



THE MAIN DRAIN

STORMWATER NEWS YOU CAN USE

A Publication of the Portsmouth Department of Public Utilities/Public Works -
Division of Stormwater Management
Summer 2005

Storm Drain Testing...Why Do We Do It?

Every summer the City of Portsmouth conducts water quality testing of their stormwater drains. 75 sites are chosen within the City limits to be tested during "dry weather" conditions. On dry weather days when there has not been rain for 48 to 72 hours, two stormwater technicians inspect the selected drainage structures to determine if there is flowing water in them. The premise is that during dry weather, the drainage system should be dry within 2 to 3 days following a rainfall. If flowing water is found, it could be an indicator of an illegal discharge into the drainage system. It could also mean that groundwater is seeping into the drainage system or that a sanitary pipe has been mistakenly connected from a

house or building to a storm drainage pipe. Or...it could be that the pipe system is influenced by tidal waters.

If water is found to be flowing at a selected structure, the technicians test the water for various parameters in an attempt to determine the nature of the flow. When a water sample is first taken, the pH and salinity are tested. Other tests are then run to determine the level of chlorine, copper, phenol and detergents in the water. If any of the numbers exceed the accepted value for that particular parameter, then another sample is taken from the same water and sent to the Hampton Roads Sanitation District's (HRSD) laboratory for more rigorous testing.

If HRSD's testing shows any of the parameters exceed the allowable limits, the technicians attempt to track the flow back to its source. If it can be determined that an illegal discharge is occurring and the source of such discharge can be identified, then the City takes action to notify the offender to cease the discharging activity. The City also advises the offender that unauthorized discharges into the drainage system violate federal, state and local laws.



Stormwater technicians Jason Champion & Juan Angarita take a water sample from a stormwater drainage structure.

Depending on the nature of the violation, the discharger may be asked to clean up the receiving drainage structure or waterway. The City may also pursue legal action if necessary.

Should the tracking efforts reveal a cross connection with the sanitary sewer system, the City's Public Utilities Department oversees the disconnection of the sanitary line from the storm drainage line. Should groundwater be the issue, failing storm drain pipe joints are the probable cause and the Department of Public Works is notified so that repairs can be made to the pipe.

If you see someone discharging into the drainage system, please call 393-8691.

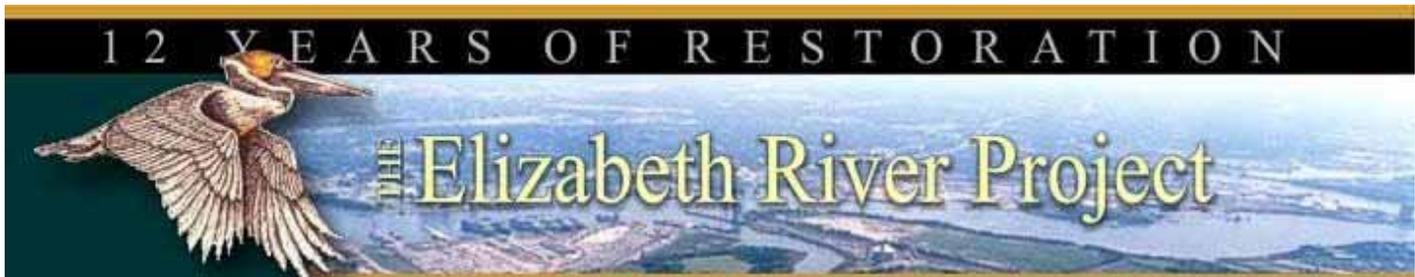


Stormwater technician Jason Champion analyzes a sample to determine the Phenol level.

STORMWATER TIP OF THE

"CAR WASHING 101"

Wash your car with low or no phosphate detergents while it's parked on the lawn. This allows the runoff water to be absorbed and filtered by the soil and it will NOT kill your grass. Otherwise, use a commercial carwash that recycles the runoff water.



Paradise Creek is Now One Step Closer!

Outstanding Volunteers Finalize a Great New Rain Garden

Generous sponsors, unbelievable volunteers and a creative Elizabeth River Project (ERP) staff met the challenges (and there were many) to accomplish this latest piece of the Paradise Creek restoration plan...a promising new rain garden to purify runoff into the creek from a major highway.



Thirty volunteers gathered with ERP board members, staff and guests of staff on December 18 to put in the final layer--a planting of native trees, shrubs, grasses and herbaceous species. "These volunteers were so good at what they were doing that we finished 2 hours ahead of schedule!" said Lyle Jackson, project manager. Staff member

Robin Dunbar added an enjoyable, hands-on educational dimension to the project so that volunteers could understand the long-term impact their work would have.

The \$90,000 project at old Cradock High School involved excavation of 300 cubic yards of soil (26 loads), and replacement with layers of sand, gravel and other material that will filter runoff from busy George Washington Highway before it reaches the Paradise Creek tributary to the Elizabeth River.

The project is the latest in a series of efforts to restore the environmental quality of Paradise Creek by 2007, as a model for improving the Chesapeake Bay--one creek at a time.

Major sponsors of the rain garden were the **Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation**, the **City of Portsmouth** and the **Portsmouth School Board**, and four civic groups that agreed to maintain the site weekly for a year! They are **S.N.E.H.A.** (Student National Environmental Health Association) of ODU, **Cradock Helping Hands**, the **Cradock Civic League**, and the **Cradock Lions Club**. "This is the most maintenance work ever committed for one of our plantings," said appreciative ERP staff member, Amanda Ackiss.

Congratulations and kudos to all the sponsors, volunteers and ERP staff!

If you'd like to take part in these exciting and worthwhile projects, contact Lyle Jackson at (757-399-7487). Just think...each year, you'll be able to see your efforts grow. How cool is that!

Stormwater Utility Fee

Effective July 1, 2005:

The stormwater fee was increased from \$4.00 to \$4.50 per Equivalent Residential Unit (ERU) per month (or from \$12.00 to \$13.50 per ERU per quarter).

Current Fee Structure

\$4.50 per ERU per month (or \$13.50 per ERU per quarter).

RESIDENTIAL properties are billed for only 1 ERU = \$4.50 per month, or \$13.50 per quarter, or \$54.00 per year.

NON-RESIDENTIAL properties are billed for their actual amount of impervious cover, converted to ERU's. (Note that 1 ERU = 1,877 SF of impervious cover.)

Example: The bill for a non-residential property with 10,000 ft² of impervious cover would be calculated as follows:

10,000 ft² divided by 1,877 ft² per ERU = 5.3 ERUs

5.3 ERUs x \$4.50/ERU = \$23.85 per month, \$71.55 per quarter, or \$286.20 per year.

How are bills sent?

SMU fees are billed as a line item on the real estate tax statement. Real estate tax statements are issued quarterly, therefore the SMU fee on each statement is for the **previous** three months. Tax-exempt properties must pay the SMU fee because it is a utility fee rather than a tax.

Stormwater Utility Fee - What it PAYS for. . .

- Ditch and Pipe Maintenance in the City Right-of-Way
- Construction of Flood Control and Water Quality Structures
- Water Quality Monitoring and Testing
- Lake and Pond Management
- Illicit Discharge Investigation
- Enforcement of City Code and Program Standards
- Public Education
- Federally Mandated Reporting Requirements

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The Main Drain is a publication that addresses local Stormwater and Erosion and Sediment Control issues concerning Portsmouth residents and employees and is produced by The City of Portsmouth, Department of Public Utilities / Public Works - Division of Stormwater Management.

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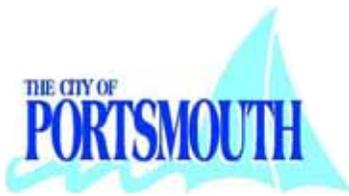
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Applications Being Accepted for Mini-Grants Program

The Hampton Roads Environmental Education Teams (HR WET, HR STORM and HR CLEAN) offer competitive mini-grants of up to \$250 each year to provide supplemental funding for environmentally-related projects. All school teachers (K-12) and youth leaders in the Hampton Roads region are eligible.

All projects should be specifically tied to litter prevention, waste minimization and recycling or beautification; or water conservation, stormwater pollution prevention and efficiency.

For a list of appropriate topic areas, more information and access to the easy-to-fill-out application, refer to the HR STORM website at: <http://www.hrstorm.org/MiniGrant.shtml>



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