

Frequent Heavy Rain Events Spell Stormwater Trouble

Township News, Winter 2019

Stormwater runoff is rainfall or snowmelt that flows off the surface of the land instead of permeating into the soil. Today, construction standards to regulate this runoff are stricter than they've ever been. Stormwater management systems have become a major requirement of any large development project with permits required by the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) to control runoff volume, rate and quality. However, that wasn't the case years ago and the extraordinarily heavy rain the Township experienced this year has exposed that fact.

Neighborhoods older than 10 or 15 years – which includes much of the Township – don't have nearly the same amount of stormwater design and infrastructure as newer developments. Minimal requirements and a desire to preserve natural features may have led to the deferment of the construction of manmade stormwater infrastructure in years past.

“When I meet people new to the Township, they almost always comment on its natural beauty,” says Township Community Development Director Mike Mrozinski, who notes that it's a unique feature of Lower Providence that many natural features remain even though the Township is mature and almost fully built-out.

Finally, the addition of sheds, gardens, playsets and the like to backyards have had a cumulative impact on stormwater runoff. Bottom line: The Township is left with less than ideal stormwater management in some areas.



The destructive power of water is seen in this photo from October when heavy rains pulled a storm pipe out of the ground and destroyed a portion of the roadway on Catfish Lane.

Residential stormwater issues are subject to very limited regulation, says Mrozinski. Most fall outside the scope of Township's authority. “For the majority of situations, the most effective way to solve this kind of issue is to work cooperatively with your neighbor,” says Mrozinski. There are many things that homeowners can do to mitigate issues and the Township is happy to assist property owners and neighbors who want to work together.

Neighbors need to remember that water does not follow property boundaries and it is important to realize that activities on your property can adversely affect your neighbor. The first thing to do as a responsible neighbor is to familiarize yourself with how stormwater flows on your own property. Ask yourself how does water enter and exit my property? Are

there areas of concentrated flow currently causing damage to your property or adjacent neighboring property? If so, flows can be re-directed to vegetated areas for infiltration. You can also install a rain barrel, cistern, rain garden, or dry well as needed to control roof run-off.

Informative resources for homeowners regarding stormwater best management practices, such as “A Homeowners Guide to Stormwater Management” can be found on the Township website, www.lowerprovidence.org/stormwater-management, and at the Penn State Extension, extension.psu.edu. Questions can be directed to mmrozinski@lowerprovidence.org.