

CURRENTS

Celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act



The Clean Water Act (CWA), signed into law in 1972 under the Nixon Administration, is the primary federal law governing water pollution in the United States. Administered by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in tandem with state governments, its primary aim is simple: **to restore and maintain the integrity of our nation's waters.**

In the decade prior to the passing of this landmark law, Americans collectively realized the damage human actions had done to our waterways through careless industrial pollution and the discharge of raw sewage into those sources.

Some may remember the notorious 1969 Cuyahoga River Fire in Cleveland, although many may not realize that the river, where hotspots of

industrial activity were situated, **caught fire no less than a dozen times.** As a result of pollution from food processing plants nearby, **more than 26 million fish were killed off** in a single lake in Florida in 1969. And as the *Allegheny Front* recently **reported**, due to industrial pollution and the untreated discharge of sewage into the Delaware River up until the 1960s, a “dead zone” of more than 25 miles was created. This made it impossible for wildlife like fish to survive and, due to decomposing bacteria that gave off noxious fumes, made the river and surrounding areas stink.

Managed through a series of pollution control strategies and programs, the law makes it illegal to discharge any pollutant from a point source (a single point of origin, like

a pipe) into navigable United States waterways and territorial seas unless the appropriate permit is obtained. The EPA has established the federal National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit program, which is locally imposed by the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP).

As a public organization whose mission it is to **protect public health and the environment through the delivery of safe and reliable water services**, all of us at PWSA are responsible for ensuring we operate in compliance with the CWA and help protect our waters.

PWSA is required to comply with our NPDES permit for discharges of wastewater and stormwater associated with industrial activity. This permit includes activities at our Water Treatment Plant and other remote sites that have point source discharges to the Allegheny River. Through best practices, PWSA reduces pollutants that may be picked up by rainfall or snowmelt, and monitors our plant equipment to limit wastewater production.

As another example, we are co-permittees with the City of Pittsburgh for a Municipal

Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit. This permit requires that we follow specific regulations and implement practices to reduce pollutants in our separate storm sewer system.

That also means implementing a plan to ultimately reduce discharge of pollutants into waterways. This is managed under six Minimum Control Measures focused on public education and outreach, illicit discharge detection and elimination, pollution prevention and good housekeeping practices in our operations, and more.

As one last example, last year we established a formal **Environmental Compliance and Ethics Program**. The program is multi-faceted and made up of various components, including a whistleblower system, annual training, and a robust set of policies and procedures, placing environmental compliance and ethics front-of-mind in everything we do.

Be sure to check out this issue of *Currents* for more information celebrating the CWA and detailing how PWSA is helping to protect our waters, the environment, and public health.

Chief Executive Officer Briefing by Will Pickering

A newsletter issue focused on the Clean Water Act & how PWSA protects our waters



As Pittsburghers, we're fortunate to have in our own backyards three mighty rivers. Aside from their natural beauty, recreational benefits, and ecological importance, one river in particular, the Allegheny, serves a much greater purpose: **providing safe and clean drinking water to those in the region.**

Water's fundamental importance means that we at PWSA have a very tall order in protecting those waterways so they can serve generations to come.

In celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act (CWA), this issue of *Currents* recognizes this groundbreaking law and highlights how PWSA remains in compliance to help keep our waters clean.

Throughout this issue, you'll find articles that provide a brief history of the CWA, how it works, and how PWSA uses this important law to guide our work. Our Engineering Report provides a deeper dive into the components of our MS4 permit,

which governs PWSA and the city in reducing pollutants from entering our separate storm sewer system. In our Employee Spotlight, you'll learn more about our Environmental Compliance team, and our In the Community piece shows readers how we're taking to the community to spread public awareness around the CWA.

On a final and related note, as part of our renewed focus on environmental compliance and ethics, last year we established a formal Environmental Compliance and Ethics Program. The program is multi-faceted and made up of various components, including a whistleblower system, annual

training, and a robust set of policies and procedures, placing these important facets of our work front-of-mind.

If I had to impart one takeaway on our readers in honor of this anniversary, it would be this: by nature of our role as a public water utility, we're proud to lead the way when it comes to keeping our waters clean. But that's only part of the challenge, as all of us in our region have a unique role to play in protecting our waters and the environment. Only through sustained, collective action can we make improvements to help ensure our rivers can continue to provide to us the valuable resources they do today.

TEAM PGH2O

Employee Spotlight: Environmental Compliance Team



Back row, left to right: Kumar Navile, Nicole Benoit, and Dan Thiessen. Front row, left to right: Emily Huff and Sarah Koskinen.

PWSA's Environmental Compliance group is responsible for ensuring we operate in accordance with the strict requirements of the law and with high ethical and professional standards. While each day is different, this team manages our Environmental Compliance Program; oversees

activities associated with our NPDES-held permits; conducts inspections in tandem with Operations; leads public education in conjunction with Public Affairs; and much more.

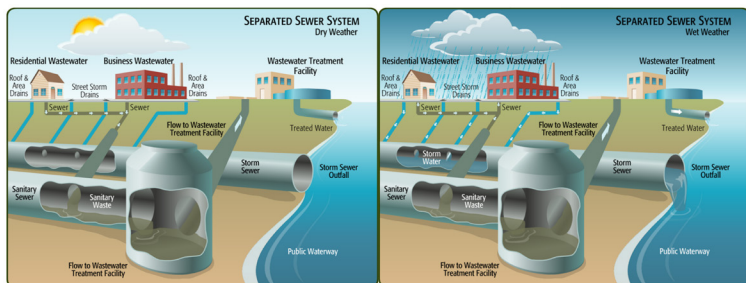
In the past few years alone, this team has been further built out to support our renewed focus

on environmental compliance and ethics. Now made up of six compliance professionals from a variety of backgrounds – like food and steel manufacturing, biology, water distribution, and government – they're led by **Frank Sidari**, Chief Environmental Compliance & Ethics Officer, and **Kumar Navile**, Environmental Compliance Program Manager. Rounding out the team are Environmental Compliance Specialists **Emily Huff**, **Sarah Koskinen**, and **Dan Thiessen** and Senior Environmental Compliance Specialist **Nicole Benoit**. This group hasn't just evolved in size. They've also had a role in evolving how PWSA approaches this compliance work, taking on a more proactive, creative,

and solution-oriented mindset, working closely with departments to find solutions that are both legally sound and in the public interest.

They've also helped increase communication with the PGH2O teams who need it most. In support of that, the team participates in Monday Morning Tailgates at the Aspinwall Water Treatment Plant and our field sites to highlight pertinent compliance- and ethics-related topics, alongside PWSA Operation and Safety staff. Whether that week details illicit discharges or proper chemical storage, the point is this: each of us here at PWSA has an important role to play in driving environmental compliance and ethics.

Complying with Stormwater Regulations



Across about 25% of Pittsburgh, sewage and stormwater are routed into separate underground sewer pipes. When it rains, stormwater enters inlets and storm sewer pipes send it directly to our streams and rivers, along with any harmful pollutants picked up on the ground surface or in the below-ground network.

The City of Pittsburgh and PWSA operate under a Municipal Separate Storm

Sewer System (MS4) permit from the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). This permit requires that we follow specific regulations and implement practices to reduce pollutants from our storm sewer system. It also means implementing a plan to ultimately reduce discharge of pollutants into waterways. This is managed under six Minimum Control Measures focused on public education and outreach, illicit discharge

detection and elimination, pollution prevention and good housekeeping practices in our operations, and more.

Meeting these water quality goals will mean working collaboratively with other local stakeholders to develop stormwater management plans for Pittsburgh's unique geography and existing infrastructure. This includes mapping the entire separate sewer system, establishing an inventory of potential and known sources of pollution, and investigating and inspecting all outfalls routinely or in response to reported illicit discharges or suspected pollution concerns.

To learn more about PWSA's MS4 Permit, visit www.pgh2o.com/MS4.

Preventing Illicit Discharges

Rainwater and snowmelt carried through the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) discharges directly to streams and rivers, meaning anything entering a storm sewer will not be removed at a wastewater treatment plant. This pollution can harm local water quality, fish and wildlife, drinking water intakes, and recreation.

Any unauthorized discharge from the MS4 that is not composed entirely of stormwater is considered an illicit discharge and is prohibited. Follow these tips to prevent illicit discharges:

- Never dump vehicle fluids, grass clippings, leaves, household chemicals, paint, animal waste, car washing soaps, litter, or fats, oils, and greases into storm drains.
- Do not connect sanitary, restaurant waste, or industrial wastewater lines to the storm sewer system.
- Only the following uncontaminated water sources are permitted to enter a storm sewer: water used for firefighting, fire hydrant, and water line flushing; lawn watering; groundwater; and HVAC condensate.

PGH₂O IN THE COMMUNITY

Celebrating the CWA in the PGH Community

In October, the Pittsburgh chapter of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE Pittsburgh), along with PWSA and its other host partners, held a series of events in recognition of the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, capped off by Pittsburgh's first-ever Clean Water Festival on October 15.

The free, family-friendly festival, held at the Millvale Riverfront Park in Millvale, Pa. featured food trucks, exhibitors, artist activities, presentations from water experts – including PWSA CEO Will Pickering – Native American dance performances, water-related activities for all ages, and much more.

PWSA representatives held water-based demonstrations

related to topics like water quality and stormwater, and our PGH₂O Cares team were on site to enroll customers in our Customer Assistance Programs.

We're also hosting an all-employee volunteering event and mixer on October 29 to celebrate the anniversary of this historic and important law. In partnership with Allegheny Cleanways and Friends of the Riverfront, PWSA employees will participate in river- and land-based cleanups along the Monongahela River. This kind of volunteering work will enable us to give back to our community in ways that align with our mission and passion as public servants to keep our waters and community clean. Following the volunteering event – which



Clean Water Festival attendees explore water-based demonstrations

is open to all employees and their families – we're gathering at a nearby restaurant for an afternoon of food and fun to celebrate PWSA, the work we've accomplished, and each other.

If you discover an illicit discharge, please report it to 412-255-2423 (Press 1).

Customer Assistance Programs

Our Customer Assistance Programs are designed to provide financial relief for income-qualified residential customers who are having difficulty paying their PGH2O bill. These programs are managed by our **PGH2O Cares team**, a group of education and outreach professionals dedicated to working directly with our most vulnerable customers to bolster enrollment in our Customer Assistance Programs and identify ways to reduce water usage.



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 our [Customer Assistance Program](#) page or contact the PGH2O Cares team at 412-255-2457 or cares@pgh2o.com.

Additional Assistance Programs

Additional assistance programs are offered separately from PWSA's Customer Assistance Programs.

The **Pennsylvania Housing Assistance Fund (PAHAF)** provides financial assistance to eligible homeowners to help cover water and wastewater charges. Please visit their [website](#) or call 888-987-2423 for more information and to apply.

The **Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN) Clean Water Assistance Fund** is available to eligible residential customers. It is also administered by Dollar Energy Fund. To learn more and apply for assistance, visit the [Clean Water Assistance Fund](#) page.

Neighbors Helping Neighbors

If you can, consider donating to our [Hardship Grant Program](#).

Enroll in eBilling

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

New enrollees who also enroll in the autopay feature on our [website](#) will receive a one-time \$5 discount on their bill.

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.

TO UPDATE YOUR CONTACT INFO:

Call PWSA Customer Service:
412.255.2423 (Press 5)

Visit our [Update Contact Information](#) portal.

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