

Cranberry Township partners with Haine Middle School each year by stenciling messages by catch basins to increase the awareness of proper stormwater management.



## Financing new state and federal stormwater requirements

Officials in Cranberry are giving serious thought to new ways of paying for increasingly costly mandates from state and federal authorities concerning the Township's stormwater management. It's an issue facing municipalities throughout the Commonwealth. Stormwater management practices have become a matter of urgency because of increasingly heavy rainfalls and, at least in Southwestern Pennsylvania, associated pollution, flooding, erosion and landslides.

This past March, the Township received a new five-year permit from the state Department of Environmental Protection. It allows Cranberry to discharge the stormwater it accumulates into "Waters of the Commonwealth." Those Commonwealth waters include streams like Brush Creek and Coal Run that flow through Cranberry's municipal boundaries. But one of the permit's new conditions was a requirement that the Township restore approximately a mile of stream bank along Brush Creek to reduce pollution from sedimentation.

Pollution reduction – which was recently added to DEP's permitting requirements – comes on top of other state-prescribed control measures, including the maintenance of Cranberry's already extensive network of publicly-owned catch basins, conduits, detention ponds and pipelines that protect state and local roads, as well as buildings, against flooding. Until now, the costs associated with that system's

upkeep were financed out of general tax revenues.

But as those costs grew – exacerbated by PennDOT's withdrawal from stormwater system maintenance along state roads – Township officials began seeing the need for a dedicated revenue stream as well as for greater clarity regarding the costs associated with its stormwater management practices. Although Pennsylvania has issued a variety of mandates for dealing with stormwater, it doesn't provide any funds for complying with them.

Details of how Cranberry plans to pay for these new and mounting costs are still being formulated. Most municipalities facing this issue have instituted stormwater fees – operating their stormwater systems much like their other public utilities where the more you use, the more you pay. Under that scenario, property owners with the greatest impact on the municipality's stormwater costs, such as large retail and office developments, would pay in proportion to their impervious surfaces. Those surfaces include things like parking lots, sidewalks, roofs, driveways and other solid features that collect stormwater, some of which drains into the municipal system.

Nothing has been decided yet, but detailed strategies will be developed over the next few months – using information learned through public outreach – as the Township continues exploring its options to address this costly new mandate.

## Sewer and water rate increases in the pipeline



Rates for the Township's sanitary sewer service were raised April 5 in response to increasing costs. Charges for the service are based on each customer's metered water use plus a monthly minimum charge that varies with the water meter's size. For homes served by 5/8-inch supply lines – the most frequent for residential use – that charge is currently \$7.00 plus consumption fees of \$8.48 per 1,000 gallons. The typical home uses 5,000 gallons of water per month. The new rate, which represents a 50¢ per 1,000-gallon increase as well as a \$2 per month increase in the base rate, went into effect with the June billing cycle. The combined monthly impact for an average home is \$4.50. In addition, West View Water Authority has indicated that it will be raising the price of providing fresh water to Cranberry effective September 1, which will be reflected in new rates for Township water service.



### The water's great

Cranberry's 2017 federal water quality report is available online. Check it out at [www.Cranberrytownship.org/waterqualityreport](http://www.Cranberrytownship.org/waterqualityreport) or call 724-776-4806 for a print version.