

STORMWATER BMPs

What are they & what do they do?

BMP stands for Best Management Practice, and includes designed stormwater management facilities (such as detention basins), as well as non-engineered approaches like protecting open space to manage stormwater.

The goal of BMPs is to reduce the impact of development on downstream bodies of water (streams, lakes, etc.) by:

- Minimizing the amount of stormwater runoff
- Slowing down the runoff
- Infiltrating runoff
- Evapotranspiring* runoff
- Filtering runoff

Many BMPs will use vegetation for their ability to use water, put water back into the atmosphere, or help it infiltrate into the ground, rather than allow it to become runoff.

If you've ever walked through a meadow or shaken a tree branch after a rain, you got wet with intercepted water. When it rains, some of the water is trapped on plants. This "intercepted" water never even makes it to the ground where it could be infiltrated. Plants also use water as part of the photosynthesis process where they use the sun's energy to create their own food. This water used by plants is called evapotranspiration. Larger plants with broader leaves and deeper roots like trees, shrubs, or decorative grasses will intercept and evapotranspire more water than a grass lawn.

Communities are designed with stormwater management in mind. There are many different BMPs spread throughout our community. Stormwater flows downstream, and the homeowners must do their part on their own property to protect the streams for everyone. You and all of your neighbors each play an important role in the health of downstream waters.

Some BMPs are landscaped and others are buried so you might not see anything at the surface. Even though it might just look like some plants or gravel, the BMP is still performing a very important function. Disturbing the vegetation or compacting the soil can ruin that BMP and have a negative impact downstreams.

What's the Homeowner's Legal Responsibility?

If your home was constructed after 2010, and your property contains any Post Construction Stormwater Management BMPs, the developer will have recorded details about them with your property's deed. State regulation requires that the information recorded with the deed identifies the BMP, provides for access to the BMPs for maintenance and inspection purposes, and provides notice that the responsibility for long-term operation and maintenance of the BMP is a legal requirement that runs with the property. You can view your property records at the Recorder of Deeds office at the Lancaster County Courthouse, or visit their website at lancasterdeeds.com, to determine if you are responsible for the maintenance of any BMPs.

If you are the person designated as the responsible-party for operation and maintenance, you must ensure that the BMPs continue to function properly and follow the maintenance schedule provided by the developer and recorded with your deed. The responsibility to maintain the BMP includes the cost of plants or material for upkeep or replacement. You should have been provided a maintenance plan by the developer if you're the first owner of the home. If your home was constructed after 2010, you may need to check the property records for information if you're not the first owner and didn't receive the maintenance plan at the time of purchase.

If you're not doing the necessary maintenance and required documentation, you may be billed by your municipality for the cost of having someone else do the work. Or you could face a summary offense and daily fine until the maintenance is complete.

If responsibility has been transferred to someone else, you need to provide access for maintenance and inspection. You also must leave any BMPs in place. For example, you can't remove the vegetation of a rain garden, level it, and plant lawn grass.

For more information about stormwater BMPs or stormwater management in general please visit http://www.westearltp.org/pages/stormwater_education.html.

**Evapotranspiration (ET) is a term used to describe the water consumed by plants over a period of time. Evapotranspiration is the water loss occurring from the processes of evaporation and transpiration. Evaporation occurs when water changes to vapor on either soil or plant surfaces. Transpiration refers to the water lost through the leaves of plants.*