

What is a WATERSHED?

A watershed is the land surrounding a system of rivers (or streams or creeks), or a particular river, that, when it rains, sheds the runoff into that waterway. Everything you do impacts your watershed. Runoff from garden fertilizers, hazardous substances like used motor oil, and trash dumped into one area of a river bank can pollute water many miles downstream. Protecting and preserving our watersheds helps protect our water resources.

The watersheds that drain directly to Philadelphia are: Darby Cobbs Watershed, Schuylkill Watershed, Wissahickon Watershed, Delaware Watershed, Pennypack Watershed, Tookany/Tacony-Frankford Watershed and Poquessing Watershed.

Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Public Notification Signage Program

What is a Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO)?

A combined sewer system transports sanitary wastewater (from homes, businesses and industry), stormwater from the storm drains on our streets and stormwater from property downspouts through a single-pipe to a Water Pollution Control Plant (treatment plant).

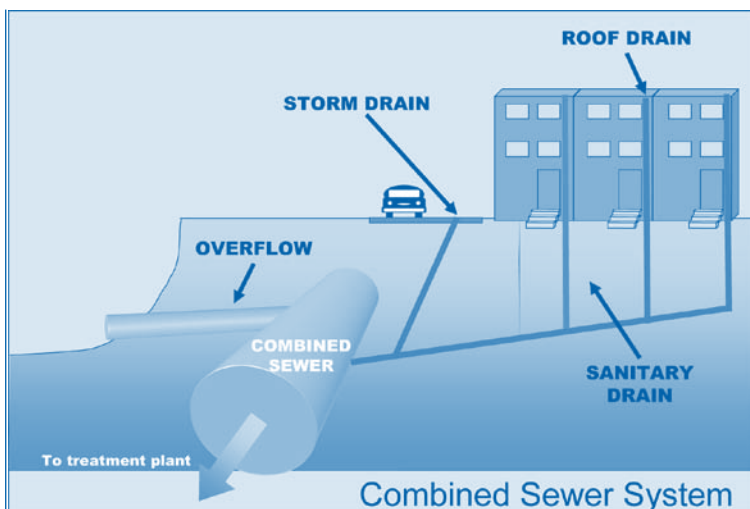
Under heavier rainfall conditions, however, the flow in combined sewers may exceed the capacity of the pipe or treatment facility. As a result, a portion of the wastewater and stormwater may be sent directly to a nearby stream or river to prevent the flooding of homes and streets. This is what is known as a Combined Sewer Overflow.

During heavy rainfalls or sudden snowmelts, Philadelphia may experience these overflows in various locations throughout the City. These overflows may exceed water quality standards, threaten aquatic life and its habitat, and impair the use and enjoyment of the water body.

What is the goal of the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) Public Notification Program?

The goal of the Philadelphia Water Department's (PWD) CSO program is to improve and preserve the water environment in the Philadelphia area.

The goal of the CSO Public Notification Program is to educate the public on CSOs using a variety of methods that will reach different segments of the population. One method that we are implementing is the CSO Public Notification Signage Program. This program informs the public of the potential hazards of primary contact with creeks and rivers during combined sewer overflow events.



What is the goal of the Signage Program?

PWD is striving to educate citizens about water quality conditions in our rivers and streams during and after a rain storm.

In 2005, PWD initiated its pilot signage program and installed signs at stream and river locations with good public access. The goal of the pilot program is to gauge the effectiveness of signage as compared to other public outreach efforts. PWD is concerned about primary contact with the water (skin contact) in CSO areas during or immediately after a rain event. The signs warn the public to avoid fishing, use of PWCs (Personal Water Crafts, such as jet-skis or wave runners), wading and particularly swimming. CSOs contain bacteria and pathogens that could make someone sick if they swallow water or eat fish that have come in contact with CSOs. The public should not go in the water, near the CSOs, for 48 hours after a heavy rain event.

The signs are in English and Spanish. PWD recognizes that there are many native-Spanish speakers that use our parks and waterways for recreation, as well as other non-English native speakers.

The signs also include the Philadelphia Water Department Hotline – 215-685-6300. PWD should be contacted if there is flow coming from the outfall during dry weather (when it is not raining).



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Can I swim in the water near a CSO?

Swimming and bathing are not permitted in the City's rivers and streams due to risks of drowning, injury from submerged objects, strong currents, and other hazards. An additional risk to the public is ingesting tainted water from an overflow as untreated sewage contains bacteria. Women of child-bearing age, children, the elderly, and persons with compromised immune systems are at an even higher risk of getting sick.

Is it safe for my dog to drink the water near a CSO?

PWD recommends that your dog not drink the water after a rainstorm. Despite their superior sense of smell, dogs are known to get "up close and personal" with things that might seem gross to you,

or stop to take a drink out of a muddy puddle. If this really concerns you, consider carrying plenty of drinking water and a "packable" drinking bowl for your dog. Dogs that are offered plenty of water in this manner may be less likely to drink out of the creek.

Can I eat the fish?

The Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission and Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection have jointly issued a statewide "blanket" consumption advisory recommending no more than one meal (up to 8oz) per week of recreationally caught fish, including hatchery-raised stocked trout.

Mercury and PCBs can be harmful to humans, and all fish, whether wild-caught or farm-raised, will contain some level of these contaminants. Women of child-bearing age, children, elderly, and persons with compromised immune systems may wish to limit their consumption of fish. If you still plan to consume the fish, please follow the cooking and cleaning directions for eating skinned and trimmed fish. These instructions, along with other information, may be found at <http://www.depweb.state.pa.us>.

Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Recognition Program

2007 Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Recognition Program Recipients

On May 3, 2007, the Stormwater Best Management Practices (BMP) Recognition Program announced the exemplary and innovative stormwater management projects that were recognized for helping to transform the health of our watersheds in the region. The event took place at the third annual Urban Watersheds Revitalization Conference, held at the Kanbar Center at Philadelphia University.

The Stormwater BMP Recognition Program is sponsored by the Philadelphia Water Department, American Water Resources Association (AWRA), Montgomery County Conservation District, Villanova University, and the Department of Environmental Protection (Coastal Zone Management).

Please visit the website for more information and to submit an application: <http://www.stormwaterBMP.org>.

Andropogon Associates & Friends of Wissahickon

Valley Green Environmental Restoration Program
 Type of Project: Rain Garden

Gilmore & Associates

Chatham Financial Corporate Headquarters
 Type of Projects: Retention Basin/
 Wet-Pond & Native Species Landscape
 Restoration (Meadows)

Johnson & Johnson

Pharmaceutical Research and Development Spring House Road Property
 Type of Projects: Porous Asphalt
 Parking Lot, Underground Infiltration
 Beds, and Bioretention Swales

Lower Merion Environmental Advisory Council

Riverbend Environmental Education Center
 Type of Projects: Porous Pavement
 Parking Lot and Vegetative Swale

Lower Merion Township

Aqua America Headquarters
 Type of Project: Bioretention
 Parking Lot

Lower Providence Township

Type of Project: Naturalized
 Stormwater Basin

Penni Associates, Inc.

3925 Walnut Street Mixed Use Facility
 Type of Project: Green Roof

Upper Darby Township & Cahill Associates

Second Ward Park
 Type of Project: Stormwater
 Retrofit - Porous Pavement
 Basketball Courts, Bioretention,
 and Tree Trench

Upper Perkiomen High School (UPHS)

UPHS Stormwater BMPs
 Type of Project: Wet-Pond and
 Vegetated Swales

Upper Providence Township

Black Rock
 Type of Project: Naturalized Basin

Warrington Environmental Advisory Committee

Igoe, Porter, Wellings Memorial Field
 Type of Project: Rain Garden

Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association

Sandy Run
 Type of Project: Wetland
 Restoration

Wissahickon Charter School

Harmony Garden
 Type of Project: Infiltration Basin

Roofscapes, Inc. Lifetime Achievement Award

Philadelphia Fencing Academy
 Type of Project: Green Roof