



January 2009

## **WHY IS THERE A STORMWATER UTILITY CHARGE ON MY WATER BILL?**

In March of 2007, the Village of West Salem established a Stormwater Utility. The Village believes the management of stormwater and other surface water discharges affect Lake Neshonoc, the La Crosse River watershed, and other bodies of water within the Village. This is a matter that affects the health, safety and welfare of the Village, its citizens and businesses, and others in the surrounding area. Stormwater discharges within urban areas are contaminated in various degrees by nitrogen and phosphorous, heavy metals, suspended solids, bacteria, and solid waste materials. Failure to effectively manage stormwater also affects the sanitary sewer utility operations of the Village by, among other things, increasing the likelihood of infiltration and inflow into the sanitary sewer system.

Prior to the Stormwater Utility, all stormwater improvements and projects were funded solely by the general taxpayers of the Village. Storm drain replacement and curb and gutter installation costs, for example, have always been included and budgeted in with street reconstruction projects. Street project capital expenses, of course, are included in the total West Salem tax levy on all taxable property owners. Tax-exempt properties such as governmental offices, schools, hospitals, etc., however, do not pay taxes and, therefore, do not contribute to the costs of such improvements.

The new Stormwater Utility effectively spreads the costs of stormwater management over all benefiting property owners—not just the taxpayers. All property owners will now pay for municipal stormwater services, not just taxable property owners. The Utility is more equitable than funding services through general taxation. The fee will be based on stormwater contribution, not property value, and it is a more equitable match between the cost and the level of service provided. How equitable would a municipal water or sewer system be if it were based on property value?

The Stormwater Utility will be operated similar to our Sewer Utility and Water Utility. Revenues from the Stormwater Utility will be used to provide outreach and education, detection and elimination of illicit discharges, and construction of

water quality treatment systems. In 2008, a portion of Stormwater Utility revenues will be used to acquire a new Village street sweeper. In 2009, Stormwater Utility revenues will be used to replace curb and gutter, fund the street sweeper purchase, and maintenance of catch basins.

The first Stormwater Utility charges were on the quarterly utility bill issued on February 1, 2008. All single family homes are charged a fixed rate per quarter. Commercial, industrial, public authorities, schools, churches, and other establishments are charged based on the amount of the property's impervious surface when compared to a typical residential user. A credit system has been proposed for the Utility, which would give credit for certain stormwater improvements on a property. The proposed credit system will provide users with an opportunity to reduce stormwater inputs, and, thereby, reduce the requirements of the Village to treat property run off issues.

A copy of the Stormwater Utility Ordinance is available at the Village Administration Office and is also posted on the Village of West Salem website at [www.westsalemwi.com](http://www.westsalemwi.com). If you have any questions on the Utility, please feel free to contact us.

VILLAGE OF WEST SALEM, WISCONSIN

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