

# CURRENTS

## Rediscovering Pittsburgh's Lost Waterways



*A photo of the South Side serpentine steps, part of the area that will see stormwater project improvements as part of the South Side Park Stormwater Project.*

Many years ago, a walk along Shady Avenue in Point Breeze would have passed a string of six small lakes and an icehouse. These Crystal Lakes<sup>1</sup>, from days past, are today the grounds of the Children's Institute and Miracle Park. Another look back, you'll see that the present-day parking lot of PPG Paints Arena hosted a stream that descended from Webster Avenue in the Hill District to the Monongahela River.

Century-old maps of Pittsburgh show plentiful streams, while current maps lack such abundant surface water. Pittsburgh's industrialization and urbanization led to confining many of these streams

to concrete culverts and retaining walls or shunted underground to accommodate the growing cityscape. These hidden streams, which once provided so much ecological value, have been replaced by hard, paved surfaces that cannot absorb and direct water as effectively as softer ground.

As the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) navigates the complexities of protecting our environment through mindful stormwater management, these hidden waterways are emerging as strategies to improve the water quality of our region with sustainable and resilient stormwater infrastructure.

Pittsburgh's hidden waterways once provided countless benefits, such as channeling stormwater runoff, reducing the risks of flooding, filtering pollution into local waterways, and keeping the city cooler compared to the heating effects caused by the hard surfaces in place today. By acknowledging the existence and function of historical watercourses, PWSA can better target green infrastructure plans and projects to recuperate some of the benefits our pre-industrial urban streams once provided.

The South Side Park Stormwater project is a collaborative green infrastructure initiative between Friends of South Side Park, the City Department of Public Works, and PWSA. This project, occurring in the South Side slopes, will partially daylight a historic stream that once ran along Quarry Road, adjacent to 18th Street. By partially restoring the buried waterway and collecting water from hillside seeps, we will reduce the burden on our stormwater infrastructure and alleviate pressure on our aging sewer system. PWSA will also begin constructing a complementary sewer separation project in the South Side Flats. This low-lying

## Next Board Meeting: April 26

For more information and to join a PWSA Board Meeting, please visit [pgh2o.com/board](https://pgh2o.com/board)

For a complete list of PWSA's community meetings and events, please visit [pgh2o.com/events-meetings](https://pgh2o.com/events-meetings).

area receives runoff from the hills above. By constructing a separate stormwater-only pipe, we can reduce sewer overflows into the river and better protect homes and the neighborhood sewer backups. To learn more about the South Side Park Stormwater Project and other projects, visit: [pgh2o.com/projects-maintenance](https://pgh2o.com/projects-maintenance).

When we take actions such as daylighting historic streams and separating stormwater from sanitary sewers, we reduce pollution entering our rivers, flooding in our neighborhoods and basement backups in our homes. This means safer, flood-protected communities. As Pittsburgh continues to evolve, PWSA remains committed to protecting and supporting the health of our communities and our environment. A glimpse into Pittsburgh's past inspires our dedication to our waterways and the well-being of all who depend on us for safe drinking water today and well into the future.

1. G.M Hopkins Company. Historic Pittsburgh Plat Maps. Historic Pittsburgh. [Parts of Wards 20, 21 & 22 | Digital Pitt](#). Accessed 22 Feb 2024.

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## Additional Stormwater Resources

Explore the resources below for additional information about the stormwater fee, the stormwater credit program, and a searchable map to understand the amount of hard surface on your property.

**Stormwater Credit Program:** Property owners choosing to manage stormwater on site may reduce their monthly stormwater charge by installing stormwater management systems such as a rain garden or an underground stormwater system on their property. For information about the stormwater credit and to apply visit [pgh2o.com/stormwater-fee](http://pgh2o.com/stormwater-fee).

**Fee Finder Website:** Use our searchable map to view the amount of impervious surface on your property and understand your stormwater fee. To use the site:

- Launch the [Fee Finder Website](#)
- Enter your address in the search bar and press enter
- Click inside the boundaries of your property for the amount of impervious surface and Equivalent Residential Units (ERU's)
- To determine your fee amount, multiply the number of ERU's by the current stormwater rate and subtract any credits that may apply

**Disputing Stormwater Fee:** If you have questions about the amount of impervious surface calculated for your property or believe there is a discrepancy, please contact our Customer Service department by calling 412-255-2423 (Press 5), to start the process.

**Questions:** Please call PWSA Customer Service at [412-255-2423 \(Press 5\)](tel:412-255-2423) or email [info@pgh2o.com](mailto:info@pgh2o.com) for questions about the stormwater fee or general questions about the credit program. For more information about our plans to manage stormwater, please visit [pgh2o.com/stormwater](http://pgh2o.com/stormwater).

## Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Your donation to PWSA's Hardship Grant Program will directly benefit PWSA customers having difficulty paying their bill. Donate online at [pgh2o.com/give](http://pgh2o.com/give).

## 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](http://pgh2o.com/ebilling) to enroll.

Penn Liberty Plaza 1  
1200 Penn Avenue  
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

### Customer Service\*

T 412.255.2423 (Press 5)

[info@pgh2o.com](mailto:info@pgh2o.com)

*\*translation services available*

### Emergency Dispatch\*

412.255.2423 (Press 1)

Available 24/7

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## Protect your family and home from flooding



Flooding is the most common natural disaster in the United States. Since spring rains bring an increased risk of stream and river flooding, street flooding, and sewage backups, take the following steps today to prepare.

Make an emergency plan for your household, including pets, so that you and your family know what to do and where to go. Pay attention to emergency and weather alerts. We provide direction on where or how to sign up. Remember: never walk, swim, or drive through floodwaters.

Look up the flood risk for your home. Store important documents and valuables in a safe, dry place. Elevate and anchor critical utilities like electrical panels and propane tanks.

Purchase or renew a flood insurance policy through the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Take photos of your property and do an inventory in case of damage.

**Learn more at [Pgh2o.com/your-water/stormwater/flood-preparedness](http://Pgh2o.com/your-water/stormwater/flood-preparedness).**