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John Heinz

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# THE SEWAGE OVERFLOW



## CRISIS IN ALLEGHENY COUNTY

### NOW IS THE TIME FOR LEADERSHIP

Imagine more than 130 stadiums overflowing with raw sewage. Now imagine that sewage filling our region’s streams and rivers. That’s the reality of this crisis: 16 billion gallons of sewage overflow annually, resulting in chronic basement backups, contamination of our primary source of drinking water and potential economic development restrictions in 83 communities throughout our region.

During nearly every rainfall or snow melt, excess water gets into the aging and deteriorated municipal sewer systems, which results in untreated sewage overflowing into our streams and rivers. These overflows violate the EPA’s federal Clean Water Act, mandating that the overflows be eliminated and/or controlled.

In order to solve this \$3 billion problem, elected officials and community leaders must get involved in developing inter-municipal strategies. Now is the time for communities to join forces in this effort because:

- Uncoordinated sewer system rehabilitation by individual communities may not have the desired impact.
- Watershed-based, inter-municipal solutions are more cost-effective.
- A proactive approach helps communities maintain control of the rehabilitation and avoid EPA fines and penalties.
- New EPA regulations are becoming more stringent. (Newly appointed EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman has indicated that the elimination of sewage overflows will be a top priority.)
- Delaying repairs and rehabilitation will be more costly later.
- Many families in our communities experience chronic basement backups and raw sewage in neighborhood streams and other publicly accessible areas.

### A RESOURCE FOR HELP

The 3 Rivers Wet Weather Demonstration Program (3RWWDP) is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to help Allegheny County communities control existing sewer system overflow issues through grant money, new technologies and inter-municipal cooperation. Communities tackling their sewer problems through innovative and cost-effective solutions are eligible to receive grant money from 3RWWDP. In addition, the organization is helping communities to develop watershed-based solutions through the formation of multi-municipal groups in eight planning basins throughout the region.

For more information, contact 3RWWDP at 412-578-8375.

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