

What is a Stormwater Utility and Why Does Reno Need One? Jan 18, 2023

Our region has experienced significant flooding over the past several decades, and with our recent weather, we may experience more this year. The increasing frequency and intensity of these storms, coupled with Reno's aging infrastructure, will only worsen Reno's flooding problems and significantly increase the damage, repair, and cleanup costs after a weather event. Unlike the Cities of Sparks and Carson City, Reno has no dedicated stormwater fee for providing a sufficient and stable revenue source to implement and manage its stormwater and flood control needs. So, what is a stormwater utility, and why do we need it?

Stormwater utilities provide a dedicated funding source to address stormwater and flood control. Stormwater Utilities are common throughout the United States and exist in most municipalities in Nevada. A stormwater utility establishes a monthly fee, similar to a sewer fee, paid by all property owners to provide for engineering, construction, and maintenance of flood improvements and drainage infrastructure. The fee will be based on each property's contribution to the stormwater system. The City of Reno's proposed residential fee is estimated to be between \$10-\$15 a month. This is comparable to other Nevada cities with existing stormwater utility fees. For businesses, the fee will be based on the amount of impervious surface or areas that do not allow for water to infiltrate, like rooftops, parking lots, and driveways, and account for the number of equivalent residential units the property occupies.

Why does Reno need a stormwater utility? A stormwater utility will provide the City with dedicated funding to fix and replace stormwater infrastructure on a planned and scheduled basis, avoiding high-cost emergency repairs and the expensive damage to many property owners associated with floods and stormwater impacts. These capital projects cost tens of millions of dollars each. At the current funding rate, most storm drain improvement projects will never be accomplished.

Stormwater and flooding damage can be costly but may be prevented. There are many examples of local flooding in recent history. In early August 2022, the airport received 1.22 inches of rain in a single day, more than the rest of 2022 combined. The heavy downpour left streets and property flooded. Rock Boulevard flooded, and there were two feet of standing water on Terminal Way, which was closed from Mill Street to Villanova Drive. On several occasions, the Aquila and Sagittarius neighborhood experienced flooding and damage that prevented homeowners from using the streets until the waters subsided. These are just a few examples of areas needing stormwater improvements, and stormwater impacts like these can happen anywhere in our community. Routine maintenance and infrastructure upgrades or repairs **before** the floods cost much less; it's like maintaining our cars or homes.

What will happen if we don't implement this stormwater utility? Essentially, what we have will deteriorate, and the future damage costs will be higher and impact even more community members. Without the stormwater utility, we do not have a funding source to remedy, repair or replace infrastructure that has either: reached its serviceable life, caused recurrent flooding, or is undersized for our increased frequency and intensity of storms.

Together, we can prevent flooding in Reno and protect local waters. It is time to join the other local governments in addressing our stormwater needs. A properly functioning stormwater

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system can prevent flooding, minimize pollution from entering our local waters, and keep our natural waterways healthy. The dedicated stormwater fee will ensure that the City has a sufficient and stable revenue source to implement its stormwater and flood control program needs effectively. When we do this, we will be a safer and healthier community.

For more information, visit [Reno.gov/StormwaterUtility](https://reno.gov/StormwaterUtility) or e-mail stormwaterutility@reno.gov.