



What are we planning to do and why?

1. Lexington County and its municipalities have real, growing and unresolved stormwater problems.

- The County is currently responsible for drainage systems only on County-owned properties and County-maintained road rights-of-way. Currently, the County also maintains streams only on County-owned property in compliance with safety and water quality, which can leave unstable natural stream channels within the regional system. This includes approximately:
 - 36,000 inlets and junctions
 - 16,000 outlets
 - 3.75 million linear feet of pipe
 - 1 million linear feet of ditches
 - 614 miles of dirt roads
 - 178 detention ponds
 - 212 stream culverts
 - 1, 265 miles of streams
- Based on extrapolation of initial condition assessments of the County-maintained stormwater infrastructure and stormwater infrastructure associated with SCDOT roads but located outside of the SCDOT right-of-way, we estimate there are approximately:
 - 2,500 collapsed stormwater junctions and inlets
 - 7,400 obstructed or collapsed pipe outlets
 - 200 miles of pipes that are blocked or collapsed
 - 65 miles of road ditches obstructed or eroded
 - 150-200 miles of high-maintenance dirt roads needing drainage work
 - 178 detention ponds that are County responsibility
 - \$76 million in known smaller scale flooding problems
 - \$35 million in known larger scale flooding problems
- Not including the cost of the known flooding problems, this amounts to a backlog of stormwater issues estimated to be \$114 million and growing at a rate of about \$3 million annually.

2. Compared to many communities its size and its growing needs, Lexington County currently spends little on stormwater management:

- Public Works currently spends about \$ 2M annually on stormwater maintenance and minor capital projects, and Community Development currently spends about \$1M annually for all aspects of stormwater regulation and water quality permit implementation.
- This total stormwater expenditure, \$3 M annually, when compared to similar urban areas across the country, places Lexington County in the “incidental” category. That is, Lexington County manages stormwater incidentally to other activities such as roadway maintenance.
- Similar areas with a successful “moderate” stormwater program have an annual budget in the range of \$10-\$14 million. Because Lexington County is facing significant backlog issues of unmaintained infrastructure and because the program will include stormwater infrastructure associated with SCDOT roads (outside of SCDOT right-of-way), the program may be slightly higher than this range.

3. Lexington County can, over time and with proper investment, improve its stormwater problems, and bring its stormwater infrastructure to an acceptable condition.

- A plan has been developed to correct and catch-up to the large and growing backlog of problems over ten to twenty years and provide a better response time for drainage complaints.
- The plan includes providing ongoing County-staffed service on all County responsible areas (described above), prioritizing local flooding projects, and contracting for service for design and repair of backlog projects.
- The estimated cost of the recommended program will be between \$10-\$20 M annually.

4. Among the options for paying for this improved stormwater program, a stormwater user fee has been found to be the best choice.

- A large number of South Carolina county governments have made a similar decision (e.g. Greenville, Charleston, Sumter, Horry, Aiken, Berkeley, Dorchester, Lancaster, Georgetown, Beaufort), as well as many cities and over 3,000 local governments nation-wide.
- A stormwater user fee charges a property based on an estimate of the additional stormwater runoff it sends offsite from its property due to development. This estimate is tied to the amount of impervious area (rooftops, driveway, parking lots, etc.) on the parcel. Nearly every stormwater utility charges on this impervious area basis.
- The significant advantages of a user fee approach include the fact that it is:
 - Stable – the revenue is constant and grows as the County grows and new properties develop.
 - Adequate – a relatively small monthly fee (see below) can fund the complete stormwater program.
 - Flexible – fees can be configured in many ways, and credits for reducing a property’s impact on the stormwater system (e.g. through a detention pond or water quality device) will be offered to incentivize proper construction and maintenance of such structures.
 - Equitable – the concept of “the more you pave the more you pay” is intuitive to most residents, and far more equitable than paying for stormwater programs on the basis of property value.

Of importance is the sense equity of stormwater service on a County-wide basis while balancing the fact that all citizens deserve equal protection from human risk and property damage from flooding in the same way all deserve equal police protection, roadway access, or other county-wide services. By far the largest investment categories in the stormwater program are both the ongoing maintenance services and the significant backlog of small capital and maintenance needs. This table shows that a stormwater utility approach is remarkably equitable in terms of both the sources of the revenue and level of routine maintenance needs. Thus, each council district will receive, over time, a return on its investment in routine and remedial construction maintenance that is both

Council District	Estimated Population	Estimated Revenue per Fee Dollar	Estimated Maintenance Backlog
1	11%	15%	15%
2	11%	12%	19%
3	12%	11%	9%
4	11%	12%	9%
5	12%	9%	10%
6	12%	10%	12%
7	10%	8%	7%
8	11%	10%	9%
9	10%	14%	10%

equivalent in terms of service provision and in total investment. Each district has stormwater infrastructure problems and its stormwater fees will return to address them. For larger capital projects where health and property risks are far greater, every effort will be made to find funding sources (freed up tax revenue, Federal grants and cost share, local town share, etc.) to supplement the costs and a long term plan developed to balance solving the highest risk problems first, prioritizing any special funds availability from outside sources, and equity County-wide. A decision-making process involving a wider-range of individuals will be developed to assist in priority setting.

- 5. The stormwater fee is going to be charged to single-family residential (SFR) properties in three tiers and non-single family residential (NSFR) properties on the basis of the “typical” residential property.**
- The typical residential property in Lexington County has about 2,800 square feet of impervious area (SFIA). This is termed the “equivalent residential unit” or ERU. Each NSFR property will be charged a fee based on its total impervious area (IA) divided by 2,800 square feet.
 - Single family residential (SFR) properties will be charged on the basis of which of three tiers they fall into. The charges will be: less than 2,000 SFIA -> 0.5 ERU; 2,000 to 6,000 SFIR -> 1.0 ERU, and greater than 6,000 SFIA -> 2.0 ERUs.
 - Credits will be offered for those NSFR properties that have well-maintained detention ponds and water quality structures, as well as offered to educational institutions, organizations and businesses for providing qualifying stormwater education.
 - It is estimated that the monthly stormwater utility fee will be billed annually on the tax bill beginning in October 2021 for the 2021 year and will be in the range of \$4 - \$8 per month per ERU.