

# Stormwater Charge: What You Should Expect



San Francisco  
Water Power Sewer  
Services of the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission

[sfpub.org/2023Rates](https://sfpub.org/2023Rates)

## Stormwater Charge on Your Bill

San Francisco's combined sewer system is an important part of our city's effort to protect public health and coastal water quality.

Our combined sewer system collects and treats both wastewater (from toilets, showers, and sinks), and stormwater (from rain that flows off of rooftops, parking lots, and driveways) before releasing clean water to the Pacific Ocean or San Francisco Bay.

Your sewer bill currently combines the cost to collect and treat wastewater that comes out of buildings and stormwater runoff from properties. As one part of the new proposed water and sewer rates designed to take effect in July 2023, the SFPUC plans to change the way the sewer portion of your monthly bill is calculated to better align our rates with what it costs to serve different customers.

This proposed change is not a new fee. The SFPUC would still collect the same amount of money from our customers. The new methodology would more equitably distribute the costs of collecting and treating stormwater based on the amounts being sent into our sewer system. This proposal ensures each customer pays their fair share for the cost of treating stormwater runoff. This updated methodology is standard practice among many utilities nationwide.

This new structure will split the sewer portion of your bill into two parts so that each individual customer pays based on what they send into our system – whether it's wastewater from inside their building or stormwater running off their property:

- 1. A wastewater charge** – based on the estimated volume of wastewater discharged into the system.
- 2. A stormwater charge** – based on property size and the area of paved or impermeable surfaces that are unable to absorb excess rain.

## What Does This Mean for You?

**The new proposed rate structure is a reallocation of an existing charge and not a new fee.** If approved, the stormwater charge would increase sewer bills for some customers and decrease them for others, depending on the size and characteristics of a property. The amount of permeable or impermeable surface on each property is a key factor: properties with a large area of impermeable surface are more likely to see an increase in their sewer bill. Permeable surfaces, like landscaping and lawns, can absorb some stormwater. Impermeable surfaces, like concrete and roofs, direct more stormwater to—and impose more costs on—the sewer system.

**The stormwater charge will be phased in over a period seven years** to minimize the immediate impact on our customers' bills. For this example, let's assume a stormwater charge is calculated at \$70 per month. Out of that, the customer would pay \$10 per month in the first year, \$20 per month in the second year, and so on until the seventh year, when they would pay \$70 per month.



Residential rainwater harvesting system.



Before



After

Lafayette Elementary School before (top) and after (right) upgrades through the SFPUC's Green Infrastructure Grant.

## We Offer Resources to Help You Reduce Your Stormwater Charge

As part of this new rate package, the SFPUC is also proposing a stormwater credit available to customers that capture stormwater on their property using green infrastructure to help improve the performance of the sewer system. If adopted, customers that have green infrastructure on their property will be eligible to apply for a credit on their stormwater charge starting July 1, 2023.

Large public and private properties may be eligible for the **SFPUC's Green Infrastructure Grant Program**. The program funds the design and construction of green stormwater infrastructure (like rain gardens, permeable pavement, and rainwater harvesting systems), to help reduce stormwater runoff and lower the stormwater portion of your bill. Projects can receive grants of up to \$2 million. As increasingly intense storms threaten to overwhelm our sewer system, green infrastructure helps alleviate the burden while greening neighborhoods and delivering public benefits that enhance the quality of life for all SFPUC rate payers.

Since the launch of the Green Infrastructure Grant Program in February 2019, the SFPUC has provided nearly \$18 million in grants to 17 projects, including for public schools, medical facilities, and others. We are committed to providing these grants as a way to build green infrastructure to improve our sewer system and help customers lower their bills.

San Francisco homeowners may also be eligible for a pilot program to receive grant funding to install stormwater

management features, such as rain gardens, permeable pavement, and cisterns.

Visit [sfpub.org/programs/grants](https://sfpub.org/programs/grants) to learn more.

Visit [sfpub.org/2023Rates](https://sfpub.org/2023Rates) for more information on the proposed water and wastewater rates, including the change around stormwater, as well as stormwater credits, programs, rebates, and incentives to help you save on your water and wastewater bills. For questions, reach out to us at [ratesinfo@sfpuc.org](mailto:ratesinfo@sfpuc.org) or (415) 554-3289.

Si necesita ayuda en español llame al (415) 554-3289.

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