

CURRENTS

Recap: PWSA’s 2023 milestones set the stage for the continued delivery of safe, reliable water services to you



▶ In 2023, all of us at PWSA worked hard for you, our customers, in the delivery of safe and reliable water services. That commitment to our communities helped us accomplish a great deal in 2023, some of which is highlighted for you in this month’s newsletter.

Getting the lead out

In 2023, PWSA [replaced its 10,000th lead line](#) and [celebrated record low levels of detection](#) in routine lead testing.

Trust your tap

Our most recent [Water Quality Report](#) shows that the drinking water we produce meets

and exceeds all regulatory requirements. Our drinking water has a clean bill of health and this report reinforces that it is safe and of the highest quality. We’re also increasing education and outreach to the community about everything that goes into [keeping our drinking water safe](#).

Leveraging innovative financing

PWSA aggressively pursues funding from state and federal sources that helps to expedite improvements to our water system and minimizes the cost to ratepayers. In 2023, PWSA secured more than \$150 million in new low-interest loans and \$22 million in grant funding

from a mix of federal and state programs. Over time, funding from state and federal partners helps to reduce the cost to ratepayers during a period of unprecedented investment in our essential water systems.



What’s to come in 2024...

Construction of our once-in-a-generation [Water Reliability Plan](#) projects will be a significant focus area for us in 2024. This series of projects will renew century-old

water pumping, storage, and distribution pipes throughout our system.

In 2024, we’ll begin constructing the [Highland Reservoir Pump Station](#), our first new major facility project in more than 20 years. These projects will dramatically improve water service reliability for approximately two-thirds of our customers – meaning that customers can expect fewer service interruptions and low pressure that may have caused precautionary boil water advisories in the past.

As a publicly owned and operated water authority, every dollar we receive is reinvested back into our water system. Looking to 2024, we’ll remain steadfast in our mission to protect public health and the environment through the delivery of safe and reliable water services now and for current and future generations of customers. ♦

More of a visual person? Check out the brief video we made to highlight some of our top 2023 accomplishments.



Engaging our communities in fun, meaningful ways

► Engaging with our communities and those we serve is a critical part of our work here at PWSA. From Board of Directors meetings to neighborhood project updates to special community events, it's our goal to meaningfully connect with and be available to those we serve.

A key element of our community engagement focus is to partner with local schools and youth programs to host fun, interactive water themed learning opportunities.

Led by Holly Bomba, Education and Outreach Associate, these events are crucial in fostering awareness of the work we do and building science literacy for up-and-coming generations.

While this year has only just begun, we're off to a roaring start, having already planned three youth events in the first two months of 2024.

At the end of January, PWSA will visit 10th graders enrolled at the Environmental Charter School to give a talk on water quality, the history of our waterways, and the Allegheny River, the source of our drinking water. In February, we'll partner with Reading is Fundamental and visit Pittsburgh Public Schools students K-5th grade to talk about drinking water and host a water-based story time. That same month, we'll resume our partnership with the Pittsburgh Project to deliver to students grades 1-5 what we're calling Water Quality



The EnviroScape watershed model is just one tool PWSA uses to teach students about water pollution, our rivers, sewer systems, and stormwater. Experimenting with different color-coded "sources" of pollution, students can then observe the effects pollution has on the overall watershed during a simulated rainstorm.

Chemistry. In this fun lab, students play scientists who make the water safe to drink for our city, creating crazy, color changing potions in a hands-on exploration of water chemistry,

water treatment, and more. There's plenty more to come in 2024! For more information, please visit our [Events & Meetings](#) website. ♦

TEAM PGH2O

Employee Spotlight: Dana Mitro



► Please give a warm welcome to **Dana Mitro, Human Resources Analyst**, and one of the newest faces of Team PGH2O. In her role, Dana is responsible for managing employee data and running related reports that help, for instance, inform HR decision-making and ensure we're meeting our diversity and hiring goals. As someone who manages sensitive data, she

also serves as a steward of that data, upholding important transparency and accountability standards.

What do you like about working for PWSA? My time so far at PWSA has been

enriching! My colleagues have made it a great experience. The helpfulness of everyone I've encountered, both within and outside my department, creates a positive and collaborative work environment. Working alongside respectful, courteous, and kind individuals has been a pleasure, making my interactions with coworkers one of my favorite parts of working at PWSA. In addition, what

drew me to PWSA initially was its mission and values, which resonated with me as someone dedicated to serving the public.

What sort of impact do you hope your contributions will have in our region? I

hope to improve upon my role by delivering even more comprehensive analyses that will continue to improve our organizational practices so we can best serve our communities.

What is the best advice you've ever heard? Embrace personal growth by dedicating yourself to continuous learning. It will enrich your professional skills and teach you to be more adaptable and innovative in your career.

What do you enjoy doing outside of work? I like creating digital art and biking around Pittsburgh. You may see me if you ever bike along the Great Allegheny Passage!

What book or movie have you recently read or seen and would you recommend it? *Godzilla Minus One*, which was delightful, even for someone (like me) who hasn't seen any previous Godzilla films.

What's the weirdest fact you know? Most wasabi is not genuine. Instead, it is often crafted from horseradish. The authentic wasabi plant is notoriously challenging and costly to cultivate and must be consumed fresh to maintain its distinct flavor. ♦

Chief Executive Officer Briefing by Will Pickering

How do low-interest loans and grants save our ratepayers' money?



The financial picture I'm painting is to get at something of great importance to our customers. Because of our public status, we're eligible for cost-effective, low-interest loans and grants from local, state, and federal funding sources.

This kind of external funding keeps rates as low as possible during a time when we're making unprecedented levels of investment in our essential water systems.

In 2023, **PWSA secured more than \$150 million in new**

low-interest loans and \$22 million in grant funding from a mix of federal and state programs. PWSA is committed to leveraging as many of these outside financing options as possible to minimize the burden to customers to pay for necessary upgrades to our aging water system. ♦



PWSA CEO Will Pickering (second from right) and EPA Assistant Administrator for Water Radhika Fox (third from right) celebrate a \$52.4 million loan PWSA received for Water Reliability Plan projects.

▶ PWSA's standing as a publicly owned and operated utility is a win for our customers. This status means every dollar we receive from customers is invested back into our water systems, a benefit for all of those we serve. At PWSA, it's about service, not the bottom line – we don't have shareholders and don't generate a profit.

ENGINEERING REPORT

PWSA Awarded \$500,000 Grant from CFA

▶ PWSA was recently awarded a **\$500,000 grant** from the Commonwealth Financing Authority (CFA) to help fund our **Urgent Lead Service Line Replacement Program**.

The projects in this Program help protect water quality and public health by coordinating the replacement of any private lead service lines identified during unplanned or emergency work on a public service line.

This coordinated, simultaneous replacement of both public and private service lines prevents "partial" lead line replacements, known to have a negative impact on water quality, and can reduce the financial burden to customers who experience a private service line leak.

This Program is one of several lead remediation programs underway as we make progress on our goal of replacing all lead service lines by 2026. Partnerships with financing bodies like CFA help us protect public health while minimizing the impact to ratepayers.

Grants like this have an added benefit, helping bolster the economic vitality of our region. This grant will translate to a nearly \$900,000 economic impact, helping fuel our local economy, create jobs, and keep money in our communities.

As a public water utility, PWSA is eligible for these kinds of funding opportunities, which are invested directly back into our water system without profit



Contractors in the East End begin the replacement of lead lines as part of the Urgent Lead Service Line Replacement Program.

motive. Over time, funding from state and federal partners helps to reduce the cost to ratepayers during a period of unprecedented investment in our essential water systems. ♦

How to protect green infrastructure during winter



Green stormwater infrastructure, like rain gardens, permeable pavement, and rain barrels, mimic nature to capture, store, and filter stormwater. This infrastructure continues to function during winter, helping reduce flooding and river pollution.

Follow the below tips to protect green infrastructure during winter:

- Don't overapply de-icing salt or sand, especially next to green infrastructure. De-icing salts harm plants and water quality and sand can clog green infrastructure.
- Don't shovel snow piles next to or on top of green infrastructure. Snow piles block stormwater flow and crush plants and soil.
- Ensure rain barrels are drained and spigots are left open to prevent freeze damage. Switch downspout diverters to bypass barrels so stormwater drains through the downspout.
- On a snow-free, sunny day, take a peak at garden projects. If the soil isn't frozen, clean debris and loosen the soil.

Learn more: [Help Manage Stormwater.](#)

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 own Customer Assistance Programs. Please see below for a listing of available programs.

The **Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN) Clean Water Assistance Fund** is available to eligible residential customers. It is 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 \(www.pgh2o.com/give\)](#).

Enroll in eBilling

Convenient and easy to use, our [online billing and payment portal \(www.pgh2o.com/ebilling\)](#) ensures timely delivery of bills and payments.

Track Water Use

Visit our [Customer Advantage Portal](#) to track water use in real time and receive alerts when there's a spike in water use.

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](#).

Stay in the know with PGH2O!

Join our email list to make sure you're getting the latest news and updates. Signing up is simple on our [News & Events](#) page.

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