

Rockdale County Stormwater Management



STORMWATER
MANAGEMENT

**Stormwater Utility
Credit Manual**

Table of Contents

Overview	3
Public Participation	4
County Approved Training Program	4
County School Education	5
Conservation Easements	7
Stream Buffers that exceed standard	8
Rain Barrels	8
Rain Gardens	8
Septic Tank Maintenance	9
Connection to Sanitary Sewer	9
NPDES Industrial Stormwater General Permit	9
Water Quality / Run-off Reduction	10
Channel Protection	10
Peak Flows	10
Stream Restoration/Streambank Stabilization	10

Overview

Rockdale County Stormwater Management (SWM) operates a small Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewer System (MS4) and Stormwater Management Program (SWMP) to collect and convey stormwater runoff for County owned streets and rights-of-way. The operation of the County's MS4 and SWMP must satisfy regulatory requirements imposed by the State of Georgia, the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Stormwater Permit, and the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District.

In order to address the need for funding the operation of the County's MS4 and SWMP, a Stormwater Utility was established to collect a user fee for individual properties within the County. The stormwater utility provides support for major stormwater activities such as:

- replacing stormwater pipes,
- maintaining infrastructure
- reducing flooding,
- fulfilling regulatory requirements, and
- reducing pollution carried by stormwater runoff to local waterways.

These fees are based on the amount of impervious area (hard surfaces, buildings, parking lots, concrete patio and swimming pools, decks, etc.) on each property. The fee is a flat rate of \$125.40 for residential customers and calculated as \$125.40 per square foot of impervious surface for commercial customers. The impervious area is calculated from aerial photography and permitting.

To encourage activities by both residential and commercial property owners that promote good watershed stewardship and reduce demands on the operation of the County's MS4, the County has established a Stormwater Utility Credit system to make appropriate reductions in individual property Utility Fees. These Utility Credits are available to homeowners, developers, builders, and other property owners in the County that submit credit applications and provide the required documentation. **Applications are due December 31 and credit will be applied to the next billing year.** Application can be found [here](#). The maximum available Credit that can be received is 40%. The following table includes a list of 16 available credit categories, the maximum percent reduction for each, and the number of years each is effective.

STORMWATER UTILITY CREDIT TABLE

Credit Category	Percent Credit Available		Term (Years)
	Residential	Non-Residential	
Public Participation	Up to 5%	Up to 5%	1
County Approved Training Program	Up to 5%	Up to 5%	1
County School Education		Up to 40%	1
Conservation Easements	Up to 10%	Up to 10%	10
Stream Buffers that exceeds 75' Standard	Up to 10%	Up to 10%	5
Rain Barrels/Cisterns	Up to 10%	Up to 10%	5
Residential Rain Gardens	Up to 10%	Up to 10%	5
Septic Tank Maintenance	30%	30%	Up to 5
Connection to Sanitary Sewer	30%	30%	1 only
NPDES Industrial Stormwater General Permit	10%	10%	5
Water Quality / Run-off Reduction	Up to 10%	Up to 10%	5
Channel Protection	Up to 10%	Up to 10%	5
Peak Flows	Up to 10%	Up to 10%	5
Stream Restoration/Streambank Stabilization	Up to 30%	Up to 30%	10

Stormwater Utility Credit Description

Watershed Stewardship Practices

Watershed Stewardship Credit will be given to property owners that make efforts to increase public awareness about watershed management or take action to protect the watershed. The goal is to encourage good watershed stewardship and pollution prevention on individual residential and commercial properties. Practices that SMW has identified as meeting these criteria, as well as the maximum percent credit that can be received, are shown on Credit Table. A description of each of these practices is contained in the following text. Property owners are allowed up to 40% credit under the Watershed Stewardship and Best Management Practices category or the 40% can be obtained from more than one practice. Please note that 40% is the maximum credit allowed for any property, no matter how many categories or practices are utilized. Property owners should understand that local codes (such as municipal and homeowner's associations' regulations), restrictions and/or ordinances may not allow the installation of some of these practices. Before proceeding with design or installation of any practice, property owners should check to make certain that their actions will not violate any local requirements.

Public Participation

Up to 5% Credit

The County believes that public participation and involvement is a key component to addressing water quality concerns. As such, the County will issue credit to customers who participate in certain events to promote water quality in the County's water ways and drainage systems. The following activities are eligible for the credit:

- Spending four (4) hours stenciling storm drains
- Spending four (4) hours participating in a stream clean-up

For residential customers to qualify for the credit, at least one member of the household must participate in a qualifying event. For commercial customers to qualify for the credit, at least 20% of the employees or members of the organization must participate in a qualifying event.

To participate in an upcoming event, email
Eduina Flint Eduina.Flint@RockdaleCountyGA.gov

County-Approved County Training Programs

Up to 5% Credit

Rockdale County Stormwater Management has established various water quality training programs that are generally available for free. Check the [Rockdale County Stormwater Management Stormwater Utility](#) Events and Workshops website for upcoming training. Attendance records taken at the training program will be used to validate the credit application. In order to receive credit for this practice for subsequent years, additional training will be required during the subsequent years and a new application submitted at that time.

- Residential Property - in order to qualify for a residential credit under this practice, the owner of the property or a resident must submit a certified application, verifying his/her participation. Attendance at the event will be taken and used to validate credit applications.
- Commercial Property - in order for commercial property owners to receive credit for this practice, 20% of employees or members associated with the facility against which the credit is to be applied, must participate in the training program.

County School Education

Up to 40% Credit

Rockdale County Stormwater Management is required by permit to educate the public about the effects of urbanization on stream water quality. Working with schools that teach stormwater management issues will help the County meet these goals. Using the credit process, the County may make an adjustment to the baseline fee for Group Day Care, Child Care Centers, preK-12th, and postsecondary educational institutions located in facilities that provide and/or promote educational activities that support and complement the County's stormwater goals.

Eligible Schools:

- **School** – A school as defined by Unannotated Georgia Code 20-2-690 recognizes the existence of public schools, and private schools as educational entities.
- **Postsecondary Institutions** – Postsecondary educational institutions are defined in the Official Annotated Code of Georgia Code Section 20-3-519.7.
- **Daycare** – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning defines and has jurisdiction for the licensing and registration for Group Day Care, and Child Care Centers.
- **Pre-K** – The Georgia Department of Early Care and Learning is authorized to administer the Lottery funded Georgia Pre-K program and defines its authority over these programs.

Viable credit applications will result in the reduction of the applicant's fee. The per-parcel adjusted fee may not total more than 40% and credit may only be applied to the property where the educational activities are taught. Eligible Schools will be considered for stormwater fee credit by teaching a watershed education curriculum or participating in an Watershed Education Stewardship Activity.

Watershed Education Curriculum

The Watershed Education Curriculum credit is a maximum of 20% and may be granted provided the following conditions are met:

- Schools will attach a list of appropriate Georgia Performance Standards, Academic Knowledge and Skills, or objectives for the lessons that were taught using watershed curriculum for each grade level.
- At least 20% of enrolled students at the eligible commercial school have completed at least one unit of study during the calendar year. Greater than 20% participation will be rewarded with a higher credit in accordance with the following:

50% of students = 20% credit

40% of students = 15% credit
30% of students = 10% credit
20% of students = 5% credit

Watershed Education Stewardship Activity

A maximum of 20% credit is granted for Watershed Education Stewardship. Participation in several activities in order to reach the 20% maximum is allowed. A participating student is defined as one who completes at least 4 hours of stewardship activities. Watershed Education Stewardship stormwater fee credits may be granted for participation in approved programs provided the following conditions are met:

- Watershed Education Stewardship activities may be integrated into the school curriculum. Suggested activities may include but are not limited to Earth Week celebrations, Environmental Science Nights, Water Festivals, Great American Clean-Up, Adopt-A-Stream, Rivers Alive, Georgia Wildlife Federation events, and/or Clean Water Week.
- Participation in activities related to watershed education approved by the County.
- The number of participants, name and description of the activity, and date of the activity is submitted in support of the application for Watershed Education Stewardship. This description of the activity, if signed by a principal, headmaster, dean, or school director, will be considered acceptable evidence that the activity was completed as stated.
- At least 5% of enrolled students at the eligible commercial school have completed at least 4 hours of stewardship activities during the calendar year. Greater than 5% participation will be rewarded with a higher credit in accordance with the following:

20% of students = 20% credit
15% of students = 15% credit
10% of students = 10% credit
5% of students = 5% credit

Conservation Easements

Up to 10% Credit

Land may be permanently protected for conservation by means of a conservation easement. A conservation easement is a binding legal contract between a landowner and a qualified entity (a local, state, or federal jurisdiction or a nonprofit organization recognized under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code) to ensure that lands are maintained in a conservation use state. The easement ensures protection of the conservation values of a property while the owner retains ownership and use. The easement must be properly recorded in the Rockdale County Stormwater Management deed room.

The conservation values or criteria for such protection fall into one of four categories, according to the Internal Revenue Service (Section 170(h)): A. provides outdoor recreation or educational use for the general public; B. protects a relatively natural habitat of fish, wildlife, plants or similar ecosystem; C. preserves open space including farmland and forest land that provides scenic enjoyment of the general public or is pursuant to a clearly delineated federal, state or local governmental conservation policy; and yields a significant public benefit; or D. preserves an historically important land area or a certified historic structure. The State of Georgia identifies key features for conservation emphasis:

1. Water quality protection for rivers, streams, and lakes;
2. Flood protection;
3. Wetlands protection;
4. Reduction of erosion through protection of steep slopes, areas with erodible soils, and stream banks;
5. Protection of riparian buffers and other areas that serve as natural habitat and corridors for native plant and animal species;
6. Protection of prime agricultural and forestry lands;
7. Protection of cultural sites, heritage corridors, and archaeological and historic resources;
8. Scenic protection;
9. Provision of recreation in the form of boating, hiking, camping, fishing, hunting, running, jogging, biking, walking, and similar outdoor activities; and
10. Connection of existing or planned areas contributing to the goals set out in this paragraph.

The credit calculation assumes that 900 square feet of land in the easement area will mitigate the effects of 100 square feet of impervious area on the property. Credits will be effective for a maximum of 10 years. A violation of the easement that compromises the conservation values of

the property may require reapplication for credits at the discretion of the Director. Extinguishment of the easement will result in termination of the stormwater credit. The application must include a copy of the recorded easement and a survey or tax map of the protected property. Once approved, credit for this action will remain in place until ownership of the property changes or for a maximum of 10 years.

Stream Buffers that Exceed 75' Standards

Up to 10% Credit

Stream buffers are naturally vegetated areas along the stream's banks. To receive any credit, the buffer width must exceed the local requirements of 50 feet undisturbed and 75 feet impervious surface setback. Only undisturbed, natural areas with no impervious surfaces in the area will be considered for preservation credit. Areas already required as a part of open space requirement may not be included in the preservation area. Areas used for preservation must be contiguous at all points along the existing stream buffer and the length of the preservation area as measured parallel to the stream must be equal to or greater than the width as measured perpendicular to the stream (e.g., only rectangular areas parallel to the stream for protection of the stream corridor will be considered; flag shapes are not acceptable). The maximum width of the buffer from the stream bank is 300'. The 25 feet of impervious setback (transition zone) between the undisturbed buffer and unprotected area must be maintained. The maximum credit allowed is 10% and is based on the amount of area placed in the buffer. It assumes that each 900 square feet of buffer will mitigate the effects of 100 square feet of impervious area.

Rain Barrels

Up to 10% Credit

Rain Barrels and Cisterns are containers or systems that collect rainwater and are typically connected to roof downspouts. They reduce runoff or enhance water quality by providing opportunity for retention and stilling of rainwater which promotes the settling of pollutants. In addition, they allow water to be held for future use, generally in dry times, where the water is then typically distributed onto pervious surfaces where it can infiltrate into the ground. In recognition of these benefits, a full credit of 10% is available if the entire impervious area of a parcel is served by a properly sized system. Partial credit is offered based on the percentage of the impervious area that is served by facilities that properly collect, retain, and store runoff for treatment.

Residential Rain Gardens/Bioretenion Facilities

Up to 10% Credit

Residential property owners can receive credit by installing rain gardens/bioretenion facilities, which are depressions in the landscape, planted with native vegetation that collect stormwater runoff and allow it to slowly soak into the ground. Native vegetation consists of plants that are adapted to, and occur naturally, in an area (versus non-native vegetation which are often invasive and affect habitat and food supply for native animal and fish species). The maximum credit of 10% is for facilities that collect and treat stormwater runoff from all the impervious surfaces on

the property. Partial credit is offered based on the percentage of the impervious area that is served by facilities.

Septic Tank Maintenance

Up to 30% Credit

Residential property owners with septic systems can be awarded a credit by having their septic tanks pumped out on a regular basis every 5 years as recommended by [Rockdale County Environmental Health](#). By submitting documentation in the form of a receipt from a licensed hauler of septic wastes, homeowners would be eligible for a 30% credit for the five years after the septic tank was pumped out. Property owners may apply for this credit at the end of every five-year term.

Connection to Sanitary Sewers

30% Credit

Property owners who utilize on-site wastewater disposal systems (typically a septic tank and lateral fields) will qualify for a 30% credit the year after they connect to the sanitary sewer and abandon their on-site systems. Property owners should submit documentation that the septic tank has been decommissioned by having a plumber remove the solids from the tank and then filling it with sand to ensure that no liquids continue to leach into the soil. The 30% credit will be effective for the year after the connection is made.

NPDES Industrial Stormwater General Permit Compliance

Up to 10% credit

By complying with NPDES Industrial Stormwater General Permit requirements for industrial facilities, industrial customers are helping the County address potential water quality issues onsite before they are discharged into the public drainage system and/or Waters of the State. Therefore, these customers are eligible for a Stormwater Utility credit. If the industrial customer has properly secured coverage under the NPDES Industrial Stormwater General Permit and is in compliance with all applicable requirements (i.e. development and implementation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWP3)), a credit application may be filed with the County.

Best Management Practices

Water Quality Credit / Runoff Reduction

Up to 10% Credit

The Water Quality Credit may be awarded to properties that capture the majority of pollutants thereby providing Runoff Reduction or Water Quality Treatment in accordance with the *Rockdale County Stormwater Management's Manual*.

Channel Protection

Up to 10% Credit

The County has adopted the standards for channel protection as outlined in the [Georgia Stormwater Management Manual](#). The County will offer a credit for those customers who can demonstrate that the property on which the Stormwater Utility account resides has properly designed, constructed and maintained extended detention facilities that can capture the volume of runoff generated by a 1-year, 24-hour SCS rainfall event for the entire property and release this volume over 24 hours as outlined in the GSMM.

Peak Flow Credit

Up to 10% Credit

The Peak Flow Credit is the most widely used method of credit by a majority of stormwater programs throughout the United States. The principle is to delay the highest flow from impacting the drainage system, thereby protecting property. This is accomplished through the construction of small impoundments or dry ponds that fill up during rainstorms, providing control of the post-development peak discharge rate to the pre-development rate for the 1-year through 100-year, 24-hour return frequency storm events which includes criteria for Overbank and Extreme Flood Controls.

Stream Restoration/Streambank Stabilization

Up to 30% Credit

Stream restoration is the re-designing and associated construction of a stream section to make it more stable and to re-establish the stream's hydraulics and habitat conditions. Streambank stabilization is the repair of an unstable streambank utilizing bioengineering practices. Both of these practices need to be prepared by a design professional registered in the State of Georgia, as appropriate. Approval and permits to construct any improvements must be obtained from SMW, the US Army Corps of Engineers, and the Georgia Department of Natural Resources before any actual construction takes place.

Rockdale County Stormwater Management recognizes that there are different types of stream restoration projects and that they have different hydraulic and environmental benefits. Four Levels of Restoration (LOR) have been established based on established stream restoration/stabilization practices.