

Frequently Asked Questions

What is changing?

Water Quality Improvements

Manage more water

The Water Quality Volume increased from 1 inch to 1.5 inches. This will help reduce combined sewer overflows and local flooding, with minimal impact to site design. **Applies to:** All development sites.

Slow water entering sewers

The peak release rate decreased from 0.24 to 0.05 cubic feet per second per acre of non-infiltrating impervious area. This will make the rate at which water leaves a site and enters the sewer system equal to the rate at which treatment plants can clean the water. **Applies to:** Detention projects in the combined sewer, about 23% of projects each year.

Clean water entering sewers

Philadelphia Water requires 100% of surface runoff that can't infiltrate the ground to go through a pollutant reducing practice. This requirement will remove pollution from the dirtiest stormwater on a property. **Applies to:** Detention projects in the combined sewer, about 23% of projects each year.

Business Friendly Improvements

Faster project approvals

Philadelphia Water is introducing "Surface Green Review," a new expedited review process for sites that use surface practices to manage stormwater.

Simpler application resources

Simplified technical worksheets and Plan Review application resources will improve the quality of submissions and reduce review times. By using these resources, designers will know before submitting that their projects meet regulations.

Accessible information

The new digital Stormwater Management Guidance Manual and Plan Review website provide better information in a user-friendly format.

What is not changing?

The 15,000 square foot threshold

Elsewhere in Pennsylvania, stormwater development regulations apply to projects as small as 5,000 square feet. Before adopting this change, Philadelphia Water wanted to ensure that developers of small parcels have effective options for meeting this requirement. The threshold remained at 15,000 square feet.

Stormwater billing credits

Projects that meet updated development regulations will be eligible for stormwater billing credits. Projects submitted under previous regulations will also remain eligible.

Updated Stormwater Regulations & Guidance Manual

On July 1, 2015, Philadelphia Water updated its Stormwater Regulations, Stormwater Management Guidance Manual, and Stormwater Plan Review Website to better align with State and Federal regulations for managing stormwater. The changes will improve the health of Philadelphia's rivers, minimize local flooding, and encourage the use of green infrastructure throughout the city.

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When are the regulations effective?

The new regulations are effective July 1, 2015. Projects that submit a complete Existing Resources and Site Analysis (ERSA) application prior to July 1 will be eligible to meet the current regulations. Projects submitting ERSA applications on July 1 or later will be required to meet the updated regulations.

How has the development community been involved?

Development Services Committee - To ensure the program remains business friendly, Philadelphia Water has met regularly with the Development Services Committee, a special committee of property owners, engineers and developers convened in 2012 to provide input on the Stormwater Plan Review program and discuss potential changes that impact development in the City.

Guidance Manual Interviews - Philadelphia Water sought feedback about the Stormwater Management Guidance Manual by conducting interviews with frequent users of the manual in the summer of 2014.

Focus Groups - Four development community focus groups with over 90 participants solicited feedback about technical and procedural changes and provided a preview of the new Plan Review Website & Guidance Manual.

Why are we implementing these changes in July 2015?

New Stormwater Regulations were last implemented in 2006. Since then, Philadelphia Water negotiated new permits with Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection. In 2011, Philadelphia Water and the State agreed to *Green City, Clean Waters*, a 25-year plan for managing combined sewer overflows. In addition, we submitted several Act 167 Watershed Management plans to the State for different watersheds in the city. The changes to the Stormwater Regulations are necessary to meet the goals outlined in *Green City, Clean Waters* and Philadelphia's other regulatory obligations.

This is the first significant change to the Regulations and Guidance Manual since 2008 and represents an opportunity to improve our Plan Review process based on several years of feedback from the development community.

How will these changes impact private development?

The change in the Water Quality Volume requirement from 1 inch to 1.5 inches will apply to all development projects and will typically be met by making stormwater management systems slightly deeper. We anticipate this requirement will have minimal impact on the layout of a development site and cost to the developer.

Lowering the release rate to 0.05 cfs/acre and requiring 100% of surface runoff to go through a pollutant reducing practice will only apply to projects in the combined sewer area that cannot infiltrate. This represents approximately 23% of the regulated projects each year. The change in release rate will require the installation of slightly larger subsurface detention systems as well as more constricting outlet controls. Requiring 100% of surface runoff to drain through a pollutant reducing practice will result in more projects using green stormwater infrastructure and filters. Runoff from rooftops will not require filtration and will only have to meet the release rate requirement; this should assist constrained projects in dense portions of the city.

Generally speaking, systems designed under the new requirements will need more frequent maintenance to perform correctly. Engineers are likely to turn to design tools like constant head orifices, sand and media filters, and proprietary products more than in the past.