



December 2017

How to Maintain a Retention or Detention Pond

Both detention and retention ponds are used to manage stormwater runoff to prevent flooding and downstream erosion and improve water quality in an adjacent river, stream or lake.

The two terms sound similar and both need regular maintenance to function properly. But there are subtle differences between the two.

Retention ponds are typically older structures intended to capture stormwater runoff and hold it indefinitely. The water evaporates, soaks into the ground, or is pushed out by the next rain event.

Detention ponds also capture stormwater runoff, but are designed to slowly release that water over the course of a set amount of time. This process of capturing and holding rainwater is how a detention or retention pond helps protect the environment by slowing down stormwater and preventing flooding.

Fortunately, you don't have to determine if your pond is detention or retention in order to make sure it is functioning properly. All stormwater ponds should:

- be free of trash and large debris that can block the outlet control structure
- have small, soft-bodied plants and grasses established to prevent erosion
- have erosion stabilized quickly
- have trees and other woody shrubs cut and removed

Each of these tasks can be handled by the pond owner or neighbors from a subdivision if they are addressed early and regularly. Ponds that have not been maintained for some time may require the expertise and equipment of a pond maintenance contractor.

Whether retention or detention, if you keep your stormwater pond maintained, you can reduce the cost of ongoing maintenance, prolong the life of the pond, and protect the environment downstream.

For questions, contact City Hall at 678-691-1200.

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