You Might Want to Consider a Stormwater Utility
Overview

• What a utility is & its benefits
• CT enabling legislation
• What they look like

Contributed photo, CT Post
Poll – What is your opinion of stormwater utilities?
Stormwater Challenges

- More frequent, severe, damaging storms
- Aging, undersized infrastructure
- Increasing development
- Stormwater runoff pollution
- Combined sewer overflows
- Increasing stormwater management requirements (MS4, industrial, other permits)
- Bottom line: $$$$$$$
What is a stormwater utility?

• Entity that collects fees which generate direct, equitable and stable funding for stormwater management

• Based on impervious cover
  • Use/contribution based

• Function the same as other utilities, such as water and sewage
Benefits

“stormwater utilities offer a powerful toolset to both capture negative externalities that intensify stormwater risks and recycle revenues into more resilient patterns of growth.”

BROOKINGS

The Avenue

As flood risks intensify, stormwater utilities offer a more resilient solution

Joseph W. Kane and Ranjitha Shivaram Thursday, September 21, 2017
Benefits

• More equitable funding source than property taxes
  • Based on runoff generated (IC amount) not property value
  • Includes tax exempt organizations (universities, hospitals, government agencies, etc.)

• Dedicated fund
  • Funds are dedicated to stormwater management, not diverted to other needs

• Stable
  • Known amount billed regularly
  • Allows for planned expenditures

• Flexible
  • Can be adjusted as community needs change

• Incentivize private investment
  • Provide credits for private efforts to reduce runoff & disconnect IC
They are increasingly popular

• over 1,800 utilities in 41 states
• In 2007, there were around 800
• 26% of MS4 communities (up from 19% in 2013)
• Avg fee for single family home $5.94/month
• Largest: Los Angeles (4 million)
• Smallest: Indian Creek Village, FL (88)
• Average: 18,000

Source: Western Kentucky University
And now allowed **everywhere** in CT – PA 21-115
effective July 1st, 2021 . . .

*Any municipality may, by ordinance adopted by its legislative body, designate any *existing* board or commission or establish a *new* board or commission as the *stormwater authority* for such municipality.*

*Can also contract with another municipality or regional entity (COG, water district) to implement stormwater authority/utility*
What can authority/utility do?

*Establish stormwater management program to:*

- Control construction and post construction runoff
- Control and abate stormwater pollution
- Illicit discharge detection & elimination
- Public education & outreach
- Establish boundaries of district
- Administration of the program
- Recommend fees to carry out above
Setting fees

In setting fees, shall at least consider:

• area of property containing impervious surfaces
• land use types (i.e. generate more or less runoff)
• property values
Limits on fees

• No more than 15% of total fees collected can come from hospitals (can also be exempted)
• For farms, forests, open space, or State property, can only levy fee on IC that drains to a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4)
• Must offer partial fee reduction credit for onsite BMPs that reduce, retain, treat stormwater (municipality decides)
It has been done

New London!

Stormwater Utility Webinars and Workshop Materials

Funding Climate Solutions for Chronic Flooding, Extreme Rainfall Events, and Water Quality with Stormwater Authorities, CT DEEP, CIRCA, UConn CLEAR

Stormwater Utilities in CT?! Amanda Ryan, UConn CLEAR and Joe Lanzafame, New London

https://nemo.uconn.edu/stormwater-utilities
Poll – What is the greatest benefit of a utility?
Stormwater Utilities in Action

• Aging Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation
• Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)
• Water Quality
• MS4 Compliance
Stormwater Utilities in Action

- Aging Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation
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Aging Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation

• **2021 Stormwater Utility survey** (Black and Veatch)
  • Over 73% of respondents: aging infrastructure
    • One of the two highest ranked stormwater management issues

• **Augusta, Georgia** (Pop: ~200,000)
  • Estimated $240 million backlog of stormwater infrastructure repair
    • Previous funding = General fund & Special Purpose Local Options Sales Tax fund
  • Utility allows for direct fund
    • Double amount of stormwater crews
    • Rehab & repair of stormwater infrastructure
    • Street sweeping / catch basin cleaning
      • 13 new priority projects
Stormwater Utilities in Action

• Aging Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation

• **Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI)**

• Water Quality

• MS4 Compliance
GSI Implementation

• Raleigh, NC (Pop: ~465,000)
  • 1,700 sq. ft. Bioretention area
    • Six trees and more than 750 plants
    • 6 lbs Nitrogen + 109 lbs suspended solids
  • Another 500 ft bioretention area in the works
    • Fall 2022
GSI Implementation

• Credit System as incentives

• Portland, Oregon (Pop: ~645,000)

  • Credits for all property types
    • Residential = up to 100% for properly managing stormwater runoff from rooftops
    • Dry wells and french drains, lawns and rain gardens, rain barrels, and eco-roofs.
Stormwater Utilities in Action

• Aging Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation
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Water Quality

- **Lake Whatcom, Washington**
  - 10 mi long
  - Recreation
    - Swimming, fishing, boating
    - Tourism
  - Drinking water for 85,000
  - Home to various flora and fauna
Water Quality

• **Lake Whatcom TMDL**
  • Excess phosphorous and bacteria

• **City of Bellingham, WA (Pop: ~88,000)**
  • Native vegetation
  • Treated with phosphorous removing filters

• **Whatcom County, WA (Pop: ~230,000)**
  • Separate utility for properties outside of Bellingham and draining to Lake Whatcom
  • $45,000/year for monitoring
Water Quality

• **South Burlington, Vermont** *(Pop: ~20,000)*
  - Sanitary sewer pipe accidentally connected to stormwater drainage pipes
    - Discharging directly into local waterways since 1994
  - Funding to dig up and reconnect pipe to correct system.
    - Monitoring results = reduction in pollutant levels at this outfall

• **We will hear from them soon!**
Stormwater Utilities in Action

• Aging Infrastructure and Flood Mitigation
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**MS4 Compliance**

- **Millis, Massachusetts** (Pop: ~8,000)
  - Utility implemented: 2018
  - Focus on Construction Site Control Measure
    - Legal authorities to control runoff on (re)development sites
  - Funds for legal consultants
    - Establish ordinance
    - Conduct inspections

  “inspection and enforcement of stormwater bylaws at construction sites”
MS4 Compliance

• Stormwater Utility and MS4 Compliance Fact Sheet

• Examples from towns and cities across the country!

https://nemo.uconn.edu/stormwater-utilities
Poll – What do you want to learn more about?
Tools to Help

Establish a Stormwater Utility

Learn how stormwater utilities can transform your community by addressing long-standing flooding and water pollution problems that threaten the health, safety, and economic well-being of your residents.

Click the links below to find all the tools you need to affordably and effectively establish a stormwater utility in

Key Milestones For Implementation

Eight Basic Steps to Establish a Stormwater Utility

1. Vetting the concept with top local officials
2. Establishing a core team of internal experts
3. Engaging the mayor (or county executive or utility director)
4. Authorizing a feasibility study to identify options that best suit the community
5. Ongoing stakeholder and outreach activities
6. “Go” or “no go” decision
7. An implementation phase
8. The final launch

NJ Stormwater Utility Resource Center

https://stormwaterutilities.njfuture.org
Tools to Help

UCOH COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, HEALTH AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Stormwater and Climate Resilience

What is Stormwater Runoff?
Stormwater runoff is rain or snowmelt that doesn’t sink into the ground but flows over impermeable surfaces as runoff into a drainage system. Along the way, the runoff picks up pollutants such as vehicle fuels, metals, trash, yard waste, fertilizers, and other chemicals from pavement and other surfaces. Most stormwater flows through storm sewers untrreated into streams, lakes, rivers, and the ocean. Extreme weather events overwhelm the capacity of a stormwater system and lead to flooding, erosion, and poor water quality. As the climate changes and precipitation becomes more intense, the impacts of stormwater runoff will become more frequent, severe, and widespread. Regulations to protect the environment require municipalities, developers, industry, and large commercial sites to take action to reduce stormwater entering waterways. But when stormwater flows, the existing infrastructure may be inadequate. One way communities can address pollutants in runoff and improve resilience to extreme precipitation events is to upgrade stormwater management practices and infrastructure. But the rules, dedicated funding.

What is a Stormwater Authority?
In 2017, acting on recommendations of the Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GCC), the Connecticut legislature passed PA 21-115 enabling municipalities to create a stormwater authority to help manage stormwater and improve resilience to climate change by investing a modest user fee based on the amount of stormwater runoff a property generates. Funding generated from the user fee can be used to maintain and enhance stormwater treatment measures and resilient infrastructure and provide matching funds for state and federal grants.

Tools to Help

UConn Law/CIRCA Ordinance Template & Municipal Grants

CIRCA Announces Municipal Resilience Grant Availability

Posed on December 8, 2021 by Katherine Lund

CIRCA is requesting Municipal Resilience Grant Program applications (MRGP) from municipal governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in partnership with municipalities, and councils of governments (COGs) for initiatives that advance two specific climate priorities for the state of Connecticut: 1) implementation of stormwater authorities, and 2) development of a resilience “project pipeline.” Applicants can submit proposals for both tracks, but only one proposal for each track. Projects should be completed in 12-months.

This funding supports the state’s recent legislation, An Act Concerning Climate Change Adaptation (PA 21-115), and recommendations of the Governor’s Council on Climate Change (GCC). Importantly, this funding expands the capacity of municipalities to address local resilience financing and project development needs. Project proposals in either track should be directly supported by a municipality as an applicant or with a letter of support and products should be transferable to other communities.

For more information and to apply, see the MRGP website.
More to come . . .

• Wednesday, May 4th at 1pm: South Burlington, VT

• Stormwater Utility Workshop: Fall

• Coming very soon...

New website: Same link, new look!

https://nemo.uconn.edu/stormwater-utilities
Questions?

Mary Looney

Municipal Stormwater Educator
(aka, all things MS4)

mary.looney@uconn.edu

Dave Dickson

CLEAR Interim Director

david.dickson@uconn.edu