



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**TO:** Hyun Kim, City Manager  
**FROM:** Shauna Hansen, P.E., Environmental Services  
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Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Ordinance - Adopting the 2026 Stormwater Management Manual - June 2, 2026  
**DATE:** May 8, 2026

Initial DS  
CWC RALPP

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### SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

An ordinance adopting the updated City of Tacoma Stormwater Management Manual (SWMM) providing policy and design requirements for stormwater management in Tacoma in compliance with the City's Municipal Stormwater Permit and amending Chapter 12.08D of the Municipal Code to reflect SWMM updates.

### BACKGROUND:

The Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) maintains responsibility for implementation and enforcement of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Permit for Phase I Municipalities (Permit) (and thus the Federal Clean Water Act and 40 CFR 122) in Washington State. On August 1, 2024, Ecology issued the 2024-2029 NPDES Permit to all Phase I Municipalities including the City of Tacoma (City), City of Seattle, Pierce County, King County, Snohomish County and Clark County.

The NPDES Permit regulates the discharge of stormwater to surface waters and groundwaters of the state from Tacoma's storm sewer system. The NPDES Permit is designed to protect and improve the water quality of receiving waters by requiring the City to implement a variety of stormwater management activities. An updated permit is issued every five years.

The NPDES Permit requires that the City implement local requirements meeting the minimum requirements of the permit for controlling runoff from new development, redevelopment and construction sites. Permittees may use Ecology's SWMM for Western Washington (SWMMWW) as part of this program or have their own equivalent manual. Tacoma has elected to develop and use an equivalent manual and updates the manual every five years to reflect Ecology's SWMM updates.

### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

There was a formal public review process of the draft SWMM in April and May 2025. There were two online meetings in April and May 2025 to outline the proposed changes and take questions and comments. Public comments were reviewed and responded to and the responses to comments are available on the City's [website](#). The SWMM was revised as appropriate based upon public comments and Ecology comments. A second public review opportunity was posted in April 2026 to comment on the SWMM revisions. A State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) determination of non-significance (DNS) was issued for the SWMM update in April 2026, and the SEPA notice process is complete.



**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility:**

The 2026 Stormwater Management Manual will be accessible on the City’s website. The web-based version includes enhanced search functions and increased usability.

**Economy/Workforce:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase the number of infrastructure projects and improvements throughout the city that include stormwater best management practices to protect local waterways and thereby generate new business development.

**Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

The updates to the stormwater manual provide additional clarity for stormwater management requirements for new development, redevelopment and construction projects throughout the city.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
Do not approve the 2026 SWMM	None	Non-compliance with the NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit and possible enforcement actions by Ecology and third-party lawsuits.

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

Project applicants will be required to utilize the new SWMM starting July 1, 2026. City staff will also use the new SWMM for capital projects starting July 1, 2026. Training sessions will occur starting in May-June 2026 and will continue as demand continues. Staff and applicant feedback will be used to gauge usability of the SWMM. As needed, clarification and revision to the SWMM will occur through errata or clarification documents.

**STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Environmental Services and Planning and Development Services recommend that Council approve the ordinance to adopt the 2026 Stormwater Management Manual.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no fiscal impact.

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?** N/A

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?** N/A

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

YES. If the City does not adopt the 2026 SWMM, the City would not be in compliance with our NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit and lead to possible enforcement action by Ecology and third-party lawsuits.



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**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

No

**Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?**

No

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Draft 2026 Stormwater Management Manual

## **Attachment: Enhanced Tree Retention/Transplanting Requirement in the 2026 Stormwater Management Manual**

### **Overview**

As part of the City of Tacoma's upcoming Stormwater Management Manual (effective July 1, 2026), the City is introducing a new enhancement under **Minimum Requirement #5**, mandating **tree retention and transplanting where feasible**. This addition goes beyond State of Washington Department of Ecology guidance and reflects a proactive local commitment to sustainable urban water management

### **Key Features:**

- **Mandatory Retention or Transplantation:** Project applicants must prioritize the retention of existing healthy trees within the project footprint and/or transplant trees when site conditions permit. This requirement applies in addition to standard flow reduction Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- **Stormwater Flow Benefits:** Retained and transplanted trees contribute to stormwater mitigation by intercepting rainfall, promoting infiltration, and reducing runoff volumes. These benefits are recognized with flow-control credit in applicable plans.
- **Site-Specific Applicability:** The requirement encourages, but does not force, tree retention/transplanting in areas where it is not feasible—considering space constraints, tree health, and project design.
- **Enhanced Environmental Outcomes:** By incorporating live trees into new development and redevelopment projects, Tacoma aims to bolster urban canopy, support water quality, and strengthen resilience to stormwater impacts—surpassing baseline standards in the statewide manual.

### **Conclusion**

This enhanced tree retention/transplanting requirement demonstrates Tacoma's leadership in integrating green infrastructure principles with stormwater management policy. It reinforces our dual goals of environmental sustainability and compliance with evolving local community values in land use and infrastructure planning.