

Seattle 2026 Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

This document provides a summary of the changes from the 2021 to 2026 Stormwater Code. Refer to the Stormwater Manual Table of Changes for the Stormwater Manual changes.

Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code – Overall Changes

Stormwater Code

2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)

- Added and updated definitions and requirements for clarity and to be consistent with the 2024 Phase I Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Permit and Ecology’s 2024 Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington (SWMMWW).
- Various updates to align text with other Seattle Municipal Code sections (e.g., Land Use, Shoreline).
- Revised utility work and pavement maintenance exemptions to be consistent with MS4 Permit.
- Revised vesting dates / references to be consistent with MS4 Permit and simplified text.
- Revised “closely related projects” definition and criteria based on Ecology’s equivalency comments and moved from Volume 1 to Stormwater Code.
- Added clarification for application of thresholds and a new definition for “common plan of development or sale” to be consistent with MS4 Permit.
- Revised terminology from “enhanced” to “metals” treatment and updated Metals Treatment thresholds to be consistent with 2024 MS4 Permit.
- Updated definitions for “new and replaced hard surfaces” to be consistent with 2024 MS4 Permit.
- Revised “pavement maintenance practices” definition to be consistent with MS4 Permit and moved to 22.801.
- Deleted “single-family residential project” definition to align / support Land Use Code changes.
- Add limits to washdown of buildings with PCBs to be consistent with 2024 MS4 Permit.
- Revised existing construction related flow control requirements.
- Revised ensure sufficient capacity threshold for newly connected areas.
- Added new section to address water quality impacts associated with pollution-generating surfaces not previously discharging to receiving water basins.
- Increased flow control threshold for parcel-based projects discharging to small lake basins and capacity-constrained systems from 2,000 sf to 5,000 sf.

Stormwater Code

2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)

- Added “new plus replaced” hard surface to flow control and treatment thresholds and removed 5,000 sf “**new**” hard surface threshold for flow control and treatment thresholds for Roadway Projects to be consistent with 2024 MS4 Permit.
- Updated on-site lists to facilitate increase in tree canopy and stormwater management, improve feasibility of bioretention in space-limited urban areas, provide additional BMP options, address temperature increases and atmospheric deposition, and reduce feasibility barriers for certain BMPs.
- Added the requirement that in addition to OSM BMPs, all infiltrating BMPs (e.g., infiltration basins) must be used to the maximum extent feasible to meet flow control and water quality treatment requirements.
- Renumbered 22.805.080 Flow Control to meet revised code drafting requirements and updated affected code sections.
- Updated Wetland Protection – Method 2 to allowed greater flexibility in matching volume percentages during winter months and to match MS4Permit.
- Added criteria for projects that are required to meet the Wetland Protection Standard but other requirements conflict.
- Clarified that fields with crumb rubber infill require metals treatment.
- Lowered Drainage Control Review and Application thresholds for land disturbing activities to ensure adequate review of erosion control measures in tight urban environment.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.800 – Title, Purpose, Scope, and Authority

Stormwater Code, 22.800 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.800.010 through 22.800.030	● No edits.
22.800.040 – Exemptions, adjustments, and exceptions	● Added that utility work that is integral with and contiguous to a non-exempt project type (e.g., Parcel-Based Project) the utility work is not exempt under 22.800.040.A.2.a. ● Revised pavement maintenance associated with a Parcel-Based Project or Roadway Project is not exempt under 22.800.040.A.2.b. ● Refer 22.801.170.P for changes associated with “Pavement Maintenance Practices”. ● Add that ADA work associated with exempt activities is also exempt.
22.800.070 – Minimum Requirements for City Agency Projects	● Changed dates and references so that they are up to date with the most recent Permit S5.C5 vesting dates. ● Changed reference from “fiscal year” to “City’s 2026 budget”.
22.800.080 through 22.800.090	● No edits.
22.800.100 – Transition to Revised Stormwater Code	● Changed dates and references so that they are up to date with the most recent Permit S5.C5 vesting dates. ● Revised vesting text for simplicity. ● Removed “gas” installation from a utility that counts as a “start of construction”.

Stormwater Code, 22.801 – Definitions

Stormwater Code, 22.801 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.801.020 – “A” – “Aquatic life use”	● Added “<u>Aquatic life use, marine water</u>”. ● Revised existing definition to: “Aquatic life use, <u>fresh water</u>” and added “wetlands” to definition.
22.801.040 – “C” - “Closely Related Projects”	● Moved “Closely related projects” criteria from Volume 1 to code. ● Clarified criteria including adding “features that create physical or functional interdependence between projects”.
22.801.040 – “C” - “Common plan of development or sale”	● Added “Common Plan of Development or Sale” definition and examples. ● Refer to Volume 1 for criteria for a “single plan”.
22.801.040 – “C” – “Creek”	● Updated definition to remove reference to creek “Type” and to rely on “stream” definition instead. ● “Creek” and “stream” continue to be used synonymously. ● Refer to 22.801.200 “Stream” for changes.
22.801.050 – “D” – “Development”	● Added "street improvement permit" to items listed under the "Development" definition.
22.801.050 – “D” – “Drainage water”	● Added reference to subsection 22.802.030.B (Permissible discharges in addition to 22.802.030.A (Conditionally permissible discharges) to “Drainage water” definition.
22.801.060 – “E” – “Enhanced treatment facility”	● Removed “Enhanced treatment facility” definition – now “Metals treatment facility”.
22.801.080 – “G” – “Groundwater”	● Added water being “perched or otherwise” to the “Groundwater” definition.
22.801.090 – “H” - “Hard Surface”	● No edits.
22.801.090 – “H” – “High-use sites”	● Added new items to "High-use Sites" definition including total trip counts and other petroleum related products in addition to “oil”. ● Clarified “High-use sites” includes “oil <u>or other petroleum products</u>”.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.801 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.801.100 – “I” – “Infiltration BMP”	● Categorized "Infiltration BMP" in the same category as "Infiltration Facility".
22.801.100 – “I” – “Impervious surface”	● Revised “subjected to vehicular traffic” to “<u>subject</u> to vehicular <u>use</u>”.
22.801.130 – “L” – “Large project”	● Lowered land-disturbing activity threshold to 10,000 sf from one acre to account for potential erosion impacts in a tight urban environment. ● Removed larger thresholds related to conversion of pervious areas as now covered under land-disturbing activity 10,000 sf threshold. ● In the Stormwater Manual, “Large Project” term is only used in in relation to when a "Large Project" Construction Stormwater Control plan sheet is required in Volumes 1 & 2.
22.801.140 – “M” – “Metals Treatment Facility”	● Added new definition for “Metals treatment facility” to replace “enhanced treatment facility” definition.
22.801.140 – “M” - “Municipal separate storm sewer system”	● Added new definition for “Municipal separate storm sewer system”.
22.801.140 – “M” - “Municipal Stormwater NPDES Permit”	● Updated “Municipal Stormwater NPDES Permit” to not exclude areas outside the City [of Seattle] limits.
22.801.150 – “N” - “New Hard Surface”	● Revised “New Hard Surface” definition for consistency with Permit and to provide clarity.
22.801.150 – “N” - “New Impervious Surface” (deleted definition)	● Deleted “New Impervious Surface” definition as already defined as part of “New Hard Surface” definition.
22.801.170 – “P” - “Pavement Maintenance Practices	● Revised and clarified “Pavement Maintenance Practices”, moved to definitions from 22.800.040 Exemptions. ● Added that pavement maintenance can include sidewalks limited to the criteria found under definition (e.g., square cut patching). ● Clarified that pothole and square cut patching does not count towards new or replaced hard surface amounts when performing only exempt activities.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.801 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.801.170 – “P”- “Pollution-Generating Hard Surface”	● Moved “Vehicular Use” definition from definition of “Pollution-Generating Impervious Surface” and created new “Vehicular Use” standalone definition. ● Refer to 22.801.230.V for changes to “Vehicular Use” definition.
22.801.170 – “P”- “Pollution-Generating Impervious Surface” (deleted definition)	● Deleted “Pollution-Generating Impervious Surface” definition as already defined as part of “Pollution-Generating Hard Surface” definition.
22.801.170 – “P”- “Project”	● Revised definition to also refer to section 22.801.050 for “development”.
22.801.190 – “R” - “Receiving Water”	● No edits.
22.801.190 – “R” - “Replaced Hard Surface”	● Revised definition of “Replaced Hard Surface” definition.
22.801.190 – “R” - “Replaced Impervious Surface” (deleted definition)	● Deleted “Replaced Impervious Surface” definition as already defined as part of “Replaced Hard Surface” definition.
22.801.200 – “S” - “Single-Family Residential Project” (deleted definition)	● Deleted “Single family residential project” definition. ● Refer to 22.805.050 for revised parcel-based project thresholds.
22.801.200 – “S” – “Site”	● Revised definition of “Site” to include that a site may include “multiple parcels and / or sections of right-of-way”.
22.801.200 – “S” – “Small lakes”	● Added comma after Green Lake.
22.801.200 – “S” – “Small project”	● Revised land disturbing activity threshold for “Small project” from one acre to less than 10,000 square feet.
22.801.200 – “S” – “Stream”	● Updated definition to remove reference to creek “Type”. ● “Creek” and “stream” continue to be used synonymously.
22.801.200 – “S” – “Surface waters”	● Added new “surface waters” definition.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.801 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.801.230 – “V” - “Vehicular Use”	• “Vehicular Use” definition now standalone definition instead of under “Pollution-Generating Impervious Surface” definition. • Added clarifications to “Vehicular Use” related to existing light rail and airports parameters.

Stormwater Code, 22.802 – Prohibited and Permissible Discharges

Stormwater Code, 22.802 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.802.010 – General	• No edits.
22.802.020 – Prohibited Discharges	• Added bromine to prohibited discharges.
22.802.030 – Permissible Discharges	• Added that routine building washdowns and discharges are allowed but dependent on building age and absence of PCBs. • Clarified that lawn watering and irrigation runoff discharges are only allowed if water use is minimized. • Clarified that only “non-toxic” tracing dye can be used. • Updated terminology related to building washdowns and PCBs by replacing reference to “single-family residential buildings” with “single detached dwelling units and associated accessory structures”.
22.802.040 – Testing for Prohibited Discharges	• No edits.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.803 – Minimum Requirements for All Discharges and All Real Property

Stormwater Code, 22.803 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.803.010 - General	• No edits.
22.803.020 – Minimum requirements for all discharges and real property.	• Added facility components must be kept accessible for inspection and maintenance.
22.803.030 – Minimum Requirements for Source Controls for All Real Property	• Broadened discharge rule to include more types of dog runs, not just rooftop ones. • Added reference to Seattle Stormwater Manual Volume 4.
22.803.040 – Minimum Requirements for Source Controls For Businesses and Public Entities for Specific Activities (<i>title change</i>)	• Updated title of section to “Minimum Source Controls for Specific Activities”. • Revised so that source control requirements for “specific activities” under one new subsection 22.803.040.A. • Revised 22.803.040.B (formerly 22.803.040.A) to reference Section 22.802.020 instead of subsections 22.802.020.A-D.

Stormwater Code, 22.805 – Minimum Requirements for All Projects

Stormwater Code, 22.805 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.805.010 – General	• Added that in addition to “Closely Related Projects”, thresholds apply to entire “Common Plan of Development or Sale”, “Short Plat”, and “Subdivision” when applying thresholds. • Clarified that for non-neighborhood residential zones the assumed level of hard surface coverage is based on maximum allowable build-out coverage when applying thresholds unless otherwise approved by the Director.
22.805.020 – Minimum requirements for all projects C. Minimum requirements for flood-prone areas.	• Updated code reference related to minimum requirements for flood-prone areas.
22.805.020 – Minimum requirements for all projects G. Project shorelines.	• Updated code reference related to minimum requirements for shorelines.

Stormwater Code, 22.805 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.805.020 – Minimum requirements for all projects D. Minimum requirements for construction stormwater pollution prevention plan.	● Under “4. Protect downstream properties and receiving waters”: ○ Added the requirement to protect downstream properties and receiving waters from “<u>flooding</u>” in addition to “erosion”. ○ Added controlling “<u>duration</u>” in addition to: “volume, velocity, and peak flow rate”. ● Instead of referring to "large project" under "12. Control dewatering" section, added specific thresholds; no substantive changes. ● Added “all projects with an excavation depth of less than 12 feet located in an area expected to have shallow groundwater depths” to "12. Control dewatering". ● Under “19. Protect stormwater BMPs”: Changed “on-site BMPs” to “<u>infiltration</u> BMP” requiring protection during construction.
22.805.020 – Minimum requirements for all projects H. Ensure sufficient capacity.	● Instead of referring to "large project" under “Ensure sufficient capacity” section, added specific thresholds. ● Added ensure sufficient capacity for “all projects that alter the drainage pattern from 5,000 square feet or more of an existing, new, or replaced hard surface or 3/4 of an acre or more of a pervious surface from a site to a downstream system not previously connected via discrete conveyance”.
22.805.020 – Minimum requirements for all projects K. Comply with Side Sewer Code.	● Revised authority to only “SPU Director”.
22.805.020 – Minimum requirements for all projects O. Minimum requirements for treatment.	● New subsection 22.805.020.D for “Minimum requirements for treatment” to address changing flows from pollution-generating hard surfaces that are not otherwise captured under “new hard surface” or “replaced hard surface” definitions.
22.805.030 - Minimum requirements for single-family residential projects”.	● Removed section 22.805.030 “Minimum requirements for single-family residential projects”. Parcel-based Project requirements now apply.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.805 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.805.040 - Minimum requirements for trail and sidewalk projects	● No edits.
22.805.050 – Minimum Requirements for Parcel-Based Projects	● Updated code references to reflect renumbering of 22.805.080 – Flow Control – no change in requirements proposed. ● Revised small lake basin flow control threshold from 2,000 square feet to 5,000 square feet. ● Revised capacity-constrained system flow control threshold from 2,000 square feet to 5,000 square feet. ● Revised text to require treatment of discharges from pollution-generating pervious surface areas and from which discharge through a natural or constructed conveyance system from the site.
22.805.060 – Minimum Requirements for Roadway Projects	● Revised flow control thresholds for discharges to “Wetland”, “Listed Creek Basins”, “Non-Listed Creek Basins”, and “Small Lake Basins” to include “new <u>plus replaced</u>” hard surface. ● Removed “new hard surface 5,000 square feet” flow control threshold for: ○ “Wetlands” ○ “Non-Listed Creek Basins” ○ “Small Lake Basins” ● Revised treatment thresholds to include “new <u>plus replaced</u>” pollution-generating hard surface.
22.805.070 – Minimum Requirements for On-Site Stormwater Management D. On-site Lists 2. Single-family Residential Projects – Table A (table deleted)	● Removed Table A - On-site List for Single-family Residential projects.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.805 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.805.070 – Minimum Requirements for On-Site Stormwater Management D. On-site Lists 3. Trail and Sidewalk Projects – Table B	• Added that rain gardens can include a tree. • Added that “Infiltrating Soil Cell Bioretention with Tree” can be used as an OSM BMP in Category 2. • Clarified that infiltration testing is not required for permeable pavement sidewalks or composted amended strips unless used to demonstrate infeasibility.
22.805.070 – Minimum Requirements for On-Site Stormwater Management D. On-site Lists 4. 2. Parcel-based Projects – Table C <u>Table A</u> (table moved)	• Changed table name from Table C to Table A. • <u>Category 1:</u> ○ Moved RWH sized to meet OSM Performance Standard to Category 1 for more project flexibility. • <u>Category 2:</u> ○ Added that rain gardens and bioretention can include a tree. ○ Added that " Infiltrating Soil Cell Bioretention <u>with</u> Tree" can be used as an OSM BMP in Category 2. ○ Clarified that infiltration testing is not required for permeable pavement sidewalks or composted amended strips unless proving infeasibility. ○ Clarified in OSM List that approved equivalents (already included in current BMP manual) are allowed for permeable pavement facilities and surfaces. • <u>Category 3:</u> ○ Add that "Infiltrating Structural Bioretention <u>without</u> tree" can be used as a Category 3 BMP. • <u>Category 4:</u> ○ Added evaluation of “Vegetated Roofs” for “Projects Discharging to a Designated Receiving Water”. ○ Added "Non-infiltrating Soil Cell Bioretention with Tree" and "Residential Cisterns" as optional Category 4 BMPs.

Seattle Stormwater Code – Summary of Changes

Stormwater Code, 22.805 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.805.070 – Minimum Requirements for On-Site Stormwater Management D. On-site Lists 5- 4. Roadway Projects – Table 4 Table C (table moved)	• Changed table name from Table D to Table C. • Added that rain gardens and bioretention are required to evaluate having a tree • Added that "Infiltrating and Non-Infiltrating Soil Cell Bioretention with Tree" can be used as an OSM BMP • Clarified that infiltration testing is not required for permeable pavement sidewalks or composted amended strips unless proving infeasibility.
22.805.080 – Minimum Requirements for Flow Control	• Renumbered flow control standards to meet new city formatting requirements. • Added requirement that in addition to OSM BMPs, all infiltrating BMPs (e.g., Infiltration Basins) must be used to the maximum extent feasible to meet flow control requirements. • Added requirements if the Wetland Protection Standard cannot be fully met due to the implementation of required on-site stormwater management, water quality, or other Flow Control BMPs. • Updated Wetland Protection – Method 2 to allowed greater flexibility in matching volume percentages during winter months. • Clarified that discharges “from the project site” must meet the required flow control standard.
22.805.090 – Minimum Requirements for Treatment	• Added requirement that in addition to OSM BMPs, all infiltrating BMPs (e.g., Infiltration Basins) must be used to the maximum extent feasible to meet water quality treatment requirements. • Revised terminology from “Enhanced” to “Metals” Treatment. • Updated Metals Treatment thresholds to lower AADT threshold for roadways and to include roadways that provide on-street parking for commercial and industrial areas and sites that are subject to “industrial activities”. • Added that landscaped areas with crumb rubber require metals treatment.

Stormwater Code, 22.807 – Drainage Control Review and Application Requirements

Stormwater Code, 22.807 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.807.010 – General	● No edits.
22.807.020 – Drainage Control Review and Application Requirements	● Removed exemption for drainage review for projects in a City owned right-of-way. ● Lowered the threshold requiring a Comprehensive Drainage Review to 10,000 square feet of land-disturbing activity. ● Added that removal of a building 5,000 sf or more roof area, regardless of whether the slab or foundation remains, requires comprehensive drainage review. ● Moved when a licensed civil engineer must prepare a drainage control plan from “22.807.020.D – Submittal Requirements” to “22.807.020.A.3 – Comprehensive Drainage Review” for clarity. ● Added a reference to Source Control Facilities under the Inspection and Maintenance Schedule submittal requirements. ● Added that in addition to “Closely Related Projects”, thresholds apply to entire “Common Plan of Development or Sale”, “Short Plat”, and “Subdivision” when applying thresholds.
22.807.090 Maintenance and Inspection	● No edits.

Stormwater Code, 22.808 – Stormwater Code Enforcement

Stormwater Code, 22.808 – Code Section	2026 Final Changes Summary (from 2021 version)
22.808.010 through 22.808.110	● No edits.