

CURRENTS

PWSA Launches New Online Permitting Portal

The self-serve dashboard simplifies the customer experience and eliminates paper applications.



It was a familiar scene for many Pittsburgh area contractors and engineering consultants. Print out a paper application. Fill in the project information. Drive to 1200 Penn Avenue. Wait in line to speak to an employee. Write out a check. Receive a permit.

Before the pandemic closed our offices to the public, heading to our permit counter in person was the only option for customers. Permitting evolved into email applications when in person was no longer an option, but our staff was still processing permits manually and payment

options were limited. We knew we could do better.

On November 1st, we launched the public portal for five of our most common processes, including dye test certifications, hydrant flow tests, hydrant meters, tap terminations, and residential tap permits. Over the past several months, a cross-departmental team from Customer Service, Engineering, Public Affairs, and Operations developed the online permitting solution. The portal has streamlined the application process so customers can apply from home. Payment methods now include credit cards.

The team selected CityGrows as the software provider with several priorities in mind:

- Cost-effective solution
- Limited staff time required to develop the product
- Ease-of-use for our customers

The product was under budget and ready for launch within eight months. With over-the-counter permits as the first phase priority, a second phase will be launching in early 2022 to include the remaining processes, such as development permits and waterline shut permits.

“Enhanced customer service, shorter processing times, and greater convenience are all possible through the technology improvements underway at the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority,” said Chief Executive Officer Will Pickering. “Providing our residential and commercial customers with the new permitting portal is an example of how we’re proactively improving the PWSA customer experience.”

In preparation for online permitting, our team has modernized the customer experience through increased

COMING UP:

Next Board Meeting: December 17

For a complete list of PWSA's board and community meetings, please visit pgh2o.com/events-meetings.

Following COVID-19 restrictions, meetings are held virtually and may be tentative or postponed.

staffing, standardized regulations, simplified applications, updated permit checklists, tracking inspections, and opening lines of communication.

How It Works

To start an application, customers select a permit. On-screen instructions then guide applicants through the required submittals after creating an account or signing in to an existing account. Automated emails provide status updates and alert the customer when an application requires action. The 24/7 dashboard allows users to view and download issued permits quickly. Each permit application offers the opportunity to chat with staff if questions arise throughout the process.

You can access the portal from our website at
Pgh2o.com/developers-contractors-vendors/permits.

DIRECTOR'S CUT

By Chief Executive Officer Will Pickering



Imagine a Day Without Water 2021: A time to reflect on this life-essential resource



On October 21, we participated in the seventh annual Imagine a Day Without Water, a nationwide day of education and advocacy led by the Value of Water Campaign. We are proud to be one of over 1,200 organizations across the country that raises awareness about the role of water infrastructure in our lives and the importance of investment. The focus of this year's event was to invite people to learn more about where our water comes from and where our wastewater goes.

As part of the event, we partnered with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to host an essay and drawing contest encouraging youth to imagine what a world without water would be like for a day. The response was heartfelt with children and adolescents recognizing the value of reducing water use where they can and how parts of the world do not have access to clean, treated water.

We are fortunate to live in a region where water is plentiful, allowing the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority to have a reliable and high-quality supply of water to provide to our customers. The Allegheny River as the source of our

drinking water provides a constant supply; however, it is time to make the necessary reinvestment in our drinking water system to provide customers with dependable water services for years to come.

Over the next five years, we will invest nearly \$300 million in our [Water Reliability Plan](#), a series of large-scale water improvement projects that will strengthen our water system, add redundancy, and provide an uninterrupted supply of safe, quality water.

We will also continue our aggressive efforts to remove all lead service lines from our system and rehabilitate our network of sewer mains, some of which are over 100 years old. To further reduce the burden of water on our sewers and neighborhoods,

we are executing a series of innovative stormwater management projects and developing a [Stormwater Strategic Plan](#) that will serve as Pittsburgh's blueprint to address local stormwater challenges.

With the passage of the federal infrastructure bill, we recognize how this funding, primarily available to municipalities and publicly owned utilities, could alleviate the financial burden on our ratepayers and help to offset the cost of the investment we must make over the next several years. We expect this infusion of federal funding to advance our infrastructure investment and prioritize the families, workers, and businesses that rely on our services each day.

Being tasked with the stewardship of water within our vast service area is something that we are immensely grateful for. We encourage you to follow us on Twitter [@pgh2o](#), [Facebook](#), or visit our [website](#) to keep up with us as we continue to evolve into a 21st century water service provider that all Pittsburghers can be proud of.

Representative Jake Wheatley and the Pitt Community Engagement Center host fun, informative community events

Our PGH2O Cares team engage with residents on our assistance programs.



From left: PGH2O Cares Analysts, Rebecca Copney and Michael Anania hosting our information tables at community events.

The Pitt Community Engagement Center (CEC) in Homewood held their Community Dinner and Conversation event on October 20th. This event offers residents the opportunity to learn more about the University's commitment of investment, infrastructure, programming, and dedicated staff in neighborhoods such as Homewood and the Hill District. Our PGH2O Cares team was pleased to meet with the residents and join this great event.

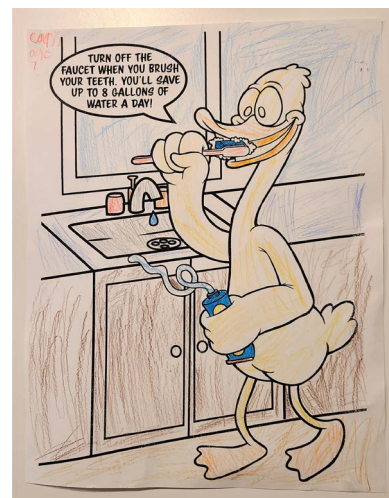
Representative Jake Wheatley hosted its 11th Annual Golden Luncheon on October 21st. This event is filled with food, fun, and fellowship to celebrate the 19th Legislative District's senior population while also providing them with an opportunity to connect with dozens of community partners and governmental agencies.

We are grateful to Rep. Wheatley and the CEC for organizing these important events and the opportunity to help residents learn more about our customer assistance programs!

Imagine a Day Without Water

On October 21, PWSA participated in Imagine a Day Without Water—a day to learn where your water comes from and where it goes. We partnered with the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy to educate Pittsburghers about the importance of water and invited the public to join the movement by submitting a short essay or coloring in one of our water-themed coloring pages as part of a contest. The response was heartfelt and recognized how fortunate we are to live in a region where water is plentiful. Thank you to everyone who participated!

All winners can be found on our website at Pgh2o.com/value-water.



A good reminder to reduce water usage.
Submitted by Caris, Age 7.



PRESS RELEASES

PWSA Launches New Online Permitting Portal,
November 3

Introducing Our Brand-New Service Outages Page!,
October 22

Three Pittsburgh Foundations Support PWSA's Stormwater Master Plan, October 22

PENNVEST Funding Awarded to PWSA, October 21
PWSA Joins Seventh Annual "Imagine a Day Without Water," October 18

Enrollment in PWSA's Bill Discount Program Exceeds 5,000 Customers, October 14

Fall Yard Clean-Up: Good for Your Garden and Our Rivers, October 13

Employee Spotlight: Awards Roundup!

This month – instead of spotlighting just one employee – PWSA will highlight eight employees who were awarded a variety of honors for excellence in their respective fields. Let's get to know a bit more about each awardee.



From left: Tishla Jones (Customer Service Manager), Tracy Willy (Senior AMI and Billing Manager), Brittany Schacht (Senior PUC Compliance Manager), Sharon Gottschalk (Senior Collections Manager), and Crystal Thurston (AMI and Billing Manager).

Both **Linda Leopold** (Water Treatment Plant Lab Project Manager) and **Rob Herring** (Engineering Project Manager) were honored by the Western Pennsylvania Water Pollution Control Association (WPWPCA) for their contributions to the western region of PA. Linda received the Alfred Bologna Water Control Achievement Award for an outstanding job incorporating and implementing her ideas in water pollution control.

Linda is actively involved in attending meetings, where she shares her ideas on both a local and state level for WPWPCA and the Pennsylvania Water

Environment Association (PWEA), another association she has been involved with for close to 20 years.

Rob was recognized with the WPWPCA's Engineer's Service Award for his more than five years of service to the organization and for providing educational operating guidance to the organization and its members. He is currently Secretary of the organization's Executive Board and formerly served as the Chair of the Student's and Young Professionals Committee.

PWSA's Customer Service Management team – **Sharon Gottschalk** (Senior Collections Manager), **Tracy Willy** (Senior AMI and Billing Manager), **Brittany Schacht** (Senior PUC Compliance Manager), **Crystal Thurston** (AMI and Billing Manager), and **Tishla Jones** (Customer Service Manager) – have been awarded with a Special Districts 2021 Technology Innovation Award from Government Technology. Remote work has certainly changed how we all perform our jobs. The Customer Service team didn't miss a beat though, leveraging technology to deliver all

in-person services previously provided to PWSA customers in digital fashions. To mention just two noteworthy achievements, the team implemented a new online payment vendor, increasing eBill adoption to 43%, and have, to-date, enrolled more than 5,000 customers in our Bill Discount Program, working closely with members of our PGH2O Cares Team.

James Stitt (Sustainability Manager) has been recognized by international energy provider NRG Energy, Inc. with an Excellence in Energy Award in the Sustainability category. This honor was the result of his and the Authority's work organizing and participating in the Western PA Energy Consortium (WPEC), which aims to partner with other local municipalities and institutions to pool our energy buying power to attain greater efficiencies, reduce costs, and drive demand toward renewable power.

Congratulations to all our award winners for receiving these well-deserved honors. Thank you all for your commitment to PWSA, our neighbors, the Pittsburgh region, and continued excellence in your areas of expertise!

Interested in working at PWSA?

We are looking for dedicated and talented people to join our team! Visit [Pgh2o.com/careers](https://pgh2o.com/careers)

New Hires

WELCOME ABOARD!

Quentin Carter, Collections Analyst

Thomas "Adam" Gardner, Utility Worker I

Michael Mirena, Utility Worker I

Joshua Reeves, Utility Worker I

Promotions

CONGRATULATIONS!

Clint Bougher, Valve & Hydrant Specialist

Winter Hibernation for Stormwater Construction Projects

As temperatures drop, five of our stormwater improvement projects are settling down for a winter pause before further construction, road restoration, and plantings start in the spring. Freezing temperatures bring a variety of challenges for the installation of underground stormwater storage tanks and pipes as well as aboveground plants and pavement. Digging into frozen ground can be difficult, frost and snow can hurt new plants and trees, and pouring asphalt when temperatures are too cold can lead to future road damage. We will return next spring to continue these important stormwater improvements.



Fresh asphalt and permeable pavers on Kentucky Avenue this fall for the Maryland Avenue Project.

Learn more about our projects!

- **Maryland Avenue Project in Shadyside:**
[Pgh2o.com/maryland-ave](https://pgh2o.com/maryland-ave)
- **Wightman Park Project:**
Phase Two in Squirrel Hill:
[Pgh2o.com/wightman-park-2](https://pgh2o.com/wightman-park-2)
- **Thomas and McPherson Project in North Point Breeze:**
[Pgh2o.com/thomas-mcpherson](https://pgh2o.com/thomas-mcpherson)
- **Woodland Road Project at Chatham University:**
[Pgh2o.com/woodland-road](https://pgh2o.com/woodland-road)
- **Landslide Remediation at Woods Run Project: Phase One in Riverview Park:**
[Pgh2o.com/woods-run_](https://pgh2o.com/woods-run_)

Fifth and Forbes Water Main Project to Continue in 2022



Green areas indicate water main construction work, red areas indicate service line installation.

PWSA's target date for completion of the Fifth and Forbes Water Main Replacement Project is May 2022. To date, crews have completed approximately 46% of the planned work on the project. This includes approximately 75% of the new water main installation. Service line replacement still remains in many portions of the project. Crews' work throughout the winter months is weather-dependent.

For updates, visit [Pgh2o.com/fifthforbeswatermains](https://pgh2o.com/fifthforbeswatermains).

Some Street and Sidewalk Restoration on Hold

Following a construction project, PWSA is responsible for restoring streets and sidewalks. This year, under the 2021 Surface Restoration Project, we restored more than 1,700 locations. This accounts for approximately 79% of the sites assigned to the contract. There are approximately 330 sites, however, that will be delayed until next spring due to cold weather. These sites will be prioritized when warm weather returns. Additionally, it is estimated that the project will accrue approximately 300 more locations from work performed over the winter months.

To search for surface restoration locations in your neighborhood, visit
[Pgh2o.com/projects-maintenance/search-all-projects](https://pgh2o.com/projects-maintenance/search-all-projects).

2021 Capital Spending

Over \$82 million in Capital Improvement Programs in 2021



Crews working on the Maryland Avenue Green Infrastructure Project.

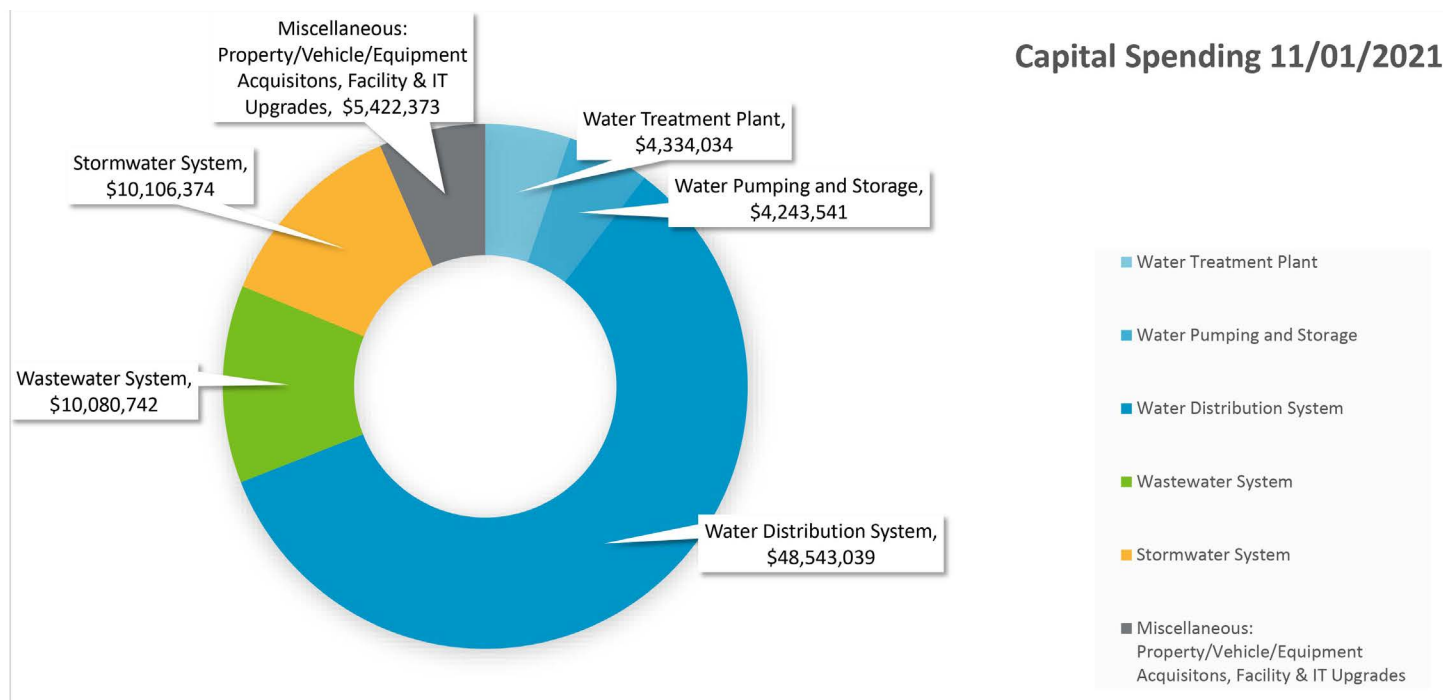
The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority has invested over \$82 million in our Capital Improvement Program (CIP) through November. The initiatives and projects identified in our CIP reflect our commitment to modernize our water

systems and deliver safe and reliable water services to our customers. Funding commitments range from improving our water distribution system, rehabilitating our wastewater infrastructure, and implementing innovative stormwater projects to mitigate runoff caused by too much rain.

Investment in the water distribution system continues to be the area where the most investment occurs. This year, we have committed over \$48 million in funds to rehabilitate or replace identified water lines. Our water team strategically determines these projects based on age and condition of the pipes, and historical records of lead service lines attached to the main.

Additionally, our investment in stormwater projects is becoming a more active part of our capital program. This year, we started construction on five innovative stormwater infrastructure projects that will help to reduce sewer overflows and lessen the amount of pollution entering our waterways. As an example, the Maryland Avenue Stormwater Project, uses green stormwater solutions to reduce runoff entering the combined sewer system.

The graphic below shows a financial breakdown of capital spending in 2021.



PGH₂O WATER WISE

Stormwater Tip: Is Your Yard & Home Ready for Winter?



The arrival of cold winter weather can bring all sorts of issues for your yard and our sewer system. Fallen leaves can clog gutters and storm drains then freeze in place, causing flooding when it rains or snows. Water expands when it freezes, which can crack and damage garden hoses or rain barrels that haven't been emptied.

Prepare your yard and home before winter:

- Drain, remove, and store garden hoses. Close the inside valves that control the water supply to the outside hose spigot, then open the outside spigot to allow any remaining water to drain.
- Clean out roof gutters. Remove leaves and other debris so that the gutters can drain properly when ice and snow melts.
- Rake up leaves. Fallen leaves can smother your lawn or wash away into storm drains. Compost leaves at home, or bring them to a Pittsburgh yard waste drop-off center: pittsburghpa.gov/dpw/leaf-waste
- If you have a rain garden, add a layer of mulch and rake any leaves. This will help the garden manage stormwater during winter and ready it for spring. Avoid cutting back plant growth, since it can provide food and cover for winter birds.
- If you have a rain barrel, drain and store it. Clear the barrel filter of debris. If storing outside, cover with a tarp and leave the barrel spigot open so it can drain any water that may enter. If you have a downspout diverter, switch it to bypass the barrel so that water drains through the downspout.



Defend Your Drains from Fats, Oils, and Grease (FOGs)!



Preparing a Thanksgiving meal can be a huge undertaking, but don't skip the proper clean up. If the messy FOGs produced by cooking a turkey and other foods are poured down your kitchen sink, they can create serious problems in your household plumbing and our sewers.

In fact, FOGs found in meats, cooking oils, dairy products, salad dressings, peanut butter, and other food scraps are a leading cause of sewer backups into basements. When these items are poured down drains, they build up inside sewer pipes and eventually restrict wastewater flow. These blockages cause untreated wastewater to back up into buildings, resulting in high costs for cleanup and repairs.

Keep FOGs out of your sink and our sewers:

- Never pour FOGs down sink drains or in-sink garbage disposals.
- Scrape food scraps from dishes and utensils into the trash or compost as appropriate.
- Wipe up FOGs on dishes and utensils with paper towels and discard them in the trash.
- Pour cooled grease into a sealable container and dispose of it once it is filled.

Learn more at
Pgh2o.com/defend-your-drains.



Customer Assistance Programs

Our Customer Assistance Programs are designed to provide financial relief for income-qualified residential customers who are having difficulty paying their water and wastewater bill.

For more information about our programs, including the Winter Shut Off Moratorium, Bill Discount, Flexible Payment Plans, Hardship Grant, and Lead Line Reimbursements, please visit Pgh2o.com/CAP or call Dollar Energy Fund at [866.762.2348](tel:866.762.2348).

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Donate to the Hardship Grant Program online at Pgh2o.com/give.

Do We Have Your Number?

Did you know that we call customers during water emergencies and outages? It is important to verify that we have the best number to reach you. You can even add multiple numbers for your account, so your entire household is informed about our work.

HOW DO I UPDATE MY CONTACT INFORMATION?

Call PWSA Customer Service: [412.255.2423](tel:412.255.2423) (Press 5)

Visit our website: Pgh2o.com/update-contact-info

Enroll in eBilling

Convenient and easy to use, our online billing and payment portal ensures timely delivery of bills and payments.

Visit Pgh2o.com/ebilling to enroll.

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