

## Understanding Harford County's Stormwater Remediation Fee

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Stormwater runoff originates during precipitation events when water flows over the ground. Impervious surfaces, such as streets and rooftops increase runoff by preventing water from soaking into the ground. Water running over impervious surfaces can pick up sediment, chemicals, debris, and toxins which are carried to local waterways. These pollutants prevent waterways from being fishable and swimmable.

### ***What is the Stormwater Remediation Fee?***

In 2012, the State of Maryland passed the Watershed Protection and Restoration Program (HB 987) which mandates that counties subject to a certain municipal stormwater permit institute a stormwater remediation fee. The purpose of this fee is to manage the pollution carried by stormwater into local waterways.

The collected fees are placed in a *dedicated fund* used to finance projects that treat polluted stormwater. Examples include such projects as street sweeping, storm drain cleaning, stormwater facility inspection, maintenance and upgrades, tree planting, water quality monitoring, watershed planning, and stormwater educational programming. The stormwater remediation fee is similar to fees for other public services such as sewer, drinking water, and highways.

### ***Who has to pay the Stormwater Remediation Fee?***

The stormwater remediation fee requirement applies to the nine largest counties in Maryland (Anne Arundel, Baltimore, Carroll, Charles, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery, and Prince George's) and Baltimore City, which are federally required to treat stormwater runoff. The fee structure is established independently by each county/city and differs across the State.

### ***What does the Stormwater Remediation Fee look like in Harford County?***

This fee only applies to improved property owned by residents in Harford County who do not live within the city/town limits of Aberdeen, Bel Air, or Havre de Grace.

**Residential property owners and owners of improved property with an agricultural use** will pay \$12.50, which is 10% of the amount recommended in Harford County Bill 13-12. The passage of this bill also required the County Council to establish a task force that would make recommendations on future fee structures.

**Owners of apartments, commercial, and industrial properties** will pay \$0.70 per 500 sq. ft. of impervious area, **as will owners of improved properties that do not support a residential or agricultural use.** This is 10% of the amount recommended in Harford County Bill 13-12. If such property is exempt from

federal income tax because of 501(c)(3) status, a flat fee of \$12.50 is charged, which is 10% of the amount recommended in Harford County Bill 13-12.

#### **Credit programs:**

Home and business owners may be able to receive up to a 100% credit for remediation projects such as using rain barrels, installing rain gardens, retrofitting existing stormwater management facilities, and planting trees along waterways. County rules and regulations regarding these credits have not yet been established. An advisory board will be selected to establish the rules and will be responsible for processing the credit and exemption applications. Currently, the only applications that can be processed are the “Hardship Exemption” (handled by the Treasury) and “Appeal” (to challenge the fee; handled by Department of Public Works).

#### **Financial Hardship exemptions:**

A financial hardship exemption is granted when **two (2)** of the following criteria are met:

- Homeowner’s Property Tax Credit Program
- Receiving energy assistance subsidy
- Receiving public assistance in the form of supplemental security income (SSI) or food stamps
- Receiving veterans or social security disability benefits.

Information and an application for hardship exemptions can be found on the Harford County “Maryland Stormwater Fee” website (see *Additional Resources*).

#### ***What can I do to help address stormwater runoff pollution?***

Among other practices, residents can install rain barrels, rain gardens, and porous pavers, and practice Bay-Wise landscaping to help in the fight against stormwater runoff.

Always remember with stormwater - *slow it down* and *soak it up!*

#### ***Additional Resources***

Maryland Department of the Environment  
Stormwater Fee FAQ:

<http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Maryland/r/Pages/StormwaterFeeFAQ.aspx>

Harford County Stormwater Remediation Fee webpage:

<http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/Interests/Index.cfm?ID=10>

House Bill 987

<http://mgaleg.maryland.gov/webmga/frmMain.aspx?ys=2012rs%2fbillfile%2fhhb0987.htm>

Contact Krisztian Varsa ([kvarsa@umd.edu](mailto:kvarsa@umd.edu), (410) 771-1761), Watershed Restoration Specialist for Baltimore, Carroll and Harford Counties, to answer your questions about the fee and what you can do to reduce stormwater runoff on your property.

*Please note: This factsheet is intended to provide an overview of the stormwater remediation fee at the time of publication. For more updates and information please go to:*

[http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/Interests/Index.cfm?ID=10.](http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/Interests/Index.cfm?ID=10)

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