SEEKING GREATER CLARITY ON STORMWATER

The pond that follows the bend along Cranberry Woods Drive in the business park of the same name, is a joy to see. Ringed by woods and cattails, with a fountain gushing from its core, it has long been a favorite stop for employees and residents walking the park's nearby trail system.

Built by MSA in the early '80s, when the business park was first carved out of what had previously been a forested church retreat, the pond is more than just a scenic asset. It is actually an integral feature of the property's stormwater handling system, receiving runoff from a series of small water channels that traverse the hillside above it, draining the park's paved surfaces. Water accumulated in the pond is released into Brush Creek at a rate controlled to minimize the risk of downstream flooding.

But until earlier this year, an aerial view of the pond told a different story. At its southernmost point, where tributaries drain into the pond, the water had turned a murky brown – the result of soil, eroded from the channel banks, being washed down the hillside and into the pond. Not only does the soil create a murky mess, it degrades the stormwater control design of the pond.

Beyond that, the muck violates a recent agreement between Cranberry Township and Pennsylvania's Department of Environmental Protection to decrease sedimentary pollution by reducing erosion and by requiring regular maintenance of stormwater ponds, of which there are currently 367 in Cranberry. But fixing theirs, the Cranberry Woods Association learned, would cost a million dollars – a figure which gave its members serious pause.

Eventually, through the intervention of Township staff, DEP, and the Association's own consulting engineer, a solution was crafted that cost only a quarter million dollars – one which, at the same time, protected its network of tributaries from undergoing further erosion.

Although Cranberry Woods' pond may be the community's largest and most visible, every pond in the Township – including 42 below-ground stormwater detention facilities – now requires regular maintenance and inspection. In essence, that mandate means whoever owns a stormwater detention facility, whether above or below ground, is responsible for maintaining it. The goal, in the event of a major storm, is to make sure it works as designed.

Understanding both the operation of stormwater management facilities and their maintenance is fundamental to satisfying the state's requirements. But it's not something people usually know a lot about. So, to help pond owners learn about their systems and their own responsibilities for keeping them up – whether they're individuals, companies, or homeowner associations – Township Waterworks Coordinator Tim Schutzman will be offering free one-hour workshops at intervals throughout the year, focused on pond maintenance issues.

"We're encouraging people to educate themselves at these workshops, to avail themselves of consultation that we will provide upon request and to raise awareness about the importance of complying with the maintenance requirements," he said. "That's because it would minimize the risk of flooding and help to catch minor maintenance problems before they become costly repairs. Also," he added, "the guidelines established by DEP, which were incorporated into Butler County Act 167, requires that Cranberry be given the power to assess fines for non-compliance."

But that's an extreme measure Schutzman is working hard to avoid. 🏠

Cranberry's Annual Fire Hydrant and Distribution System Flushing Underway

This routine maintenance operation is designed to flush sediment from the water system, check fire hydrant operation, and test chlorine levels in the water lines throughout the Township. Flushing is conducted Monday through Friday between 7:00 AM and 4:00 PM. Discolored water and fluctuations in water pressure are normal during flushing. The Township suggests that customers refrain from doing laundry when their neighborhood lines are being flushed. View the current flushing schedule at CranberryTownship.org/Flushing.