

Funding Stormwater Management and Drainage Systems

Properly eliminating polluted runoff requires just as much planning and management as drinking water, sewer or solid waste services, but as noted previously in this paper, it has rarely received the attention it deserves. That's probably because municipalities have a wide variety of responsibilities such as traffic control, safety, parks, and many other matters. They also have budget limitations.

While the costs of managing stormwater are real and the benefits of doing so are significant, stormwater management costs can be an invisible part of municipal budgets. They are not broken out or identified specifically. They are included in overall public works department budgets. It is likely that many communities are spending a sizeable amount on stormwater control activities including street cleaning, catch basin maintenance, and the response to flooding. On the other hand, it is also likely that communities suffering with recurring flooding or water quality issues are under-spending. One of the advantages of a utility is that it makes these costs easier to track and more transparent, so that a municipality can determine whether it is spending enough, too much, or too little. As climate change and a rising sea level bring dramatic changes to both the coast and the interior of New Jersey, stormwater management costs are very likely to rise. Clarity about spending and good planning, design, construction, operation and maintenance of stormwater infrastructure will be more important than ever.

Under CSFRA, stormwater management fees must be proportionate to the amount of stormwater a property generates. They must be fair, and they must include some provision for credits for property owners under certain circumstances.