

CASE STUDY #1: CITY OF ISSAQUAH

BACKGROUND

Overview of Participant Agency

Demographics

The City of Issaquah is located in King County, east of Renton and Bellevue. Portions of the City's 9 square miles border Lake Sammamish. The population of Issaquah is 11,212. The median household income is \$57,892.

Agency Stormwater Program

Program Scope

The City's stormwater program provides comprehensive services including management of stormwater quantity (local flooding), stormwater quality, and habitat restoration. The City is subject to National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II permitting requirements. The City stormwater utility generates \$4.1 million in annual rate revenue to pay for these services.

Rate Approach

The City of Issaquah utilizes the equivalent service unit (ESU) rate approach. Single family residences are charged a uniform rate, based on the average amount of impervious surface area for single family residences in Issaquah. The charge basis for all other customer types is actual measured impervious surface area by parcel, expressed as a number of ESUs. One ESU is equal to 2,000 square feet of impervious surface area. The rate per ESU for developed property is \$14.08 per month.

Local Program History / Background with WSDOT

State Highways in Jurisdiction

Portions of Interstate 90 (5.46 miles) and State Route 900 (2 miles) lie within Issaquah city limits. These Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) facilities are subject to NPDES requirements under the Department's permit. Interstate 90 and only a small piece of SR 900 are limited access highways, potentially subject to City stormwater rates as provided for in RCW 90.03.525.

Stormwater Services Provided

The City reports that it manages stormwater runoff from both SR 900 and, in spots, I-90. The State is not generally impacted by runoff from the City, although some conveyance may be provided across State right-of-way.

LOCAL RELATIONSHIP WITH WSDOT

Local Costs of State Highways

Managing Runoff from State Highways

The City reports that its cost of managing runoff from State highways is unknown at this time. The City last charged the State in 2003, identifying a total of \$11,280 in expenditures associated with activities and projects that directly reduced State highway runoff impacts associated with the limited access portion of I-90. The City identified similar expenditures of \$73,230 in 2002.

Charging the State for Its Impacts

City staff estimates that it would take several days to prepare the documentation required to support charging the State for its highway impacts again.

General Challenges of Working with WSDOT

Satisfaction with Relationship

The City reports that it has been somewhat dissatisfied with its relationship with WSDOT. Their observation is that WSDOT is very careful with fuel tax revenue, generally favoring capital expenditures over maintenance. Maintenance spending has seemed to be driven by lawsuits and other priorities. In one example, it was noted that the maintenance of a trash rack at Lewis Creek has been inconsistent, leading to destructive surges after WSDOT crews unplug it.

The City reports that it no longer charges the State for highway impacts because it does not choose to charge its own streets, a requirement of RCW 90.03.525. Their further observation is that the application process is burdensome.

Potential Improvements

State / Local Coordination on Facilities Operations and Maintenance

Regarding State and local coordination on facilities operations and maintenance, City staff suggested the following potential improvements:

- ◆ Allow local access into State right-of-way for maintenance as needed;
- ◆ Improve WSDOT responsiveness to local maintenance needs; and
- ◆ Streamline / improve process that now holds up WSDOT projects.

Ability of Local Jurisdictions to Charge WSDOT for Its Stormwater Impacts

Regarding charging WSDOT for its stormwater impacts, City staff suggested the following potential improvements:

- ◆ Develop a standard rate methodology for charging the State, provided that there be no charge for highways that do not discharge to local systems;
- ◆ Develop a standard “application” approach for charging the State;
- ◆ Eliminate the requirement that cities charge their own streets in order to charge State highways;

- ◆ Eliminate the requirement for documenting a specific link between WSDOT payments and activities / facilities. At a minimum, provide for straightforward reporting on how WSDOT money is expended;
- ◆ Consider allowing municipalities to charge for non limited access highways. Currently, cities own the responsibility with limited ways to recover the cost; and
- ◆ Increase outreach to inform jurisdictions of their ability to recover costs from WSDOT.

The project team has agreed to research and write up to seven (7) case studies from a representative cross-section of Washington municipalities that:

1. Charge WSDOT for stormwater under RCW 90.03.525, or
2. Do not charge WSDOT for stormwater fees under RCW 90.03.525 but are or could be eligible to do so.

Case study selections are to include a mix of Phase 1 municipalities, representatives of both small and medium Phase 2 municipalities from Eastern Washington, and representatives of both small and medium Phase 2 municipalities from Western Washington.

The case studies are to address at least the following issues:

- ◆ The costs municipalities incur to manage stormwater runoff from state highways.
- ◆ The costs that municipalities incur in order to impose stormwater fees upon WSDOT.
- ◆ General challenges experienced by municipalities in imposing stormwater fees.
- ◆ Barriers and challenges to municipalities' imposing stormwater fees on WSDOT.
- ◆ The municipalities' level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction pertaining to existing state law and the WSDOT application process to recover stormwater costs.
- ◆ Specific examples of potential improvements where WSDOT and municipalities may find efficiencies in the cost and management of stormwater facilities.