Beginners guide to the City-Wide Green First Plan

The Green First Plan focuses on identifying how green infrastructure can be implemented at small and large scales to address current needs to manage stormwater and also maximize the future benefits provided by the City's water infrastructure. The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority (PWSA) released a draft of this Green First Plan to the public, and will accept comments through January 31, 2017.

Background

The City of Pittsburgh is largely served by a combined sewer system. During dry weather, the system conveys wastewater to the treatment plant run by the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN), where it is treated and returned to the Ohio River. During storms, the combined sewer system may become overfilled, causing overflows of combined sewage and stormwater to pollute our waterways. When the pipes fill up too quickly, some parts of the city may experience local flooding during large storm events. These overflow events are water quality violations, and municipalities in the region must take action to reduce their volume and frequency.

Green infrastructure mimics natural processes to slow and capture runoff. This approach reduces the number and volume of overflow events and the likelihood of neighborhood flooding and backups. In addition, green infrastructure can provide environmental, economic and social benefits that would not be provided with traditional sewer engineering projects.

What is the Draft City-Wide Green First Plan?

With the goal of managing stormwater runoff from 1,835 acres by 2032, PWSA carefully evaluated the potential for green infrastructure to manage stormwater in Pittsburgh. The Green First Plan provides a planning strategy that can be used to implement green infrastructure throughout the City. Working with a team of stormwater experts, PWSA evaluated the existing sewer system, historical rainfall data, known hazard and flooding locations, and places where streams are diverted into the sewer system. Thirty priority sewersheds were evaluated during the planning effort to identify opportunities for overflow reduction. Taking into account topography, development trends, and feedback from local communities, PWSA worked with urban planners to select six sewersheds and developed project concepts for combining stormwater management and neighborhood revitalization.

Next Steps

In 2017, PWSA will work with partners to establish implementation plans for the highest priority areas. Over the next five years, PWSA is planning to expand demonstration projects into larger sewershed scale projects, while establishing programs that engage stakeholders throughout the City.

Learn more about the Draft City-Wide Green First Plan on our webpage