

Tacony-Frankford Watershed Partnership
Public Meeting Notes
Frankford Hospital
1/18/01

Attendance: Approximately 30-35 people were in attendance.

Agenda

Introduction and Agenda Review.

Community Priorities

Watershed Management Overview

Connecting Community Priorities to Watershed Restoration

Activity Updates

1. The group brainstormed and discussed a list of community priorities and concerns.

Community Priorities

Community beautification- (Frankford Style Community Arts Organization handed out a proposal to install a piece of artwork with lighting and signage above the Frankford Creek.)

Stream access

Bank stabilization

Trails

Fishing

Boating

SEPTA (Parking, safety, aesthetics, etc., specifically mentioned for Cheltenham Twp.)

Economic development

Routine sampling of water quality

Knowledge of history

Community Concerns

Raw sewage entering stream- (Particular concerns were expressed about sewage from Parkview Hospital that flows across Greenwood Cemetary, onto the golfcourse, and into the creek.)

Trash in streams, particularly after rainstorms

Floatables

Stormwater runoff

Point source discharges from industry—(Two examples mentioned were Allegheny Iron & Metal and Richmond Steel.) Oil in creek.

Concrete channelization of stream

Crime and safety

Air quality that might degrade water quality

Gravestones dumped along the mouth of the Frankford, near the Delaware River.

Historic solids deposition from Frankford Avenue to the mouth of the Delaware.

Erosion

Avian habitat degradation

1. Ann Smith from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) presented an overview of watershed management.

Ann defined a watershed as “all the land that drains to a specific body of water”. She presented watershed management as a holistic plan for all uses of a water resource that should involve all the residents and stakeholders in the watershed. Ideally, watershed management should integrate environmental objectives with economic, social, and cultural goals; establish a geographic focus based on ecological, not political boundaries; and coordinate actions based on shared information and objectives. Ann displayed a framework for watershed planning and presented possibilities for how to structure a Partnership into several subcommittees, such as a steering committee, a public participation committee, and a technical committee. She cited examples of projects done by the Darby-Cobbs Watershed Partnership to illustrate the benefits of cooperation.

2. Feedback/Questions about forming a Partnership

What is the commitment of the agencies involved? How long do they plan to participate? Will the Partnership be sustainable? (Response from the Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC)- The agencies are committed for at least several years, hopefully longer. The goal to make it sustainable will be to help people feel that they are getting as much out of the Partnership as they are contributing to it.)

Watershed protection is already done independently in Cheltenham Twp. Uncertain how forming a Partnership will be helpful. (Response from PWD-Though a Rivers Conservation Plan is being developed in Cheltenham, they are not performing water quality tests or looking to make improvements in their infrastructure. We need to share our monitoring results with the Township to encourage them to work with us in creating a true watershed management plan.)

Will the Partnership help enforce existing laws that aren't being followed by companies? (Response- Individuals who suspect a violation can contact the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) hotline, 610-832-6000, or the PWD hotline, 215-685-6300.)

3. Suggestions for Partnership

Create a list of watershed-related websites and resources for the public.

Distribute the minutes from each meeting so that those who are absent know what took place beforehand.

Distribute a list of individuals who have attended meetings so far.

Get involved with citizen water quality monitoring groups.

Schedule partnership meetings closer together than the first two. The interest is obviously here, but we need your help to push us forward.

Use Civic Associations and other existing groups help guide a Watershed Walk.

Schedule some meetings further north in the watershed.

4. Discussion about specifics in the Tacony-Frankford

The question was raised as to why the mouth of the old Frankford Creek was not included in the watershed map. It was felt that the old Frankford Creek is a critical section that should be included because it contains a lot of polluted sediments.

Representatives from the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) explained that technically, that section is not in the watershed because the storm sewers drain directly to the Delaware River while combined sewers drain to an interceptor along the river.

However, they would be willing to re-draw the watershed line to incorporate the old mouth of the creek.

In Cheltenham Township, DEP helped perform water quality tests on Mill Run. They discovered high levels of pollutants, including sewage, detergents, and oils, every day at 2pm. Cheltenham would like additional funds to perform additional tests. The only benthos found there were worms.

The group discussed the effectiveness of storm drain traps for trash. Most trash is thought to come from direct dumping rather than through storm drains. However, Cheltenham may not have storm drain traps, which would explain why high levels of trash have been observed there following rainstorms.

The group discussed the possibility of combined sewer overflows ever being eliminated in Philadelphia. It would be an incredibly costly task, and is highly unlikely, according to PWD.

5. Activity Updates

Brian Marengo, an engineer with PWD, displayed a map of the water quality sampling sites chosen in the watershed. Each of those sites is being monitored for a range of chemical, physical, and biological parameters.

Lance Butler, an aquatic biologist from PWD, detailed the types of testing that will be performed. Habitat assessments, species data, and chemical tests will all contribute to the overall analysis.

6. Feedback/ Questions about technical data

One individual questioned why he was refused records of water quality when he contacted one of the technical units of PWD. He stated that he wants future insurance that he will get accurate information when it is requested. PWD explained that monitoring results cannot be shared immediately until they are reviewed for accuracy and reliability. This quality assurance evaluation is a standard requirement by their regulators and internal testing laboratory. PWD's water quality monitoring results will be shared with the Partnership as soon as they are available, following review by the Partnership's Technical Subcommittee.

The question was raised as to what action will be taken if a severe problem is found at a sampling site. PWD explained that it would be reported to either the PWD's Industrial Waste Unit, which investigates illegal discharges originating from PWD's infrastructure, or to the DEP for investigation.

It was requested that Mill Run be added as a testing site.

Next Steps:

1. The PA Environmental Council will create a questionnaire to distribute among those interested in joining the Partnership. The questionnaire will ask the following questions:
What subcommittee do you want to serve on?
When and where do you prefer to meet?

Who else should we invite?

Would you like to help coordinate a “watershed walk”? Which section of the Frankford-Tacony are you most familiar with?

2. Begin making plans for a watershed walk to be held in late March.

3. Form two Partnership Subcommittees based on responses from the questionnaire. The subcommittees will meet independently to plan some further steps. For example, the technical committee will need to decide whether to expand the watershed boundary around the Old Frankford Creek, and whether to add Mill Run as a testing site.