Citizens Advisory Council

Good morning. I'm Wendi Taylor and this morning I am here representing the PA Chapter of the Sierra Club.

The Pennsylvania Sierra Club is one of the founding members of the Clean Rivers Campaign in Pittsburgh, a coalition which includes Action United, Clean Water Action, Nine Mile Run Watershed Association, Pennsylvania Interfaith Impact Network and Pittsburgh United.

For four years our coalition of faith, low income, minority, labor and environmental organizations has been waging a campaign to end the practice of dumping 9 billion gallons a year of raw sewage into the three rivers.

Allegheny County Sanitary Authority (known as ALCOSAN) is under a federal consent decree to stop releasing its sewage into the rivers. ALCOSAN has proposed spending $3 billion to fix the problem by building more than 14 miles of tunnels under the rivers to catch the storm water. This cost would be borne by the citizens living in the 83 municipalities served by ALCOSAN.

The Clean Rivers Campaign wants to solve this problem with a green-first approach. This means we would invest that $3 billion in green infrastructure in a smart scientific way to keep as much stormwater as possible out of our sewers. Once we have done the maximum amount using green infrastructure, we would then figure out what other kinds of gray infrastructure we would need to finish the job of cleaning our rivers. Regions that have taken this approach have found that these investments bring many benefits back to their neighborhoods such as local jobs, revitalized business districts, less flooding and a cleaner and healthier environment.

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The PA Department of Environmental Protection took a very important and positive step when they gave the affected municipalities an 18- month extension on their consent orders and encouraged the 83 municipalities to use green methods to reduce their stormwater.

The Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority is attempting to conduct a system-wide study on green infrastructure and invited the affected municipalities to participate

in this study. This would provide a first ever SYSTEM WIDE look at the potentials for using green infrastructure. Even though the campaign has been told that participating in this study would satisfy DEP, the water and sewer authority is having a hard time getting the municipalities to participate because they are under the false impression that it will not fulfill the requirements of the new DEP consent orders.

We need to get the word out to the municipalities. We have a letter asking Secretary Quigley to reassure municipalities that the Pittsburgh Water and Sewer Authority study would satisfy DEP's requirements.

We are asking that you, the Citizens Advisory Council, to deliver this letter to Secretary Quigley and with your recommendation to honor the campaign's request. Thank you.

What Is Green Infrastructure?

Green infrastructure is a term that can encompass a wide array of specific practices, and a number of definitions exist (see the EPA's definition here). In our view:

Green infrastructure is an approach to water management that protects, restores, or mimics the natural water cycle. Green infrastructure is effective, economical, and enhances community safety and quality of life.

It means planting trees and restoring wetlands, rather than building a costly new water treatment plant. It means choosing water efficiency instead of building a new water supply dam. It means restoring floodplains instead of building taller levees.

Green infrastructure incorporates both the natural environment and engineered systems to provide clean water, conserve ecosystem values and functions, and provide a wide array of benefits to people and wildlife.

Green infrastructure solutions can be applied on different scales, from the house or building level, to the broader landscape level. On the local level, green infrastructure practices include rain gardens, permeable pavements, green roofs, infiltration planters, trees and tree boxes, and rainwater harvesting systems. At the largest scale, the preservation and restoration of natural landscapes (such as forests, floodplains and wetlands) are critical components of green infrastructure.

Green infrastructure investments boost the economy, enhance community health and safety, and provide recreation, wildlife, and other benefits.

Many forward-looking cities are already embracing green infrastructure, including New York, Chicago, Portland, Seattle, San Francisco, Minneapolis-St. Paul, Milwaukee, Kansas City, Toledo, Cincinnati, and Philadelphia, as well as many others.

Why Choose Green Infrastructure?

- **Nature works best**: Rivers, streams, wetlands, floodplains, and forests provide a suite of critical services like clean water and flood protection, and should be viewed as essential and effective components of our water infrastructure. New York City has great quality tap water because the city invested in water protection by purchasing land around its Catskills reservoirs to ensure that polluted runoff from roads and lawns doesn't enter the water supply. The city's $600 million investment in Catskills land protection and restoration did the job of $6 billion in capital costs to construct a water filtration plant as well as $200-300 million in annual operation and maintenance costs.
- **We can't waste money**: Spending money wisely means investing in multi-purpose solutions that lower costs and provide more benefits. Recently, the City of Indianapolis announced that by using wetlands, trees, and downspout disconnection to reduce stormwater flows into their combined sewer system, the City will be able to reduce the diameter of the planned new sewer pipe from 33' to 26', saving over $300 million.
- **We must enhance community safety and enjoyment**: Traditional infrastructure isn't designed to handle the increased floods and droughts that come with global warming, so we need a modern approach to protect public health, safety, and quality of life. Green solutions give communities the security and flexibility they need. Napa, CA solved flooding problems by choosing to restore the Napa River's natural channel and wetlands, rather than lining the river with concrete. The effort has protected 2,700 homes and prevented $26 million in flood damage each year, and has created new parks and open space.

Green Infrastructure Is Good For Jobs and the Economy

These green solutions create good jobs in many sectors, including plumbing, landscaping, engineering, building, and design. Green infrastructure also supports supply chains and the jobs connected with manufacturing of materials including roof membranes, rainwater harvesting systems, and permeable pavement.

New York City's broad sustainability plan, PlaNYC, includes substantial investments in green infrastructure to reduce stormwater and sewage overflows and protect drinking water supplies. The City estimates that full implementation of PlaNYC will create 4,449 water infrastructure jobs of all types per year.

- See more at: http://www.americanrivers.org/initiatives/pollution/green-infrastructure/what-is-green-infrastructure/#sthash.1KmC9MXl.dpuf