

stormwater fees

larry Carson [karasov1@hotmail.com]

Sent: Wednesday, November 25, 2015 5:00 AM**To:** CouncilMail

I saw on Facebook yesterday that the county executive and councilman Fox are proposing to eliminate the storm water fees in Howard county. Based on my observations of the county's budget process over a period of 12-13 years, I noticed that as budget deadlines neared each spring, the first things to be cut were things like renovating storm water ponds and other "unglamorous" projects that the public took little notice of.

If the county removes the fee that provides a dedicated income stream for these very important projects to the health of the Chesapeake Bay, I'm afraid that decades old pattern will quickly return. I would urge the council and the executive to show the courage that former executive Chuck Ecker did in enacting a separate dedicated fee for trash collection and disposal, and retain Howard's minimal storm water fee.

Larry Carson

Storm water fee

Alan Pflugrad [pflugal@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, November 27, 2015 8:18 AM

To: CouncilMail

I recommend that the county maintain the fee on storm water because 1. significant progress has been initiated and 2. significant water quality problems remain.

Before the executive and council repeal or phase out the existing fee, please communicate clearly where the money will come from (and how much) in order to meet Clean Water Act mandates.

Please note the progress in work around the county and state as evidenced by thousands of volunteers planting trees/riparian buffers, rain gardens, and much more. The plan to clean up the Chesapeake Bay is based on sound data and enforcement plans. Let us work please.

Repealing the fee without designating explicitly where the money will come from is irresponsible and demoralizing.

Alan Pflugrad
7454 First League
Columbia Md 21046
410 440-0135

Maintain Storm Water Remediation Fee

Jnjs Dad [jnjsdad@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, November 29, 2015 3:39 PM

To: CouncilMail

I recommend that the county maintain the storm water remediation fee

1. Progress has been initiated to lower Howard County pollution due to storm water.
2. Significant water quality and storm water remediation problems remain.

Before the Executive and Council repeal or phase out the existing fee, please identify where the money will come from in order to meet Clean Water Act mandates.

Note the progress in work around the county and state as evidenced by thousands of volunteers planting trees/riparian buffers, rain gardens, and much more. The plan to clean up the Chesapeake Bay is based on sound data and enforcement plans. Please let it work.

--

Mike Calvert
6644 Corina Ct.
Columbia, MD
21044

Storm water management

Ann Coren [anncoren@gmail.com]

Sent: Tuesday, December 01, 2015 8:10 AM

To: CouncilMail

Subject: Maintain Storm Water Remediation Fee

To: councilmail@howardcountymd.gov

I would like to live in an environmentally healthy community.

I highly recommend that the county maintain the storm water remediation fee and even increase the incentives to citizens to install storm water control measures on their property.

1. Progress has been initiated to lower Howard County pollution due to storm water.
2. Significant water quality and storm water remediation problems remain.

Before the Executive and Council repeal or phase out the existing fee, please identify where the money will come from in order to meet Clean Water Act mandates.

Note the progress in work around the county and state as evidenced by thousands of volunteers planting trees/riparian buffers, rain gardens, and much more. The plan to clean up the Chesapeake Bay is based on sound data and enforcement plans. Please let it work.

Ann Coren
6449 Browsing Deer
Columbia, MD
21045

Sent from my iPhone

Maintain Storm Water Remediation Fee

Rhoda T [tobackord@gmail.com]

Sent: Friday, December 04, 2015 10:53 AM

To: CouncilMail

Cc: Kittleman, Allan

I recommend that the county maintain the storm water remediation fee

1. Progress has been initiated to lower Howard County pollution due to storm water.
2. Significant water quality and storm water remediation problems remain.

Before the Executive and Council repeal or phase out the existing fee, please identify where the money will come from in order to meet Clean Water Act mandates, not just for today but for the future as well.

Note the progress in work around the county and state as evidenced by thousands of volunteers planting trees/riparian buffers, rain gardens, and much more. The plan to clean up the Chesapeake Bay is based on sound data and enforcement plans.

Please let it work.

--
Rhoda Toback
10055 Windstream Drive
Columbia, MD
21044

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Rhoda Toback
HowardCountyMasterWatershedSteward
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Storm Water Remediation Fee

Alan Pflugrad [pflugal@gmail.com]

Sent: Saturday, December 05, 2015 6:00 PM

To: Kittleman, Allan

Cc: CouncilMail

To: County Executive

I support the existing Storm Water Remediation Fee.

In your statement to repeal the fee, you indicated that the fee could be replaced by use of the "general fund" and "obligation bonds". Please explain specific details about how the general fund will be used - that is which existing programs will be impacted by using the general fund for watershed protection. Won't the use of "obligation bonds" generate debt that has to be paid and where will the money to pay down that debt be found?

In my opinion, should you repeal the fee, the county won't be able to replace that dedicated source of funding without cutting other programs. Without the dedicated funding, the overall plan to clean our waters won't be implemented.

Our county has made significant progress in the past several years with significant constructive participation of numerous county government and non profit organizations. Your removal of the dedicated source of funding will significantly impact this progress and associated morale of numerous volunteers.

Thanks and I look forward to your reply.

Al Pflugrad
7454 First League
Columbia Md 21046
410 440-0135.

Plese

Bob and Sue Brown [brownrs10@verizon.net]

Sent: Sunday, December 06, 2015 6:50 PM

To: CouncilMail; Kittleman, Allan

Please keep the "rainwater fee".

Robert Brown

Blog: Howard County Needs the Rain Tax

Lori Lilly [lorililly@gmail.com]

Sent: Monday, December 07, 2015 9:04 PM

To: Lori Lilly [lorililly@gmail.com]

Wishing you well this upcoming holiday season! I hope that you will check out (and share) my latest blog, "Howard County Needs the Rain Tax." <http://www.lorialilly.com/blog/?p=81>

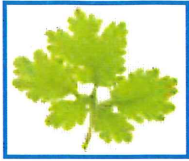
Thank you!

Lori

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Lori A. Lilly

<http://www.lorialilly.com/>



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Howard County Needs the Rain Tax

[December 8, 2015](#) lorililly@gmail.com [Uncategorized](#)

I wrote this blog primarily because I would not be able to communicate all of this need justifying the Rain Tax, aka the stormwater utility fee, aka the Watershed Protection and Restoration Fee, in a 3-minute public testimony to the County Council. I have sent a link to this blog to all of Howard County's Council Members, the County Executive and members of the public that are welcome to use any of this same information as they see fit. Much of the factual information in this blog comes from the Center for Watershed's Protection 2014 Fact Sheet called The Value of Stormwater Utility Fees in MD . The Fact Sheet presents a cogent argument for stormwater utility fees generally as well as history and case studies.

Communities across the nation with National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits to manage their municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) realized pretty quickly that there is too much work to be done to meet the requirements from the general budget (without even getting into Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) and impervious cover retrofit requirements). From 1974 to 1996, there were an estimated 300 stormwater utilities nationwide and 600 by 2007 . Takoma Park was the first Maryland municipality to establish a stormwater utility fee in 1996 with others like Montgomery County and Annapolis quickly following. It is estimated that between 1,800-2,000 stormwater utilities exist nationwide today . These communities recognize that the need to manage these public services, this incredible network of pipes, inlets, ponds and other infrastructure, as well as the needs to meet stormwater regulatory requirements requires a sustainable and adequate funding mechanism. Funding stormwater management programs through the general fund may create a system where some property owners overpay for stormwater services, while others become subsidized because the fee is based on property taxes as opposed to the actual stormwater runoff from a property (Figure 1).

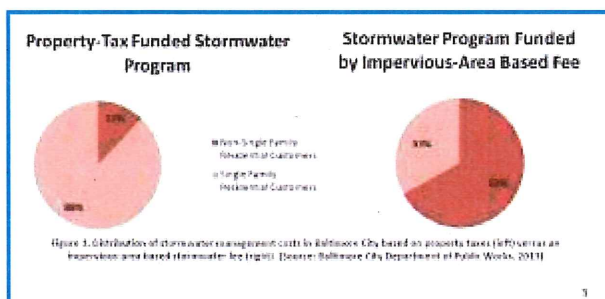
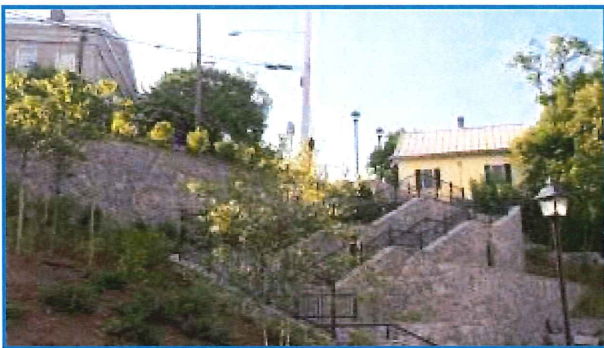


Figure 1. Distribution of stormwater management costs in Baltimore City on property taxes (left) versus an impervious-area

based stormwater fee (right) Source: CWP 2014.
Fact Sheet The Value of Stormwater Utility
Fees in MD.

Many of the benefits of stormwater fees are relevant right here in Howard County:

- Stormwater management practices have multiple economic and social benefits, for example, reduced noise pollution, reduced energy usage, increased recreational opportunity, and reduced flooding to name just a few. A good example of aesthetic and functional stormwater management is “The Staircase” in downtown Ellicott City. The Staircase was installed to stabilize a hillslope that had failed in one of the parking lots and features a series of step pools and waterfalls that filter polluted stormwater runoff from the upland courthouse area. It is an impressive feature that provides connection from under-utilized parking in the upper elevations of Ellicott City to the downtown itself. People proudly post selfies of themselves on the Ellicott City facebook page as a badge of pride.



- Adequately funded stormwater management programs contribute significantly to local economies and their associated businesses and industries. As stated in the CWP Fact Sheet, “Every dollar invested in stormwater management and restoration activities will directly support jobs in a variety of industries such as engineering, landscaping and construction.” Spending from households is stimulated by resulting income and employment changes due to stormwater management projects. In Howard County, the READY program (Restoring the Environment and Developing Youth, a young adult environmental workforce program, a project that I currently manage) spent \$50,000 of our program income on supplies and materials at local businesses such as MD Ground Covers, Kendall Hardware and Sun Nurseries between July and September of this year. We purchase many of our plants from a place called the Providence Center, which provides job skills development opportunities to those with disabilities. In addition, because all of our employees are Howard County residents, our own paychecks go back into the local economic engine. Our program, funded in part by the stormwater utility fee, is helping to spur the local economy.
- Many municipalities with stormwater utility fees also have incentive programs to help alleviate the burden of the fee while also addressing the need for the fee to begin with. Municipalities may have credits and rebate programs to incentivize the installation of stormwater practices by property owners. Howard County has a credit and rebate program for residential homeowners as well as the commercial sector. In addition, Howard County has a Non-Profit Partnership Program that provides significant benefit to non-profits that agree to participate in the program, in fact, their fee goes to zero by signing on to the agreement. Watershed advocates in the public and non-profit sector further market these credit and incentive programs in order to facilitate more restoration and progress towards the watershed restoration goals.

- The stormwater utility is paying for a requirement, a permit obligation and more than one regulation. These things will require a significant investment in resources to meet. In fact, many local governments, including Howard County, will not have enough revenue even with the fee to meet the new stormwater management requirements and Chesapeake Bay restoration goals. It could also be argued that if the remediation is funded out of the general fund, taxes would be increased across the board to cover the extra expense. Once those costs go up, they will never disappear. A dedicated fee may disappear one day if the job is accomplished that it is intended to accomplish.
- And on that vein, a dedicated fund also equates to increased accountability for the expenditure of the funds. The money can only be spent one way. We are required to meet this and that regulation, this fee helps us do that, and this is what we did with the money to help meet this and that regulation – come on, let's go look at what we did.
- Finally, having a dedicated source of funds with a name like “Watershed Protection & Restoration Fund” allows us the opportunity to educate the public about the very issues that created the need for the fee in the first place. If this cost is buried in bonds and property taxes, we will have a much harder time meeting the goals. Public education about the issue is a necessity for getting the job done.

County Executive Kittleman and County Councilmember Greg Fox announced on 11/24/2015 their plan to phase out the Watershed Protection and Restoration fee:

<http://www.howardcountymd.gov/News112415.htm>. The reason stated in the press release for eliminating the fee was that it is an “unnecessary and excessive burden” to the resident and small business population. I did a small survey in Howard County to see if this was the case and the results that I obtained show that 75.4% of the sample (n=73) do not find the fee to be a burden, don't know about the fee or haven't noticed the fee (Figure 2). (If you would like to participate in the survey, you can do so here: <http://goo.gl/forms/H1b4I4T6iy>) And for those that do find the fee to be burden, there is a hardship credit to provide assistance for those that qualify: <http://www.howardcountymd.gov/departments.aspx?ID=1465>

If the County Councilmembers that are reading this blog find dispute with this survey or feel that this survey is biased in some manner, I would encourage him/her to otherwise gather some factual information from his/her constituents to indicate otherwise and please share this information with the public as justification for phasing out the fee. That the fee is a burden seems like a pretty nebulous and non-factual statement to justify eliminating a source of revenue that has all of the benefits identified above.

After all, we are in a County with an AVERAGE income of \$108,844 – the third-highest median household income of any U.S. county as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2012. Many people report moving to Howard County “for the schools.” Clearly this is a population that cares about the future. My own kids started learning about the Chesapeake Bay in 6th grade in Howard County – this is embedded into the school curriculum. We care about our children in Howard County, we care about their futures, we care about the Bay, we care about our local natural resources. Let's put our money where our mouths are.

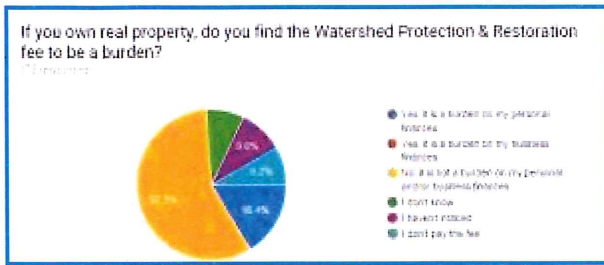


Figure 2. Survey of Howard County residents regarding whether the stormwater utility is a financial “burden” for them.

I encourage you to please leave comments below to indicate your support (or not) of the Watershed Protection and Restoration Fund. #HoCoBlogs

2 Responses to “Howard County Needs the Rain Tax”

- 
 Gayle Killen says:
[December 8, 2015 at 10:01 pm](#)

I support the Watershed Protection and Restoration Fund.

[Reply](#)

- 
 lorililly@gmail.com says:
[December 8, 2015 at 10:06 pm](#)

Yay Gayle!!

[Reply](#)

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