BLOG

Stormwater Utility Subcommittee Assesses Progress of NJDEP-funded Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study Initiatives

In April, the Stormwater Utility Subcommittee reviewed summaries of twelve stormwater utility (dedicated user fee funding) feasibility studies funded by the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) through their Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study Technical Assistance Program. Three of these projects resulted in the adoption of an active stormwater utility (Maplewood, New Brunswick, and Raritan Township in Hunterdon County). Dan Van Abs, a retired Rutgers University professor, highlighted key aspects of the reports as they explore fee-based stormwater management solutions. The studies covered a wide range of geographic areas, from mostly rural to fully urbanized. A key point is that the municipalities developed an impervious area based user fee structure and investigated diverse ways to use stormwater fees, from funding only capital projects to funding all municipal stormwater operations.

Industry expert Elizabeth Treadway, Senior Vice President at WSP USA, emphasized that building stormwater utilities is hard work requiring patience, political will, and community consensus. She noted that user fee program policy development is rarely straightforward, often complicated by changes in local government leadership and competing priorities.

In addition, developing and implementing a stormwater utility requires consistent and pragmatic levels of stakeholder engagement with diverse stakeholders in the community.

Apprehension regarding the creation of fee-based stormwater utilities appears to be diminishing in New Jersey. Although visible progress among municipalities in evaluating the feasibility of developing and launching a stormwater utility remains limited, ongoing efforts are generating momentum. Five NJ municipalities have already established stormwater utilities and several are in the midst of the feasibility study process. Updated Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) and Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) permit requirements are prompting towns to proactively address stormwater challenges. The committee intends to engage with municipalities at the forefront of these efforts and provide guidance to others considering similar initiatives. If your community is considering a stormwater utility, we encourage you to check the Stormwater Utility Resource Center.

The studies and discussions are important for raising awareness, understanding the complexities of stormwater management, and appreciating the breadth of the issues. Jersey Water Works members are eager to share insights and information. To connect, email us at info@jerseywaterworks.org.

Active 2026 committee members include:

Dana Patterson Grear from Princeton Hydro, Committee Co-Chair
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Bill Schultz, Raritan Riverkeeper
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Jessika Sherman, New Jersey Future
Paula Figueroa-Vega, Jersey Water Works

JWW Contact: ***info@jerseywaterworks.org***

NJDEP Stormwater Utility emailbox: ***SWUtility@DEP.NJ.Gov***