



WATER QUALITY SPOTLIGHT ON OUR STORMWATER TECHS



WINTER 2024

THE RESOURCE

UNDERSTANDING OUR WATER



Stormwater technicians **Tim Brooks**, **Brian Head**, and **Robert Margis** see the value of a working stormwater system up close every day. They're motivated by teamwork and protecting the local environment. They share more on why what they do matters to Forsyth County.

Tim: *What really matters to me is knowing that my involvement with the stormwater team, along with our engineering management and careful planning, will help to reduce the environmental impact in a fast-growing county. Just our day-to-day routine with a slow and steady pace so we see everything ensures that we can continue to enjoy our lakes and streams now and in the future. It gives me a sense of pride and accomplishment.*

Brian: *Education is key to stormwater management. Without stormwater management policies and inspectors to enforce those policies, the community could suffer from environmental impacts caused by illicit discharges. Protecting the environment doesn't just happen in the field. At the administrative level, creating good policies and ensuring regulations are enforced also helps protect our local waters from impacts caused by new and old development.*

Robert: *It's crucial with new and existing development that stormwater is properly handled. If not, water could over run streams, roads, homes, etc. It is also imperative that we monitor the county for any pollutants that could be entering the storm system. I would tell people to keep an eye out for anything around state waters that doesn't look right. If you see anything, give the county a call so we can investigate it and determine if there are any issues.*

STORMWATER'S CONNECTION TO THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Thanks to a law enacted 50+ years ago in response to an Ohio river catching fire more than a quarter million people living in Forsyth County enjoy quality of life, economic development and recreational opportunities supported by a robust stormwater program that contributes to a high level of water quality in local waterways.



The **Clean Water Act (CWA)**¹ establishes the basic structure for regulating discharges of pollutants into US waters **and** regulating quality standards for surface waters. Forsyth County (like others in Georgia) follows the guidance and requirements of its MS4 permit² to meet the CWA standards. MS4 is a shortened way of noting that the stormwater system is **separate** from the sanitary sewer system. This means the **water is not treated** before going back into the environment, making it critical that the stormwater system stays clear of debris, such as leaves, sticks, and objects people might toss down a storm drain and that pollutants such as animal waste, trash, chemicals, paints, etc. are not disposed of in the stormwater system or left on the ground to wash into it.

¹ <https://www.epa.gov/laws-regulations/summary-clean-water-act>

² <https://epd.georgia.gov/watershed-protection-branch/stormwater/municipal-stormwater>



The Department of Engineering publishes *The Resource* on a regular basis to build community knowledge and understanding of our shared water resources.

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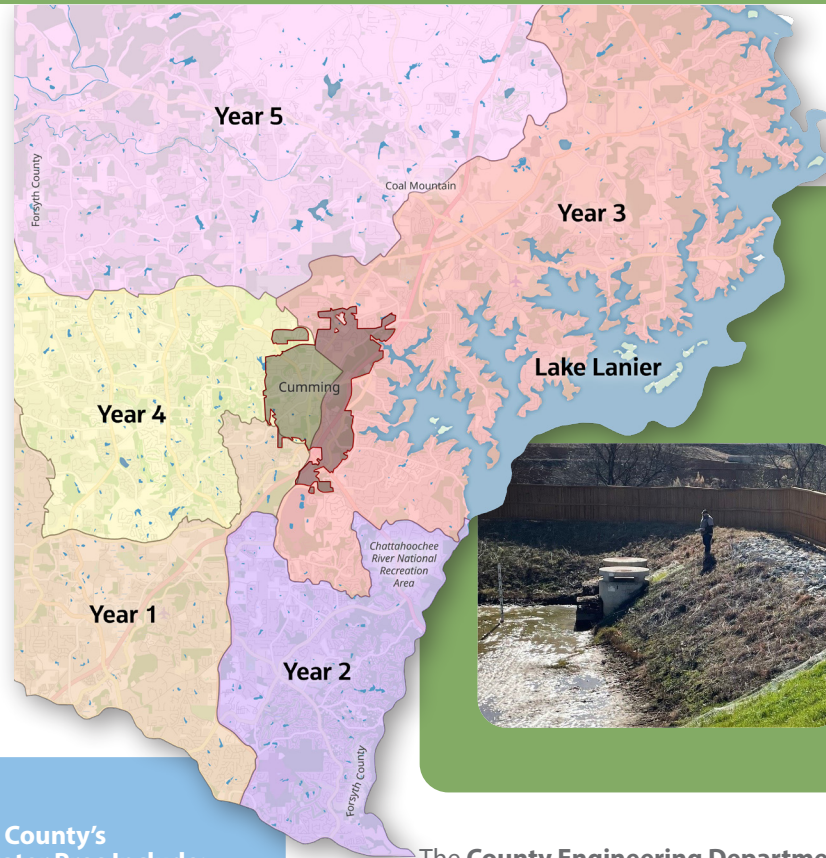
IN THE ZONE WITH STORMWATER MANAGEMENT

Forsyth County is 247 square miles and nearly 10% of that is water! With only 20 dedicated stormwater staff how can the County be sure that when it rains it drains? By getting into the zone – literally!

Forsyth County's MS4 permit is renewed every 5 years and requires that the County must inspect at least 5% of the total stormwater structures annually and 100% of its structures within the permit term.

In April 2022, the County created five zones where inspectors focus on one zone per year and inspect stormwater structures on public property, such as catch basins, outlets, detention ponds, culverts, etc.

This approach ensures the county remains compliant with its permit and efficiently keeps track of how well the infrastructure works. For residents and businesses, well functioning stormwater systems mean reduced flooding and property impacts, plus cleaner rivers, streams, and lakes that support recreation and a high-quality water supply.



The City of Cumming inspects and maintains stormwater infrastructure within its limits.



Forsyth County's Stormwater Pros Include:

- 7 Construction Inspectors
- 7 Erosion and Sediment (E&S) Inspectors
- 4 Stormwater Technicians
- 1 Division Manager
- 1 Administrative Staff

The **County Engineering Department** is responsible for most of the inspections. A team of dedicated stormwater technicians crouch, crawl, and stare into dark spaces that often go unnoticed unless something goes wrong. In addition to logging thousands of steps daily as they walk the county, they also log key details in their field reports on how individual structures are working, what may need to be cleaned out or repaired, and where structures need to be added or increased in holding capacity. The **Roads & Bridges Division** (part of the Engineering Department) is responsible for the repair and maintenance of the County's stormwater infrastructure. The **Parks and Recreation Department** also helps by performing quarterly inspections for detention ponds in parks, greenspaces, and other park property. All the field reports are compiled into a database to give the County a complete picture of the condition of its stormwater system.