss of heavy industry.

Following extensive evaluation and robust dialogue with the public, City Council concluded that the general fund could not adequately fund stormwater operations and a stormwater fee presented a more equitable way by which to recover stormwater related costs. As of 2013, Meadville's stormwater operations are fully funded via stormwater fee revenues. The stormwater fee provided the City with (i) an alternative and sustainable funding mechanism, (ii) the ability to enhance their existing stormwater program to better address local needs and priorities; (iii) direct general fund revenues to other critical non-stormwater related public services such as police and fire departments; and (iv) mitigated the level of property tax increase needed as all stormwater costs, previously funded via the general fund were transitioned to a user fee based funding.