

Frequently Asked Questions About Dane County's Stormwater Management Ordinance

What will ordinary citizens experience as a result of the stormwater management ordinance?

Cleaner lakes.

Stormwater that runs off sites that are undergoing construction - whether it's a farmer building a new barn, a construction company adding on to a parking lot or a developer building a new shopping mall - picks up sediments, oil, grease and other pollutants as it travels across surfaces and carries those pollutants directly to our lakes and streams. Runoff can still carry pollutants from these sites long after active construction has ended, too.

The stormwater management ordinance, which takes effect on August 22, 2002 and compliments Dane County's existing construction site erosion standards, will help reduce the quantity and improve the quality of water running off of those sites. That should help improve the overall health of our lakes, meaning fewer days of algae blooms and less sediment washing into our lakes.

In addition, the stormwater management ordinance contains standards related to the temperature of water that runs off of developed sites, meaning that in areas where there are streams designated by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) as "coldwater communities" the fish and aquatic life in those streams will be protected.

What is unique about Dane County's stormwater management ordinance?

Dane County is the only county in Wisconsin to have a stormwater management ordinance that is in effect county-wide.

Dane County's ordinance is also unique in that it set standards related to the temperature of the water running off of sites in an effort to reduce thermal pollution, which can damage sensitive aquatic ecosystems.

Finally, Dane County's ordinance is the product of a collaborative process involving hundreds of hours of public comment and input as well as cooperation on the part of developers, contractors, technical experts, builders, the agricultural community, environmentalists and local officials. The diversity of the stakeholders who willingly came to the table to craft and refine the ordinance helped ensure the passage of the ordinance, which was adopted 38-1 by the Dane County Board.



How does the new ordinance work?

Anyone who is building on a site and creating 20,000 square feet (about one-half acre) or more of impervious surface - a surface that water runs off of rather than soaks in to such as a parking lot, a barn roof, etc.- must submit a plan to the appropriate local or county officials which details the practices the landowner or developer plans to put in place to meet the standards in the ordinance. The plan the developer submits will be reviewed by local or County staff for compliance with standards.

The ordinance sets those standards but does not mandate how the standards can be met, in recognition of the unique characteristics of every site and each project. The fact that developers can choose the practices that work best on a particular site should also help keep costs down for the developer.

The County Board adopted the ordinance in August of 2001. What's been happening in the year since then?

The ordinance contained a year-long phase-in process in order to enable county staff, developers, landowners, farmers, engineers and others affected by the new standards time to prepare for their successful implementation. During those 12 months, the County has conducted numerous training sessions, informational meetings and provided technical and other expertise to those preparing to meet the new standards. In addition, the County has prepared and distributed the "Dane County Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Manual" which contains information on a variety of practices developers might consider as well as information on the ordinance itself.

Local governments, who can choose to administer the standards themselves or have the County do it, have been working with their own staffs and elected officials to adopt the ordinance standards as part of their own, local codes.

How can the public or landowners get information about the Ordinance?

The County has worked hard to ensure there is ample, readable and straightforward information about the new ordinance available. Here are two websites which contain a wealth of information:

<http://www.co.dane.wi.us/commissions/lakes/stormwater.htm>

This link is to the Erosion Control and Stormwater page, where the following resources (and more!) are available for downloading and printing:

- Ch.14, Dane County Code of Ordinances
- Public Information documents: Ordinance Summary, Ordinance Chronology, Ordinance and Local Governments
- Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Manual
- Erosion Control and Stormwater Management Application Checklist
- Erosion Control Plan - Simplified Checklist

http://www.co.dane.wi.us/land_conservation/homebnd.htm

Look under "Data and Technology" for links to:

- Thermally Sensitive Area Locator - for identifying parcels subject to s.14.51(2)(f)
- Thermal Model (Temperature Urban Runoff Model) - a model approved by the County Conservationist for estimating post-development runoff temperature increase (s.14.51(2)(g))
- Universal Soil Loss Equation (USLE) Spreadsheet - for estimating soil loss for sheet and rill erosion from construction sites

For More Information, Contact

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