

# MONTGOMERY COUNTY

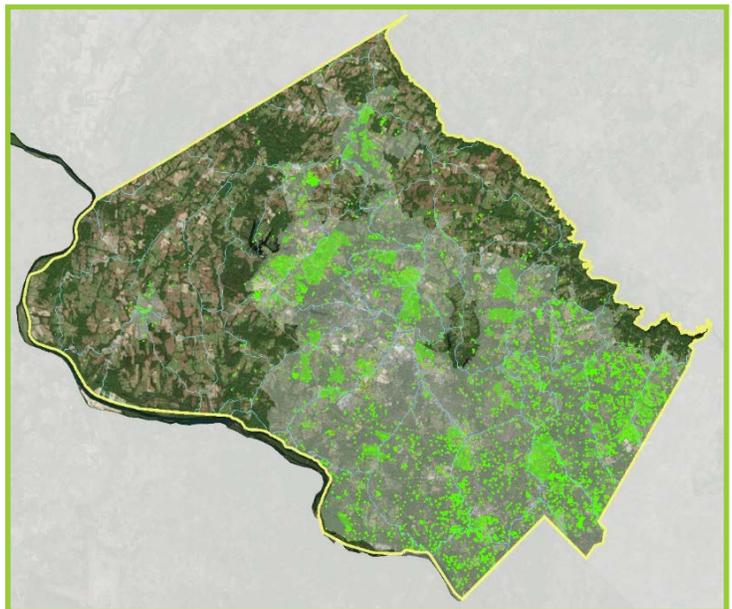
## Key Facts

|  |                     |                         |
|--|---------------------|-------------------------|
| <b>Population</b> <sup>1</sup>                                   | 1,030,447           | (1 <sup>st</sup> of 10) |
| <b>Impervious Acreage</b> <sup>2</sup>                           | 18,884              | (4 <sup>th</sup> of 10) |
| <b>Current Permit</b>  |                     |                         |
| Date of Issuance/Expiration                                      | Feb 2010 / Feb 2015 | (continued)             |
| Impervious Acreage Restoration Goal                              | 3,777 acres         |                         |
| <b>Spending</b>  |                     |                         |
| Projected Annual Average <sup>3</sup>                            | \$61.3 million      |                         |
| Spending as a Percentage of County Budget <sup>4</sup>           | 1.0%                | (7 <sup>th</sup> of 10) |
| Spending as a Percentage of Median Household Income <sup>5</sup> | 0.16%               | (6 <sup>th</sup> of 10) |
| Average Annual Residential Fee                                   | \$89                |                         |

## Summary of County Stormwater Plan and Effort

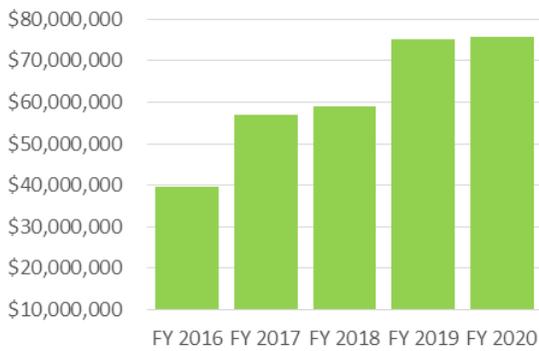
**Summary:** It is difficult to find fault with Montgomery County's efforts to reduce polluted urban runoff given that the county has been recognized as a national leader in addressing stormwater pollution. Nevertheless, it must be noted that the county has not yet fulfilled its obligation under its state and federal stormwater permit to restore 20 percent of the impervious surfaces within the county's jurisdiction, even though the five-year term under the original permit expired more than a year and a half ago. And while the county has committed substantial resources to finishing its stormwater work, the overall level of spending by Montgomery County is actually relatively modest compared with other counties in Maryland when adjusted for the size and wealth of the county. In sum, Montgomery County is redefining what it means to restore urban watersheds under the Clean Water Act while simultaneously proving that even a relatively modest level of spending on green infrastructure projects can eventually produce meaningful environmental, economic, and community benefits.

**Basics:** Montgomery County received its current municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) permit under the Clean Water Act by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) on February 16, 2010, more than three and a half years before any of the other nine jurisdictions subject to this type of permit received their current permits. This most recent permit, which has been administratively continued since its expiration in February 2015, requires the county to restore 20 percent of the untreated impervious surfaces within its MS4 by the end of the permit term. According to the county, its MS4 system contained 18,884 acres of untreated impervious surfaces, of which 3,777 acres (20 percent) must be addressed through stormwater management projects or alternative compliance practices. Since its permit was issued, County-built projects and other efforts have led to the restoration of about 2,000 acres of impervious surfaces with thousands of additional acres targeted for restoration by projects under construction or in the design or planning phases.



Urban areas are shown in light gray shading.  
Sub-watersheds are delineated with light blue lines.  
Completed impervious surface and watershed restoration projects and associated catchments are shown in bright green.

## Restoration Spending



**Level of Effort:** The county’s residential stormwater fee for average-sized homes is greater than the state and national average, though its fee is still far smaller than dozens of other jurisdictions around the country. In most years, the county’s fee has covered, or is projected to cover, between one half and two-thirds of county spending to restore impervious surfaces. Generally, the county pays for these capital projects through the issuance of bonds backed by the county’s Water Quality Protection Charge, which Montgomery County established years before the Maryland General Assembly mandated the creation of stormwater remediation fees.

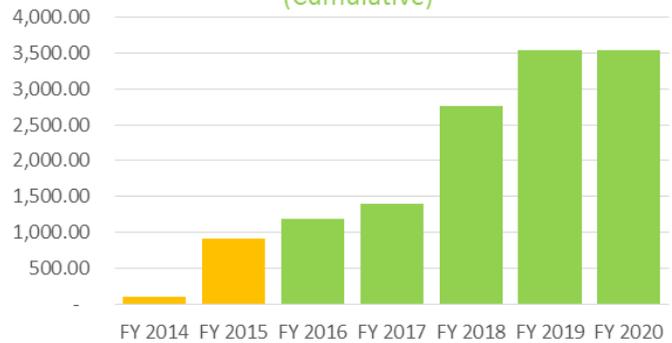
The county’s projected level of spending on impervious surface restoration projects reflected in its recent financial assurance plan

(FAP), while very high on a nominal basis, is actually only about average among Maryland counties, when adjusted for population, income, and the size of the county budget. For example, Montgomery County spending in its FAP ranks fifth (out of the 10 jurisdictions) on a per capita basis, sixth as a percentage of median household income, and seventh as a percentage of the county’s overall budget. The only measure by which Montgomery County’s spending is well above average is in terms of spending per acre restored, for which it ranks first, indicating that the county is relying heavily on capital projects to meet its permit requirements. Capital stormwater projects in highly urbanized environments tend to be more expensive than some of the other types of alternative compliance practices authorized by the state to meet permit requirements, but most capital stormwater projects are also far more valuable than alternative practices, making Montgomery County’s strategy a good one.

**Restoration Strategy:** Ideally, county stormwater management plans should generally include a diverse mix of the various types of water quality restoration projects and practices available, but with a significant emphasis on carefully designed and site-specific projects that allow rainwater and snow melt to infiltrate into the ground and filter out harmful nutrients, sediment, and toxic substances. Building this “green infrastructure” into the urban landscape has proven to be one of the most beneficial and high impact environmental policies that local governments can undertake.

Montgomery County’s restoration strategy, as described in its recent FAP, fortunately avoids many of the low value alternative compliance projects and practices like street sweeping or septic system upgrades that do little or nothing to address polluted urban runoff, as well as the environmental accounting gimmicks that a number of other counties have planned for compliance with their permit requirements. Instead, the county FAP indicates that Montgomery County plans to comply with its stormwater permit mostly through the installation of new stormwater control projects, stream restoration projects, or other accepted stormwater retrofit practices. Notably, the county’s menu of proposed projects includes a relatively significant number of projects to control runoff from county facilities, roads, and schools, with the remainder of projects focusing on stream restoration. Although it would be preferable for the county to shift some of the funds it has dedicated for stream restoration projects to infiltration, filtering, and other green infrastructure or stormwater retrofit projects, the extent of planned stream restoration is generally reasonable compared to a number of other counties in Maryland and will likely produce meaningful results in the county’s effort to restore its urban watersheds.

## Acres Restored by Projects (Cumulative)



### Notes

- <sup>1</sup>July 2014 Estimate, Maryland Department of Planning
- <sup>2</sup>MS4 Annual Report and Financial Assurance Plan (FAP)
- <sup>3</sup>FAP
- <sup>4</sup>Uniform Financial Reporting for Fiscal 2013 and FAP
- <sup>5</sup>U.S. Census and FAP

**For More Information  
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