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FAQS



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1. Why was there an increase in my taxes?

Action was taken in order to comply with federal mandate from the [Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)](#) and the [Indiana Department of Environmental Management \(IDEM\)](#). IDEM designated Porter County as an MS4 entity which requires the county to comply with standards for clean water.

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2. How will the money be spent? [Click here to view Projects in Progress](#)

The money will be spent on many improvements, new builds and maintenance such as:

- **Capital Improvements including:**
 - New infrastructure in older neighborhoods
 - New development infrastructure
 - Upgrades to existing infrastructure
 - Flood way improvements
- **Maintenance including:**
 - Maintenance of existing storm system
 - Maintenance of future system
 - Upgrades to maintenance of all municipal infrastructure
- **Compliance including:**
 - Storm Water Quality Management Plan
 - Long Term Control Plan
 - Education and Outreach to the public
 - Construction Site Erosion Control
 - Post Construction Development
 - Program Management

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3. Why should I have to pay? I live out in the country and have no drainage problems.

You may not have any drainage problems, but the runoff from your property can contribute to the downstream flooding and water quality problems. A responsible approach recognizes that everyone contributes to runoff and that everyone shares in the results (better road drainage, cleaner water and reduced flooding). For example: there are about four pipes that cross under each mile of county road, and these need to be cleaned and sometimes replaced.

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4. Doesn't the County already have funding in place for storm water issues?

Historically, money from the Highway Department has provided limited funding for storm water operations. However, these funds can be used only within road rights of way and are needed not only for drainage but for road maintenance such as resurfacing, pothole repair and snow and ice management.

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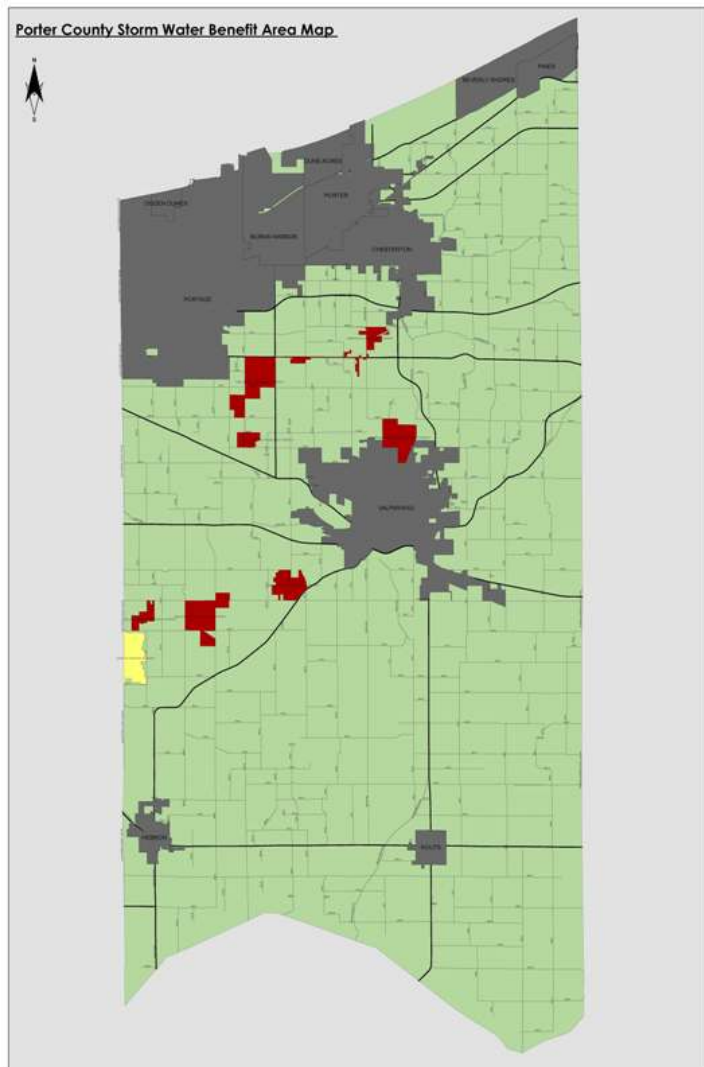
5. Do residents of Valparaiso, Portage or other Cities & Towns within Porter County have to pay the county storm water fee?

While residents of incorporated areas do not pay the County storm water fee, Valparaiso, Portage & Chesterton do have their own fee.

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LEGEND:**6. What is Storm Water and why is Storm Water Management so important?**

Storm water is rain, snow, sleet or ice melt flowing over land with all debris and pollutants picked up along the way. This water flows into a system of pipes, ponds and ditches that empty directly into our creeks, lakes and rivers. These systems require maintenance to prevent pollution and improve water quality. Storm water is not treated at a treatment plant so it is up to individuals to make sure the water depositing into the environment is clean.



Those parcels shown in green will be charged the Storm Water Fee.

The Storm Water Fee is not paid if you live in:

A city or town as shown in gray.

A development that IDEM has designated as it's own, unique MS4 entity shown in yellow.

A conservancy district that maintains their own drainage and charges the residents within their boundaries.

County Storm Water money will not be spent in areas where a fee is not charged.

Porter County Storm Water Management Benefit Area**Porter County Storm Water Management Exclusion Area****Municipalities****Conservancy Districts**

Damon Run

Falling Waters

Lake Elba

Native Woods

Swiss Creek

Volpato Lakes

**Lakes of the Four Seasons**
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7. What is storm water runoff?

Storm water runoff is water from rain or melting snow that runs off into receiving streams and lakes instead of seeping into the ground or evaporating. This runoff is not normally treated in any way before it enters lakes and streams. It does not go to a wastewater treatment plant.

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8. What problems can runoff cause?

For water supply, communities must pay more to clean polluted water than clean water, and the treated water is not as pure as that coming from a clean water source. Treatment may not completely remove taste and odor problems if the source water is not clean. Property owners do not like muddy water or water containing trash or that has an odor draining onto their property. Polluted water also hurts the wildlife in creeks and lakes. Dirt from erosion covers fish habitats and fertilizer in runoff causes too much algae to grow. Soap in runoff hurts fish gills and skin.

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9. Who oversees Storm Water Operations?

Storm water operations are overseen by the [Storm Water Management Board](#) and the [Storm Water Advisory Board](#).

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10. Are sanitary sewers and storm drains the same thing?

No. Storm drains collect and carry runoff from rainfall. Storm drains do not remove pollutants from runoff before it is discharged into receiving streams. Storm inlets are typically found in parking lots and near street curbs. Sanitary sewers collect wastewater from indoor plumbing, such as toilets, sinks, washing machines, and some floor drains, and take it to a wastewater treatment plant.

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11. What is the clean water program?

Unincorporated Porter County is regulated under the [Clean Water Act \(CWA\)](#). That means we are required to have a program that addresses public awareness, public participation, illicit discharge detection and elimination, sediment and erosion control practices for construction sites, long term clean water practices such as ponds and rain gardens, and setting a good example with county projects.

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12. How can I make a difference?**Landscaping**

- Select native plants that require less water, fertilizer and pesticide.
- Mulch flower beds to reduce weeds and conserve water.
- Hand pull weeds.
- Plan pest-resistant species or species that attract beneficial insects.
- Compost lawn wastes instead of washing clipping or leaves down the storm drain ([Where do I take compost?](#)).
- Avoid putting lawn waste near ditches or creeks.
- Install practices such as rain gardens that filter runoff and promote infiltration. Permeable pavers can be used on top of open-graded stone to create driveways and sidewalks that allow rain to soak into the ground. Allow downspout water an opportunity to soak into the ground (at least a few feet away from foundation) instead of connecting it directly to a storm drain or street gutter.

Pesticides and Fertilizers

- Always follow the label for disposal ([Solid Waste Management](#)).
- Avoid overwatering after applications & watch the weather for rain, since most will be washed away
- After application, sweep driveways and sidewalks onto the yard where it can do its work
- Use natural fertilizers such as compost or bone meal
- Use slow release nitrogen fertilizer

Pet Waste

- Place waste in the trash

- *If walking the pet, carry a plastic bag and pooper-scooper (be a good neighbor)*

Automotive Maintenance

- *Routinely check for leaks. Examples:*
 - *Engine Repair*
 - *Coolant*
 - *Transmission*
 - *Brake fluid*
- *Use kitty litter, saw dust, or wood chips to soak up fluid spills. Be sure to sweep up and dispose properly.*
- *Recycle Used Motor Oil ([Where do I take it?](#))*
- *Do not "top off" when fueling your car, truck, motorcycle or any other motorized vehicle.*
- *Use car wash to clean your vehicle or other motorized vehicles*

Household Hazardous Waste

- *Follow Label Directions. Use and dispose hazardous household material properly.*
- *Use the least hazardous products*
- *Unused household chemicals should be taken to [Solid Waste Management](#) for proper dispose.*

Septic Systems

- *Have your septic tank inspected every 3-5 years.*
- *Compost your kitchen garbage, not the garage disposal.*
- *Don't pour household chemicals down the drain. This could disrupt the septic system's treatment process and contaminate groundwater.*

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