



# Stormwater Phase II Final Rule

## Urbanized Areas: Definition and Description

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As discussed in Fact Sheet 2.1, *Who's Covered? Designation and Waivers of Regulated Small MS4s*, the Phase II Final Rule covers all small municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) located within an "urbanized area" (UA). UAs constitute the largest and most dense areas of settlement. UA calculations delineate boundaries around these dense areas of settlement and, in doing so, identify the areas of concentrated development. UA designations are used for several purposes in both the public and private sectors. For example, the Federal Government has used UAs to calculate allocations for transportation funding, and some planning agencies and development firms use UA boundaries to help ascertain current, and predict future, growth areas.

### What Is an Urbanized Area (UA)?

The Bureau of the Census determines UAs by applying a detailed set of published UA criteria (see 55 *FR* 42592, October 22, 1990) to the latest decennial census data. Although the full UA definition is complex, the Bureau of the Census' general definition of a UA, based on population and population density, is provided below.

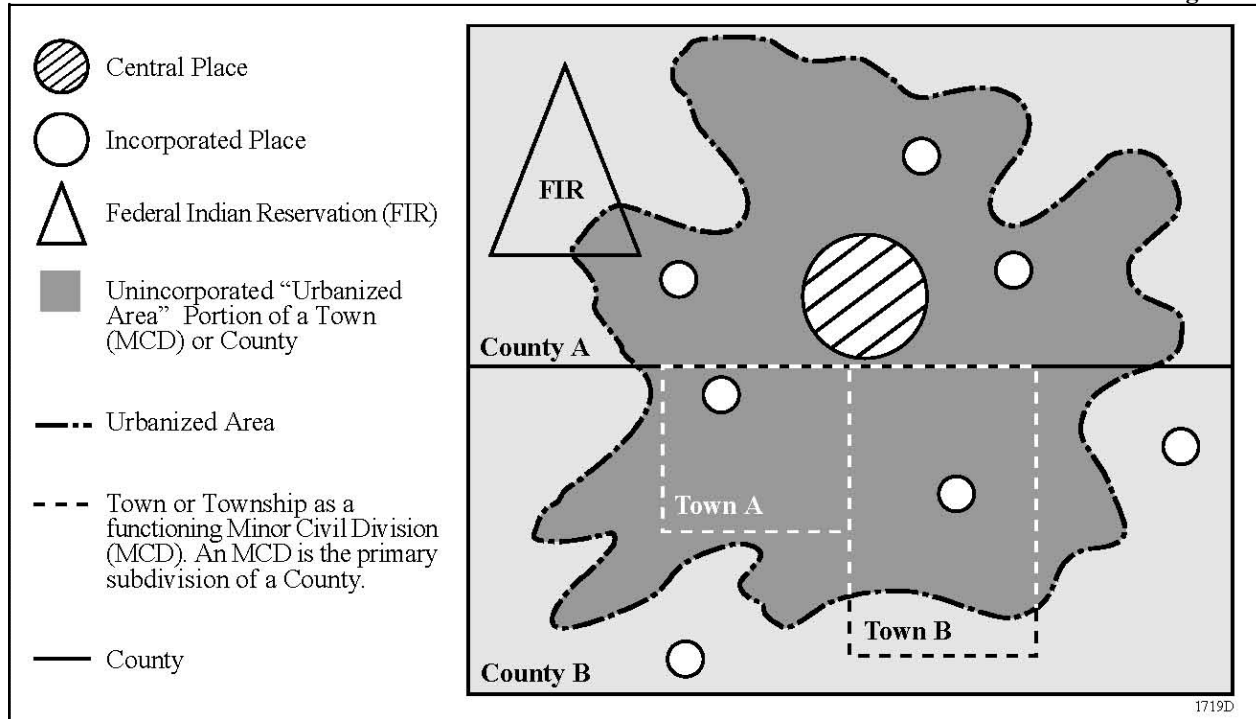
An *urbanized area* (UA) is a densely settled core of census tracts and/or census blocks that have population of at least 50,000, along with adjacent territory containing non-residential urban land uses as well as territory with low population density included to link outlying densely settled territory with the densely settled core. It is a calculation used by the Bureau of the Census to determine the geographic boundaries of the most heavily developed and dense urban areas.

The basic unit for delineating the UA boundary is the census block. Census blocks are based on visible physical boundaries, such as the city block, when possible, or on invisible political boundaries, when not. An urbanized area can comprise places, counties, Federal Indian Reservations, and minor civil divisions (MCDs - towns and townships).

### How Can Status as a Regulated Small MS4 Be Determined?

The drawing below (see Figure 1) is a simplified UA illustration that demonstrates the concept of UAs in relation to the Phase II Final Rule. The "urbanized area" includes within its boundaries incorporated places, a portion of a Federal Indian reservation, an entire MCD, a portion of another MCD, and portions of two counties. Any and all operators of small MS4s located within the boundaries of the UA are covered under the Phase II Final Rule, regardless of political boundaries. Operators of small MS4s located outside of the UA are subject to potential designation into the Phase II MS4 program by the NPDES permitting authority.

Figure 1



Operators of small MS4s can determine if they are located within a UA, and therefore covered by the Phase II storm water program, by contacting one or more of the institutions listed below for more detailed information on the location of the UA boundary. EPA and the States have compiled a list of municipalities to be covered under the Phase II Rule, but the urbanized area boundaries are important in some cases for determining the specific area within a municipality's boundaries that is covered (e.g., a county included in Phase II might only be required to implement their program for the urbanized area of the county).

**The State or NPDES Permitting Authority (may be the State or the U.S. EPA Region)**

**Storm Water Coordinators:** The NPDES permitting authority may be the State or the U.S. EPA Region. The Storm Water Coordinators for each U.S. EPA Region are listed in the *For Additional Information* section in Fact Sheet 2.9. These regional contacts can assist with UA information and provide the names of State storm water contacts. Regional and State contact information can also be obtained from OWM.

**State Data Centers:** Each State's Data Center receives listings of all entities that are located in UAs, as well as detailed maps and electronic files of UA boundaries. The Bureau of the Census web site includes a list of contact names and phone numbers for the data in each State at [www.census.gov/sdc/www](http://www.census.gov/sdc/www).

**State Planning/Economic/Transportation Agencies:**

These agencies typically use UAs to assess current development and forecast future growth trends and, therefore, should have detailed UA information readily available to help determine the UA boundaries in any given area.

**County or Regional Planning Commissions/Boards**

As with State agencies, these entities are likely to have detailed UA data and maps to help determine UA boundaries.

**U.S. EPA**

**NPDES Website:** Information about urbanized areas maps is available at EPA's website: <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/urbanmaps>

**Enviromapper Website:** EPA modified a Web-based geographic program called *Enviromapper*. This allows MS4 operators to enter a location and see a detailed map of the UA boundary (called "city boundaries"). *Enviromapper* can be accessed at <http://www.epa.gov/emefdata/em4ef.home>

## ❑ The Bureau of the Census

The site provides information on downloading UA maps and other electronic files for use with computerized mapping systems.

<http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/2010urbanruralclass.html>

## How Will Subsequent Censuses Affect the Determination of Status as a Regulated Small MS4?

Any additional automatic designations of small MS4s based on subsequent census years is governed by the Bureau of the Census' definition of a UA in effect for that year and the UA boundaries determined as a result of the definition. Once a small MS4 is designated into the program based on the UA boundaries, it cannot be waived from the program if in a subsequent UA calculation the small MS4 is no longer within the UA boundaries. An automatically designated small MS4 remains regulated unless, or until, it meets the criteria for a waiver (see Fact Sheet 2.1 for more information on the regulated small MS4 waiver option).

### For Additional Information

#### Contacts

- ☞ U.S. EPA Office of Wastewater Management  
Phone: 202-564-9545  
<http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater>
- ☞ Your NPDES Permitting Authority. Most States and Territories are authorized to administer the NPDES Program, except the following, for which EPA is the permitting authority:

District of Columbia	Guam
Idaho	Johnston Atoll
Massachusetts	Midway and Wake Islands
New Hampshire	Northern Mariana Islands
New Mexico	Trust Territories
Puerto Rico	American Samoa

- ☞ A list of names and telephone numbers for each EPA Region and State is located at <http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater> (click on "Contacts")

#### Reference Documents

- ☞ EPA's Stormwater Web Site  
<http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater>
  - Stormwater Phase II Final Rule Fact Sheet Series
  - Stormwater Phase II Final Rule (64 FR 68722)
  - National Menu of Best Management Practices for Stormwater Phase II
  - Measurable Goals Guidance for Phase II Small MS4s
  - Stormwater Case Studies
- ☞ Census Urbanized Area Information  
<http://www.epa.gov/npdes/stormwater/urbanmaps>
  - General Information:  
<http://www.census.gov/geo/www/ua/uaucbndy.html>