



STORMWATER MANAGEMENT UTILITY

Questions and Answers

Why did the City create a Stormwater Management Utility?

The City of Santa Cruz is required by the federal Environmental Protection Agency and the state Department of Water Resources to address water pollution associated with stormwater runoff from streets and properties in the City. Studies indicate that stormwater runoff is a major contributor of pollutants to the San Lorenzo River and Monterey Bay. In addition to pollution control requirements, the City faces significant flood control commitments for the San Lorenzo River Flood Control Project.

The City created the Stormwater Management Utility and established utility fees to pay for the City's share of costs for stormwater pollution prevention and flood control projects. Stormwater related pollution abatement programs are estimated to cost around \$200,000 per year on an ongoing basis. Total costs to implement the San Lorenzo Flood Control Project are estimated at over \$57 million, shared between the federal government, state and City, with the City's share of costs estimated at around \$9.7 million. These costs include the reconstruction of four bridges, levee raising, river landscaping, and the Laurel Street Extension/Third Avenue Riverbank Stabilization Project.

What is the City's plan to address stormwater pollution?

The City has developed and is implementing programs to monitor stormwater for pollutants, improve stormwater system maintenance, and provide educational activities to individuals, businesses and agencies impacting stormwater. The City recently adopted a Stormwater Ordinance establishing standards for keeping stormwater clean. Best management practices for specific areas such as retail, industrial, and construction activities are being developed and implemented. In combination, these programs will reduce stormwater pollution. These activities support the goal of the City to minimize the pollutants from the City storm drain system entering Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

What is the Citywide Stormwater Management Fee?

A stormwater management fee is charged to each property within the Santa Cruz city limits. The stormwater fee is based on the average stormwater runoff from various land use types within the City and on property size. Property land uses which have a high percentage of area covered by buildings and pavement generate more stormwater runoff than vacant land or uses with less coverage. Therefore those properties with more impermeable area are charged a higher user rate per acre.

Parcels with single-family residences are charged a flat amount of \$21.24. All other rates are based on acreage. A vacant parcel is charged at \$5.28 per acre. An average commercial parcel would be charged around \$85 per year, based on the \$261.08/acre rate. Citywide fees fund stormwater pollution reduction programs and the City's share of bridge improvements on the San Lorenzo River.

City Stormwater Management utility fees are billed on the property tax statements mailed by the Santa Cruz County Tax Collector. The fees should be paid with property taxes. Fees collected by the County are then turned over to the City.

Need more information?

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CITY OF SANTA CRUZ
Public Works Department
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What will the Flood Levee Improvement Project do?

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the City of Santa Cruz have agreed to jointly fund a project to raise the height of the San Lorenzo River levees from one to five feet, depending on location, and to restore riparian habitat along the levees. The San Lorenzo River Flood Control and Restoration Improvements project has been in the works since 1978, and is estimated to cost over \$16 million. The City's share of this cost is \$2.7 million.

The improvements will be built in several phases depending on Congressional funding. Congress approved \$4.8 million in the Fiscal Year 2000 federal budget and construction of Phase I began in August, 1999. Phase I of the project extends from Highway 1 to Water Street and Soquel Avenue Bridge to Riverside Bridge. A small section of the levee was raised in 1998 near Highway 1 behind the new Gateway Shopping Center. Phase II covers Water Street to Soquel and Riverside to the River mouth. Both phases are substantially complete. The State Legislature in 2000 passed legislation authorizing State assistance to the project. This assistance will cover a large percentage of the required City share of the Corps portion of the project.

A second part of this project was replacement of the Riverside Avenue Bridge, the northern two lanes of Water Street Bridge, the Soquel Avenue Bridge, and retrofit of the Broadway/Laurel Bridge. The new structures are higher and allow freer flow of flood waters. Bridge construction is funded by a separate Federal program and the City's share has been financed from the citywide stormwater fees, since all City residents benefit from the improved bridges.

The third part of the project is the Laurel Street Extension/Third Street Riverbank Stabilization. This project will construct a natural rock form wall along this section of the river to prevent the collapse of these streets into the river. Vegetation will be planted along the toe of the wall adjacent to the river. Design is 60% complete and additional funding is being sought.

The primary purpose of the project is to reduce flood damage and loss within the City of Santa Cruz 100-year floodplain. According to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the December 1955 flood caused over \$40 million in damage. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers estimates that today a 100-year flood in the downtown area would cause \$86 million in damage.

Which properties are affected by levee improvements?

All parcels which lie within the 100-year floodplain of the San Lorenzo River within the Santa Cruz city limits will receive increased flood protection from the levee improvements. About 1600 parcels lie within the floodplain.

What are the flood insurance benefits to affected parcels?

Most properties within the 100-year floodplain are required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to purchase flood insurance. Annual premiums for a single-family home range from \$200 to \$300. In 2002, FEMA recognized that the levees are already providing increased flood protection and granted an interim A99 flood zone designation to most parcels in the 100-year floodplain. This designation allows flood insurance premiums to be reduced by 40-50%. Property owners can get more information on this change at the City website: www.ci.santa-cruz.ca.us or by contacting their insurance agent. Once the river levee project is completely finished, the City will apply to FEMA to have the 100-year floodplain boundary revised. This will remove the FEMA flood insurance requirements for most properties. Most property owners will save money when this happens; they will pay less in annual stormwater fees for the levee project than they now pay for flood insurance premiums.

What is the flood levee improvement fee?

Those parcels which lie within the 100-year floodplain are charged a stormwater utility fee to pay the City's share of the flood levee project. This fee is in addition to the existing citywide stormwater utility fee which is financing bridge improvements and stormwater pollution reduction. Both fees were approved by the City Council in 1994. The fees are based on the average amount of stormwater runoff for the various land uses and on parcel size.

Sample Stormwater Utility Fees for Flood Levee Improvements	
<u>Land Use Type</u>	<u>Rate</u>
Vacant land	\$21.84/acre
Single-family parcel	\$87.86/year
Commercial parcel	\$1,079.50/acre

The City Flood Levee Improvement utility fees are billed on the property tax statements mailed by the Santa Cruz County Tax Collector. The fees should be paid along with annual property taxes. Fees collected by the County are turned over to the City.