

City of Philadelphia



Council of the City of Philadelphia Office of the Chief Clerk Room 402, City Hall Philadelphia

(Resolution No. 240721)

RESOLUTION

Calling upon The Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) to use projected climate rainfall information to prioritize actions to fix raw sewage overflows and urging PWD to use real world climate related rainfall data to project the impacts of their Green City Clean Water (GCCW) plans.

WHEREAS, Philadelphia's combined sewer system serves approximately 60 percent of our City. During wet weather conditions the older sections of our system can often overflow resulting in billions of gallons of stormwater and diluted sewage flowing directly into our local waterways each year; and

WHEREAS, City Council has engaged the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) on several occasions seeking to determine how it can help PWD implement its responsibilities to reduce the discharge of raw sewage mixed with stormwater entering our rivers and creeks. We are particularly interested in learning how PWD is planning to address climate change impacts that threaten the health and economic vitality of our City; and

WHEREAS, Recent reports, Unraveling the Facts and Good Intentions Are Not Enough, as well as a series of articles from Newsweek and WHYY demonstrate that Philadelphia is particularly vulnerable to climate induced rainfall resulting in the potential back up of raw sewage; and

WHEREAS, PWD's own 2022 Climate-Resistance Planning and Design Guidance states: "It is therefore imperative that PWD consider climate change in the planning and design of projects and programs for which regulatory compliance is a primary driver." Specifically, by using their existing Hydrologic and Hydraulic models to evaluate their GCCW plan, not merely against the historical 2006 rainfall baseline, but also against best current estimates of projected typical rainfall. Should the Hydrologic and Hydraulic projections indicate that the original GCCW sewage overflow targets are unachievable, PWD should provide a specific process for adaptively managing the plan to address the revised projections; and

WHEREAS, Addressing dry weather discharge. Dry weather discharge is when raw sewage enters the Philadelphia Rivers and Creeks when it is not raining. This is a problem acknowledged

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by PWD. Tackling “dry weather” discharges will have an immediate benefit of reducing health risks for water-based activity; and

WHEREAS, Requiring PWD to identify the source of any untreated dry weather sewage discharges from both the City's combined sewer system and proposing a schedule for making necessary repairs or upgrades needed to eliminate the dry weather sewage overflows as quickly as possible to protect the public health and the environment; and

WHEREAS, Requiring PWD to use netting and other practices like screening to capture litter, sludge, pollution, solids, and certain chemicals before they enter the water. The Water Center at Penn's Delaware River Bacteria Study recently identified this practice as a measure that should be piloted in the near term and is a “best management practice” used by cities across the U.S; and

WHEREAS, The City of Philadelphia is currently 12% of the Commonwealth's population but only receives about 6% of the commonwealth's funding for water quality improvements. There have been many reasons offered since the federal BIL and ARPA funds were made available for the inability of PWD to access them. Time is running out and immediate action is critical. There are new and long standing federal and state funding programs that could help reduce the total cost burden to Philadelphia's ratepayers and provide an opportunity to affordably begin to make improvements to reduce raw sewage mixed with stormwater from entering Philadelphia's Rivers and Creeks; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF PHILADELPHIA, That we hereby call upon the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) to address the issues outlined in this resolution to fix raw sewage overflows and urge PWD to use real world climate related rainfall data to project the impacts of their Green City Clean Waters (GCCW) plan. We also offer City Council's assistance to help PWD to implement these plans and assist PWD with accessing any federal and state related funds to help us accomplish this mission.

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CERTIFICATION: This is a true and correct copy of the original Resolution, Adopted by the Council of the City of Philadelphia on the twelfth day of September, 2024.

Kenyatta Johnson
PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

Elizabeth McCollum
INTERIM CHIEF CLERK OF THE COUNCIL

Introduced by: Councilmember Squilla

Sponsored by: Councilmembers Squilla, Gilmore Richardson, Thomas, Brooks
and Driscoll