



Gwinnett County Government
75 Langley Drive
Lawrenceville, GA 30045

NEWS RELEASE

Charles E. Bannister, Chairman

Heather Welch
Media Relations and Publications Manager
Phone: 770.822.7035
Fax: 770.822.7189

Story contact: Frank Stephens, Director
Department of Public Utilities
678.376.7133

STORMWATER UTILITY FOR GWINNETT IN '06

(Lawrenceville, Ga., Oct. 21, 2005) – Creating a stormwater utility for Gwinnett County is on the minds of the Board of Commissioners these days. “Water quality and stormwater runoff have become expensive issues affecting public service, public health and the environment. Federal and state regulation of stormwater are becoming increasingly restrictive.” said Commission Chairman Charles Bannister. “To meet these challenges, we have to upgrade our stormwater program to become a full-fledged partner in the Public Utilities department and increase the service level for the public.” County Administrator Jock Connell added, “Implementing a stormwater utility will not be easy, but we have to get started.”

Under the proposed plan, the County would charge stormwater service fees based on the square footage of impervious surface on each parcel of property. The Georgia Supreme Court has said that the amount of impervious surface is the most important factor influencing the cost of stormwater management services. The fee would be billed in the summer of 2006 along with streetlights and other charges that are listed on the property tax bill. A home with 3,517 square feet of impervious surface (building under roof, driveway, etc.) would pay \$27.08 the first year. The bill for 2007 would be \$49.59 and for 2008 \$70.69. For the years 2009 through 2011, the fee would be \$86.52. Two-thirds of Gwinnett’s homes have less than 3,517 square feet.

Each parcel with more than 100 square feet of impervious area would receive a bill in 2006. According to Public Utilities Director Frank Stephens, during 2006 the DPU will organize a work group representing the citizens, businesses, developers, cities, environmental groups and others that are interested to develop a credits manual. Credits would partially offset the service fee for parcels that contain eligible best management practices, known as BMPs. “A BMP measurably reduces the burden on the public stormwater drainage system,” said Stephens. The plan would implement a retroactive credits program in 2007.

The County stormwater system has a huge backlog of needed repairs. Although the County banned use of galvanized steel pipe in 2001, hundreds of miles of this material that were installed before then have been deteriorating and are failing. Also, the state requires watershed protection for both new and older developments, enforced through expensive conditions on discharge permits for reclaimed water. The stormwater utility could generate up to \$34 million annually to fix these problems.

“We will offer cities the opportunity to join the proposed stormwater utility if they choose,” said Bannister. “We believe it makes economic sense to have one entity providing the same level of service throughout the county.” The County would collect the fees under an intergovernmental agreement, a common practice under Georgia law that allows governments to cooperate in providing services.

Bannister said, “Like a flu shot, it’s painful at first but the long-term benefit is worth it. This is an equitable method of generating needed funds to accomplish the necessary work. It will be best in the long run for all Gwinnett residents and property owners.”

###