



Cooperative Efforts Keep Water Healthy in Green Tree Borough

By Heidi Hormel, Contributing Writer

A stormwater fix in Green Tree Borough, Allegheny County, might be a fabled unicorn project: it involved three government entities and still saved money.

The Poplar Street Stormwater Project, completed in the fall of 2018, brought together the borough, the PA Department of Transportation (PennDOT), and the Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (ALCOSAN).

Dave Montz, Green Tree Borough manager, explained that about 10 years ago ALCOSAN and all the communities that contribute

flow to it were placed under a federal consent decree to reduce overflows throughout the system.

One of the big problems was the amount of stormwater that flowed into the plant. Although Green Tree has separate stormwater and sanitary sewer systems, both flowed into ALCOSAN.

Initially, the only feasible option to fix the problem seemed to be finding a solution and sharing the costs with both the city of Pittsburgh and Crafton Borough, which were both “downstream” of Green Tree.

In the meantime, ALCOSAN offered Green Revitalization of Our Waterways (GROW) grants that paid up to 85 percent of the cost of projects that got flows out of the system.

After determining that the borough was sending an estimated 23 million gallons of stormwater per year to ALCOSAN, Green Tree, home to 4,400 residents, decided to redirect this flow to Bells Run – where it should always have gone, according to Montz,

who has been with the borough for 30 years, 26 of which has been as manager, said the stormwater flow decision was made before his tenure.

Cost Savings

What made the \$500,000 Poplar Street project so attractive was that it cost pennies per gallon to solve the problem.

The state got involved when PennDOT’s district executive had a meeting to discuss with municipalities the work the department would be doing and coordinating the stormwater and PennDOT repaving projects was just the kind of cooperation she was looking for. The department even was amenable to expediting the paving to make the timeline work.

To restore the 500 feet dug up by the borough’s project was about \$250,000, but PennDOT’s repaving took care of that, slashing Green Tree’s budget in half, by just coordinating with the state agency.

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***Dave Montz, Manager
Green Tree Borough***

That left the borough with a \$272,651 bill. The GROW grant paid for 85 percent of this with the remainder paid for out of a \$5 maintenance fee already included with residents' sewer bills.

Creative Solutions

The borough also used ingenuity and brainstorming to meet goals.

The borough engineer identified that a major source of water coming into the sanitary sewer system (and to ALCOSAN) was from the municipal swimming pool.

Of course, when the pool was in use, its water had to drain into the sanitary sewer. However, when the pool was emptied for the season, the water from the drains was still going into the sanitary sewer.

During a brainstorming session, the engineer suggested the empty pool was "acting like a large parking lot." With that in mind, he created a diversion system so during the nine months of the year the pool is not in use, the rainwater and melted snow from the drains goes into the stormwater system.

Less visible to the public, Green Tree has lined some of its sewer lines to reduce and/or eliminate infiltration and inflow.

In addition to the assent decree, the borough is under the Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) Program.

So on top of the Poplar Street project, Green Tree has been working to follow those guidelines by removing downspouts as well as adding more green space in multiple ways, such as taking out concrete from traffic islands at intersections in order to create planters and removing a little-used basketball court at a park to reduce its impervious surface.

"There are a lot of things I'm proud of," Montz said, "We were able to identify and correct a situation that was done at an affordable cost and something that

goes on for perpetuity. It's nice to do projects people can physically enjoy, like parks. This was a project that people don't see, but the overall affect for environmental purposes is great."

He was equally proud that three governmental entities worked together and saved money.

"People don't think we do that enough," he added. "We do it more than people realize we do."

For more about Green Tree Borough, visit www.greentreeboro.com. 

