

Stormwater Utility Fee Credit Application Success for the NS Whitaker Intermodal Facility

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The Norfolk Southern Railway Company's (NSRC) Whitaker Intermodal Facility was constructed in the City of Austell, Georgia in 2001. At that time, the Whitaker Intermodal Facility was developed applying advanced stormwater management measures as the result of participation by the City of Austell, local, state, and federal environmental regulatory agencies. The City of Austell created a stormwater utility in 2011 to address the effects of urbanization and hydrologic changes in their jurisdiction. The stormwater utility assessed fees to properties based on impervious area. The Whitaker Intermodal Facility, as an approximately 1-mile long by 1,500 feet wide paved area with four rail lines, was assessed annual fees starting at approximately \$130,000 and increasing to approximately \$187,000 per year. Because of the advanced stormwater management measures employed at the site, NSRC investigated available options to reduce the annual stormwater utility fee. Two primary mechanisms within the stormwater utility ordinance were considered: (i) obtaining a stormwater utility fee credit; and (ii) obtaining an exemption for railroad tracks.

In order to obtain a stormwater utility fee credit, the site must demonstrate that best management practices (BMPs) were in place to address four requirements: water quality, channel protection, overbank flood protection, and extreme flood protection. A maximum of 10% per requirement was available for a maximum of 40% total credit.

Stormwater at the site was managed through four wet detention ponds that discharge to adjacent wetland/stream systems. Each pond is equipped with an outlet structure consisting of a sluice gate to regulate inflow, a compound V-notch weir plate to establish a permanent pool, and a discharge pipe. The existing stormwater management system was evaluated to analyze compliance with the credit criteria. The stormwater credit utility fee application included submittal to the City of a Stormwater Management Site Plan, Stormwater Management Report, Operation and Maintenance Plan, and Certification Letter. In addition, coordination meetings with the City were held. Initial analyses indicated that three of the four ponds did not meet the water quality requirements and modifications to the compound weir plate were made to bring these ponds into compliance with that credit criterion.

Based on the successful analyses, coordination, and application submittal, the City granted NSRC a full 40% credit towards their stormwater utility fee at the Whitaker Intermodal Facility, resulting in an annual savings of approximately \$83,300 annually. This presentation will describe the facility, stormwater utility ordinance and fees, credit application process, as well as exemptions and re-assessment of impervious area, which lead to the successful grant of the stormwater utility credit for the site. This process is now being repeated at other facilities in jurisdictions with stormwater utilities to reduce the large bills that these mostly impervious sites are now receiving.
