

The Stormwater Utility Fee “Rain Tax”

The “Rain Tax” has been a major topic of conversation at many of the Candidate Forums I have attended. The first thing I would like to clarify is that this fee is not a tax on rain, but a Stormwater Utility Fee. The sole purpose of the Stormwater Utility Fee is the funding of the repair and renovation of the old and ineffective stormwater devices installed in our communities. These updates will prevent silt and pollution from running into our creeks, streams and eventually the Chesapeake Bay.

Why did this bill only affect nine counties and Baltimore City?

The Federal Government designates Counties as “Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems” short name MS4, based on the size of a county or jurisdiction: a “Large MS4” jurisdiction has more than 250,000 people; a medium MS4 county has more than 100,000 people. Both large and medium MS4s are considered “point sources” by the Clean Water Act; this means they use discrete conveyances such as pipes or man-made ditches to discharge directly to surface waters, streams, creeks and ultimately The Bay. These Counties are required to obtain a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permits (NPDES) in order to discharge into the waterways.

The Clean Water Act requires these large and medium jurisdictions to remediate their stormwater systems by the year 2025. Most Maryland counties did not have the money in their general funds to complete this work by the deadline.

The Maryland Association of Counties (MACO) came to the General Assembly and requested legislation enabling affected jurisdictions to fund the needed repairs. MACO also requested that the Counties be given control over how the fee would be collected and they would be allowed to set the fee based on the work that was needed in each County. Anne Arundel County agreed that they needed the legislation and requested our support. The legislation required each county to set up a separate fund to collect and disburse the funds only for stormwater remediation.

What is the cost for Anne Arundel County?

Anne Arundel County was ahead of many jurisdictions; a survey had already been completed determining the scope of the needed projects and the estimated cost to complete the remediation. The conclusion - over a billion dollars of stormwater remediation work to complete by the year 2025.

When I left the County Council in 2006, there was a backlog of \$450 million, but in less than 8 years that work grew to over one billion dollars. The backlog was growing with

no funds available to complete the remediation in a county with over 500 miles of shoreline along the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries.

Why was the fee for residential, single family, properties set at \$85.00 per year?

The County Council, in a bi-partisan vote, passed the Watershed Protection and Restoration Program. Information on the program can be found by [clicking here](#). The County has plans to complete all the stormwater remediation over the next five years. The fee will generate approximately \$18 million dollars per year; these funds will be used to pay the debt service on the billion dollars of work to be completed. The fee is being instituted on a gradual basis, first at 60%, then 80% and by 2015, 100%. [Click here](#) for the County fee schedule.

In District 32 alone, there are 627 projects planned costing \$282,319,419.00. The Northern part of Anne Arundel County has very old stormwater devices, built before much was known about how to control stormwater run-off. Some of the problems are very obvious, like the flooding at Dorsey Road and Route 648, the flooding on Furnace Branch Road, or Furnace Branch and Crain Highway. The problem is not only the flooding and silt run-off, the pollutants washing from the roadways are running untreated, directly into the creeks and ultimately The Bay.

What is the Economic Benefit of the Stormwater remediation work?

This work will require hundreds of new jobs, from surveyors, engineers, and construction crews. Also a healthy Chesapeake Bay is important to the Maryland Economy. The watermen need a healthy bay for fishing, crabbing and oysters. The tourism economy and boating industry depend on a clean and healthy bay and the citizens want clean waterways for swimming and boating. The Chesapeake Bay is critical to the Maryland and Anne Arundel County economy.

Also, Early Voting begins Thursday, October 23, 2014 through Thursday, October 30, 2014 from 10 am until 8 pm. at the Odenton Regional Library (formerly West County Area Library), the Glen Burnie Regional Library and the Severna Park Community Library.

It is truly an honor and privilege to represent you in the Maryland House of Delegates and I would appreciate your vote in the General Election. I can be reached at: pam@pambeidle.com or [410-766-3091](tel:410-766-3091).

Thank you for your consideration for the General Election, November 4, 2014.