

Meeting About Storm Drain Art

Thursday, December 3, 2015

A large group of people attended the meeting held at AmeriThai Restaurant and the discussion was lively. Rachel Cox arranged for Chris Anderson, Community Planner at the Water Department to present to us. He explained that the Water Department is quite willing to work with us on this project.

In response to questions, Chris explained how the storm drains work. Trash placed in the storm drains will be filtered out by the water processing plant. However when there is heavy rain, the pipes cannot handle the volume and the dirty water is discharged to an outfall pipe. The end result of these discharges is that the rivers become degraded and stream banks are eroded. The Water Department has chosen to handle this issue by constructing many individual storm water management projects.

Chris also told us that opening fire hydrants will lessen water pressure on the block and could potentially cause a water main break if it is not turned off correctly.

In response to a question about screens over the inlets, Chris said that there are 75,000 inlets throughout the city and any screens would have to be pulled before a rain storm. In addition there are 18 different types of inlets. Chris recommends that any painting be on top of the inlet and does not seal the cover. He suggests that we don't go into the streets because that would have to be handled by the Streets Department. The Water Department will give us permission to paint the inlet and concrete. They will supply the equipment, safety vest, etc. for us to apply existing decals on the inlets. These are now very colorful and describe the watershed for each part of the city.

Chris will reach out to his contact at the Mural Arts Project to see if funds are available for painting the storm drains. He stated that there are maintenance grants for community groups to maintain storm water projects within their borders. One example of this project is the trees planted around Jenks School. Several people expressed interest in this maintenance. The website for maintenance work is www.phillywatersheds.org/adoption.

Chris asked us to supply a list of locations for the storm drain painting. He will approve these and check to make sure there are no construction plans for them. He would like to review the designs and materials used. We will continue to work closely with him on this project.

In addition, he can connect us with community outreach resources to be used by educators. We need to get the children out to help when we decorate each storm drain and make it a family event. Chris mentioned education training for science teachers that would help them teach children about storm water and conservation and the importance of trees and gardens to our community. We are aiming to begin this project next Spring. Our next meeting is Wednesday, January 6 from 7:30pm to 9pm at AmeriThai Restaurant, 1244 Snyder Ave, Philadelphia, PA 19148. Hope to see you there!