

Lack of Rain? Time to Maintain!

This past May, you've probably noticed the warmer temperatures. Some say we are two months ahead of schedule, skipping the typical May weather and going straight to July! This drier weather has also paved the way for a mild drought. According to meteorologists, an El Niño is not too far away, and with it will come even warmer weather. That is why the summer months are perfect for stormwater basin maintenance on your dry or wet stormwater pond!

You may be asking: How do I know if my pond is a stormwater pond? In the 1970s and 80s, many housing subdivisions had these ponds designed and installed. Many commercial businesses that have disturbed or excavated over an acre of land probably have a stormwater pond as well. Contact Geauga Soil and Water Conservation District (SWCD) at 440-834-1122 if you are unsure whether your pond is a stormwater pond.

What is the purpose of a stormwater pond? Stormwater ponds are not just ponds. These ponds are designed to capture stormwater and release it at a pre-developed rate. In recent years, stormwater ponds have been used to filter out sediments, and other pollutants to protect the quality of Ohio's natural water features: such as rivers and wetlands. Since these ponds are designed by an engineer to manage stormwater runoff, they are explicitly sized for development runoff accounting for the increase in impervious areas like roofs and parking lots.

Okay, but I didn't build this structure: Who is responsible for maintaining it? Stormwater basin maintenance is typically the landowner's responsibility, but not always. Some Homeowners Associations (HOAs) maintain all stormwater basins within their subdivision and in some cases there may be an easement identifying another entity. To determine who is responsible for maintenance, homeowners need to locate the recorded Inspection and Maintenance Agreement for the basin. This agreement is usually attached to the deed of the land, on file with the HOA or with Geauga SWCD. Contact the district for more information.



Lack of precipitation makes summer the perfect time to access, inspect and maintain your stormwater pond, like the basin pictured above. Routine maintenance is required to enable these ponds to manage runoff and water quality most effectively.

Why is stormwater pond maintenance necessary? When basins are not taken care of regularly, they can become full of noxious weeds like pricker bushes, phragmites, and cattails. These weeds can clog pipes and outlet structures if not cut down regularly, leading to basin failure. After a while, these weeds can also take over a basin reducing its stormwater holding capacity. If your stormwater pond has a large amount of dense vegetation, remove the cuttings so they don't adversely clog the basin you spent so much time clearing!

Regular or routine maintenance has other benefits besides weed control. You can spot minor issues before they become major expenses. A quarterly inspection of your pond will help you understand how your pond functions and help you catch these small problems. Minor issues that can escalate if not dealt with include broken or leaky pipes, berm seepage, the presence of beavers, and animal burrow holes. All these problems can become major issues if not fixed early on. If you do need to complete a major repair, notify the Geauga SWCD office of your intent. They can verify your new repair does not alter the pond's original design.

My stormwater pond is consistently wet year-round: How can I maintain it? Droughts and dry weather patterns cause water features such as rivers, ponds, and wetlands to dry out, making them more accessible than in previous years. This includes your dry or wet stormwater pond. A more accessible pond means maintenance is easier to accomplish and potentially less costly. Don't hesitate to contact Geauga SWCD with any other questions regarding your stormwater pond.

Hopefully, the effects of any drought are mild, and we will continue to see relief in the days to come. In the meantime, let's roll up our sleeves and do some maintenance before those thunderstorms come back and wash away a good opportunity down the basin outlet pipe.