

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

Stormwater a costly problem

The disastrous 1972 flood in Pottstown caused by Hurricane Agnes was supposed to be a “one-in-500-years” event.

But Houston has experienced three “500-year” flood events in just the last three years.

With climate change and ever more natural areas being paved over for development, flooding will be far more common in the future than it has been in the past.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton

Meanwhile, state and federal environmental agencies are cracking down on municipalities to reduce flooding and keep pollutants out of our streams and rivers.

Last year, consulting engineers conducted a stormwater management study for Pottstown.

Covered streams

Pottstown has four streams totaling 6.5 miles that were covered over as the town was developed. Much of Pottstown’s stormwater is diverted into these streams, which flow into the Manatawny and the Schuylkill River.

But the stone arches covering these streams have begun to fail. One arch under Walnut Street near York street collapsed in 2004 and cost \$600,000 to repair.

It’s bad enough if an arch fails un-

der a street, where at least it’s accessible. But 80 percent of these covered streams flow under private property, including scores of buildings.

Pipes and inlets

In addition, Pottstown has more than 40 miles of pipes to carry stormwater to the Manatawny Creek and Schuylkill River. They too are old and need to be repaired or replaced.

And the borough has 1,751 inlets for these pipes that have been kept clear and maintained.

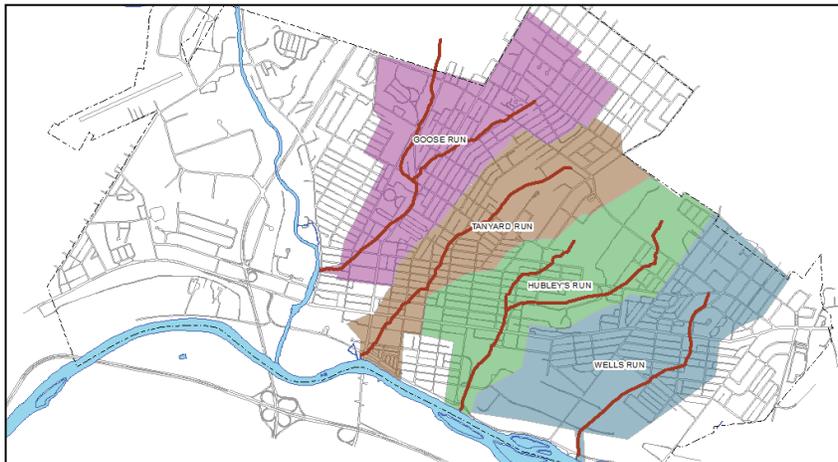
The borough will also have to install traps and trenches to remove road grit and sediment from the stormwater before it flows into the Schuylkill River.

The consultants estimate it will cost millions of dollars to maintain this system in the coming decade.

All this work cannot be wished away. The borough faces increased flooding and regulatory fines if it isn’t done.

Next week: How to pay for it.

Projected annual stormwater costs	
Ramp-up	\$780,000
Years 1-3	\$900,000
Years 4-6	\$950,000
Years 7-9	\$1,450,000
Years 10-12	\$1,420,000



COVERED STREAMS — Pottstown has four major streams totaling 6.5 miles that were arched over as the borough was developed. In addition, the borough has more than 40 miles of underground stormwater pipes and 1,751 inlets. This infrastructure is aging and needs repairs and upgrades.