

Your Cobb Water Bill Pays for Stormwater Management

Stormwater is rainwater that is not absorbed into natural landscapes. When not absorbed, it runs off impervious surfaces including rooftops, driveways, lawns, parking lots, and roads into a system of stormwater pipes, and eventually ends up in Allatoona Lake or the Chattahoochee River. The Stormwater Management Division of the Cobb County Water System (CCWS) is responsible for managing both stormwater quality and quantity to ensure the health of the community and local ecosystems are sustained.

Some of the water quality and water quantity services that the Stormwater Management Division provides include:



💧 **Water Quality Compliance** – enforces the Illicit Discharge and Illegal Connection Ordinance by monitoring commercial and residential properties for compliance of water quality and environmental standards.



💧 **Stormwater Infrastructure Repairs & Maintenance** – maintains residential drainage pipes and structures that are shown in easements on subdivision plats, and maintains subdivision detention ponds that are dedicated to and accepted by the County.



💧 **Plan Review and Zoning** – reviews development projects to ensure compliance with Federal, State, and Cobb County flood mitigation and water quality protection requirements, and comments on rezoning applications. Cobb's detention pond design and stream buffer requirements are more stringent than State requirements.



💧 **Flood Management** – understanding and managing the quantity of water through planning and maintaining engineering controls (stormwater infrastructure) reduces the potential for damaging flood water. Efforts also include:

💧 **Floodplain mapping** to inform Cobb County's residents of their flood risk.

💧 **Participation in FEMA's Community Rating System (CRS)**, earning Cobb County residents a 15% policy premium discount.

💧 **Acquiring homes in floodplain** subject to chronic flooding through GEMA Grants, and acquiring undeveloped floodplain property.

CCWS provides stormwater services to customers in unincorporated Cobb County. These services are currently funded through water and sewer rates.

CCWS customers who reside within a city limit have slightly lower rates because CCWS does not provide stormwater services to them. Their city is responsible for providing those services.

Open drainage systems, such as streams, creeks, and/or ditches are the responsibility of the property owner.

Cobb Dept. of Transportation is responsible for maintaining the stormwater infrastructure within the road right-of-way.



Cobb's Stormwater Challenges:

- 💧 Pressure from public to provide additional services.
- 💧 Aging infrastructure from the '70s and the '80s is failing more frequently, and construction costs continue to escalate.
- 💧 The current budget does not provide sufficient funding to properly maintain stormwater infrastructure resulting in a backlog of 100 sinkhole repairs on residential property and many overgrown detention ponds.
- 💧 The longer we delay addressing inadequate funding, the more money it will cost the community.
- 💧 Understaffed and underfunded for years.

To address these challenges, CCWS has been researching services provided by stormwater utilities in Georgia to determine how our program compares to other programs. CCWS is also developing a proposal for a stormwater fee that is assessed on the amount of impervious surface on the property. The fee analysis includes the minimal fee required to fund the current level and extent of services and increases that would be required to improve the level of service and expand services. The expanded services being evaluated at this time are primarily related to maintaining existing stormwater facilities. They do not include upsizing pipes or flood recovery assistance.

Why is Cobb considering a dedicated Stormwater Utility Fee?

- CCWS currently charges for stormwater services through water and sewer fees.
- There are about 6,700 properties not being charged for stormwater services due to our current billing method.

CCWS is exploring how to better fund stormwater management in Cobb County. Currently funding for CCWS stormwater services is accomplished by charging higher fees for water and sewer services and budgeting a portion of our total revenue for stormwater. This means those properties that use more water are paying the most for stormwater services. Conversely, people on septic systems are paying less than half of what those who have both water and sewer services pay, and residents on well water and septic are not paying anything towards stormwater management. In addition, properties in unincorporated Cobb County who are Austell, Marietta, or Smyrna water customers do not pay for the stormwater services that CCWS provides those properties. CCWS does not currently have a way to bill those properties for the stormwater services, because they are not our water customers.

Current stormwater charges¹ based on consumption:

Consumption	Residential		Commercial	
	Water & Sewer	Water Only	Water & Sewer	Water Only
5,000 gallons	\$2.14	\$0.84	\$2.35	\$1.05
6,000 gallons	\$2.61	\$1.05	\$2.82	\$1.26
10,000 gallons	\$4.49	\$1.89	\$4.70	\$2.10
15,000 gallons	\$6.84	\$2.94	\$7.05	\$3.15

¹Based on 10/1/23 rates.

Water consumption is not the best measure of a property's impact on the stormwater system as demonstrated below.

	Monthly Water Consumption (Gallons)	Impervious Area (ft ²)	Current Fee Based on Consumption ¹
House	3,000	4,200	\$1.20
House	6,000	4,200	\$2.61
Drug Store	3,000	59,062	\$1.41
Fast Food	36,000	33,843	\$16.92
Church	121,000	300,464	\$56.87
Big Box Store	133,000	370,939	\$62.51

¹Based on 10/1/23 rates.

Stormwater Services and Fee Research:

- There are more than 60 stormwater utilities in Georgia including the cities of Acworth, Austell, Powder Springs, and Smyrna and in Gwinnett, Douglas, DeKalb, Clayton, Henry, Fayette, and Rockdale counties.
- The extent and level of service vary across utilities. CCWS provides services that other utilities do not provide, such as accepting detention ponds in new subdivisions. There are services some other utilities provide that CCWS does not provide, like maintaining open channels for a short distance from the end of a public pipe. To see how our services compare to some nearby utilities visit www.cobbcounty.org/stormwater-services.
- A stormwater management fee based on the amount of impervious surface area (rooftops, pavement, etc.) ensures the properties that generate more stormwater runoff volume pay for their share of impact to the stormwater system.
- Stormwater utility fees are charged to all properties (residential, commercial, governmental, schools, churches, etc.)



If implemented in Cobb, a Stormwater Utility Fee would:

- Include a reduction in water and sewer rates to be equal to the CCWS In-City rates. (Our current rates are available at www.cobbcounty.org/water/customer-service/water-rates.)
- Include billing properties in unincorporated Cobb that are not CCWS customers for stormwater only services.
- Provide properties options to reduce their impact on the community's drainage system and apply for stormwater credits to reduce their monthly fee.
- Need to be set at level to support the extent and level of service to be provided by CCWS.
- Ensure that the money collected for stormwater services is only spent on stormwater services by putting the revenue in a dedicated stormwater fund.
- Ensure properties with the same amount of impervious surface pay the same amount for stormwater services.



Next Steps:

- Complete the update of the 2014 impervious data in Cobb's Geographical Information System with current data.
- Based on the updated impervious data, calculate the minimal fee required to fund the current level and extent of services and the incremental fee increase for each improvement to CCWS stormwater management program being considered.
- Determine whether to proceed with implementing a stormwater fee based on impervious area and whether to provide funding to improve stormwater services. Here are the options to be considered:
 - No changes - continue to bill through water and sewer fees and only fund current level and extent of services.
 - Continue to bill through water and sewer fees and develop a FY25 budget that increases funding to improve services.
 - Create a Stormwater Utility Fee based on impervious area and set it to only fund current level and extent of services.
 - Create a Stormwater Utility Fee based on impervious area and set it to increase funding to improve services.
- Determine which improved services to fund, if decide to fund improvements.
- Amend Cobb County Code of Ordinances, if move forward with a fee.



COBB COUNTY WATER SYSTEM

www.cobbwater.org



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Cobb County Water System is an agency of the Cobb County Board of Commissioners.

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