

# franc talk

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April 2016

## Working To Preserve The Environment

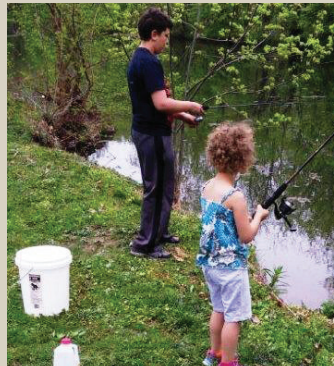
You may hear a lot about the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP). What you probably don't realize is the impact that these regulatory agencies have on you. Generally, EPA and PADEP do not deal directly with individuals, except in the case of a major pollution incident. But even though you may not be interacting directly with these agencies, you are being impacted by them on a daily basis.

PADEP is the state agency that enforces Federal (EPA) regulations. PADEP can implement stricter regulations than those required by EPA, if they so choose. PADEP's mission is "To protect Pennsylvania's air, land and water from pollution and to provide for the health and safety of its citizens through a cleaner environment." PADEP is intimately involved in air quality issues (such as odors from industry and leaf/yard debris burning), water quality, including

wastewater treatment plant discharges, stormwater runoff, wetlands, construction site runoff, on-lot disposal systems, and dams, solid waste (recycling, medication disposal), industrial site clean-up, and drinking water.

The way that EPA and PADEP control citizens is through local governments. Regulators hold municipalities accountable for the actions of their residents. They do this by requiring local governments to implement rules and regulations intended to protect the environment. They can fine municipalities and delay or disapprove activities.

Most of the time the average resident has no idea they are being affected by these agencies but they are. Typically, the municipality has to deal with the ire of its residents when they've been negatively impacted by regulatory agencies. We all want a clean environment,



but it comes to us at a cost.

We believe that an informed public is better able to understand and interact with municipal officials. For this reason, we have prepared this special environmental edition of FrancTalk to show how residents, your township officials, and the regulatory agencies all interact.

### FRANCONIA TOWNSHIP

671 Allentown Road  
Telford, PA 18969-2205  
215-723-1137

[www.franconiatownship.org](http://www.franconiatownship.org)

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215-723-1153  
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## IN THIS ISSUE



3

Township  
Required  
to Manage  
Stormwater



7

Tips for  
Better  
Waste  
Disposal

## Sewer Authority Considering Revisions To Sewer Management Program

The Sewer Management Program was adopted by Franconia Township in 2005.

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) directed the Township to implement the plan and initially provided funding toward the program. The intent of the program was twofold. First, it was intended to make sure that properly functioning on-lot disposal systems (OLDS) were maintained so that they would be less likely to cause a problem with the environment. Second, it was to identify properties with failed or failing OLDS so that they could be corrected. This would reduce the amount of nutrients entering the environment (see the related article on stormwater).

Some OLDS were installed years ago when environmental standards were lax and there was limited oversight. These systems allow partially treated waste to enter the environment, either over the surface or into groundwater. Newer OLDS can also fail with similar results. PADEP's goal is to keep functioning OLDS working well and extend public sewer to areas where OLDS are failing. Extending public sewer is costly so keeping OLDS functioning is a better, more cost effective way to deal with sewage.

The Sewer Management Program started out well but over the years compliance has waned. Only about 20 percent of property owners follow the EPA guidelines of having their OLDS pumped out every three years. Compliance with inspecting these systems is also poor. Some of our neighboring communities are using a third-party to inspect OLDS, just as Franconia did initially. However, they've continued to use a third-party to inspect OLDS, where Franconia Township has not. Using an outside consulting firm to perform these inspections assures compliance, meets the requirements of PADEP, and hopefully extends the life of the OLDS.

We will be implementing a revised SMP similar to the one described above. The Franconia Sewer Authority has been asked to manage the system and will be contracting with a consulting firm to perform the inspections every three years. The Sewer Authority will invoice each property owner with an OLDS on an annual basis to cover the cost of inspections and administration (one third of the cost will be collected each year). The homeowner will be responsible for scheduling the pump-out with their hauler every three years.

## Roads To Be Resurfaced



The Township's Public Works Department will be taking on a number of paving projects in 2016 along with our normal chip seal and crack sealing program.

The department will be applying a paver laid seal coat to our section of Broad Street from the new intersection up to the borough line.

When the North Penn Water Authority finishes installing a new section of water main on Cowpath Road, the Township's Highway Department will do base repair where needed and then a complete overlay of Cowpath Road from the new intersection to Route 113. The department will include the Franconia section of Green Street in that program.

After school is out for the summer, the department will do a mill and pave on the lower end of Godshall Road from Broad Street to Delp Road and will be overlaying the section of Long Mill Road from Morwood Road to Ruth Road.

As always, please be considerate of the road closures and, if at all possible, avoid areas that are under construction.





April 2016

*franc talk*

## Township Required To Manage Stormwater

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) are regulating the rain that falls in the township.

The Township is held accountable for the actions of its residents, and so the township has to pass ordinances and implement treatment strategies to protect streams from rainwater. Streams need to be protected from excessive flow, sediment, and nutrients. In fact, the Township is expected to improve stream water quality to that of high quality streams (those with minimal human interference), an admirable but difficult and costly effort. These requirements are laid out in EPA's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) regulations.

You might not think that you are part of a stormwater problem but you are. Do you have a roof on your house or have a driveway? These are impermeable surfaces and they cause rainwater to flow toward a stream faster than it would if your lot had only grass and trees. Do you plant crops or garden? If so you are adding to the sediment load going to the stream. Do you have an on-lot sewer, cut your grass, or allow your dog to relieve itself in your yard without picking it up and putting it in the trash? You are adding to the nutrient load. It may seem ridiculous, but these are items that the regulators want stopped, or controlled after the fact.

You may not realize it but the Township has already implemented a number of practices to comply with EPA and PADEP regulations regarding stormwater. Developers are required to install catch basins, construction crews are

required to put filtering hay bales or socks around disturbed soil, farmers are required to leave a grass filter strip and keep cattle out of stream beds.

These are practices that have been implemented to keep flow and pollutants from leaving a property. To protect streams after rainwater has left a property, we sweep streets (to collect potential sediments), install rain gardens and swales to reduce rapid runoff, and plant trees to help stabilize nutrients, among numerous other activities.

But this is not enough. EPA and PADEP are requiring the Township to do more. This will have a financial impact on our residents. We have challenged EPA and PADEP because we believe the proposed requirements are excessive. In fact, we have brought suit along with neighboring municipalities to attempt to reduce the stringent burdens that they are placing on the Township and you. Regardless of the outcome of the suit, the Township will have to do much more in the area of stormwater control. This includes stream bank stabilization, additional rain gardens, further tree planting along stream corridors, constructing sediment basins, and many other projects.

It is our expectation that all property owners will be assessed a fee relative to the amount of impact they have on stormwater. The money collected from these fees will be used to construct and manage the various controls that the Township has to implement.



April 2016

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## Sewer Authority Available To Help With Sewer Problems

Contrary to many people's opinions, Franconia Sewer Authority's goal or mandate is not to extend public sewer where it isn't needed. Extending public sewer is a costly proposition. Since the authority is a not-for-profit organization, it has to recover its costs from those who would benefit. There are certainly times when public sewer has to be extended, such as when on-lot disposal systems (OLDS) are failing and lot sizes and/or soil types won't allow for the installation of a new OLDS.

The problem is that anyone along the extended sewer is responsible for paying for their portion of the sewer line even if their OLDS is still working. The Authority can't just bypass a house and move on to the next. The sewer line is contiguous. It should be understood that pumping and inspecting an OLDS every three years goes a long way to keeping it healthy. However, a failed OLDS is not necessarily the outcome of improper maintenance.

Providing public sewer is an expensive proposition. So is replacing a failed OLDS. The economics are about the same. The real tragedy is that a property with a failed OLDS is virtually unsaleable. Mortgage companies are not interested in taking a risk by providing a mortgage for a property with problems. Many Township residents are currently in a situation where their OLDS has failed and public sewer is not available (and lot sizes or soil types are no good) so their house can't be sold.

The Authority and the Township review these areas of high numbers of failed systems to determine what, if anything, can be done. If you are in a situation where your OLDS has failed, feel free to contact the Authority or the Township and to learn what actions you might consider.

## Sewer Authority Looks At Treatment Costs

If you don't have an on-lot disposal system (OLDS) to treat your sewage, then you are connected to public sewer.

Although public sewer in Franconia Township is handled by Franconia Sewer Authority (FSA), not all public sewer goes to the same place. The Authority has about 50 miles of sewer piping in the ground, and conveys raw sewage to six different treatment plants.

The decision on what plant to send raw sewage to is initially based on geography and cost. However, the final decision rests with Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PADEP) through its Planning and Permitting departments.

Not only does PADEP regulate where flows can go, they regulate the level of treatment needed before

discharging into a stream. This is a major point of contention, since each treatment plant has its own set of discharge requirements. For example, the Franconia Sewer Authority treatment plant discharging small quantities of effluent into the Skippack Creek is required to (and does) reduce phosphorus to 0.1 parts per million (ppm). Other dischargers with much greater flow are allowed to discharge 0.5 ppm or more.

The question is not that municipalities be allowed to "pollute" the environment, but if higher discharge amounts have no impact on the stream, or if higher levels already exist naturally in a stream, what is the reason for over-treating? The Franconia Sewer Authority will continue to discuss these issues with PADEP in an attempt to provide for a clean environment in the most economical way possible.



## Complaints To Township Police Drop 14 Percent in 2015

The number of complaints reported to the Township Police dropped by 14 percent to 2,478 incidents in 2015. Personal crimes reported were down slightly in most categories with the exception of fraud complaints. The most notable increase involving fraud complaints stemmed from credit cards and bank accounts. Police agencies across the country have experienced these crimes due to the explosion of credit card cloning and skimming as well as electronic bank fraud. Sadly, the first homicide in the township in more than thirty years took place February 18th. Responding officers quickly secured the scene and located the suspect who had stabbed a fellow worker to death. That case is currently awaiting trial in the Montgomery County Courts.

Reportable vehicle crashes have shown a dramatic drop from 162 recorded in 2013 to a low of 117 in 2015. The decrease is partially due to

the result of improvements to certain highways in the township, such as the re-design to the Cowpath-West Broad-Lower Roads intersection. Assaults and harassment complaints showed a 2 percent decrease. Property crimes and burglaries continued to remain low with ten reported break-ins.

With about forty reports per year, criminal mischief, which is the vandalizing of personal property, showed little or no change. Criminal arrests decreased with 55 persons arrested for felony or misdemeanor violations.

Driving While Under the Influence arrests were down slightly with 33 arrests. Other arrests included: eight persons charged with Drug Act violations; five arrested for assaults; and four theft arrests.

There were 45 non-traffic citations issued for various Summary offenses such as Disorderly Conduct and

Harassment.

Police officers from Telford, Souderton, Lower Salford, and Franconia have always worked hand-in-hand to provide assistance to each other in a time of need. The number of assistance calls to and from other police agencies leveled out during the past six months due to the scheduling of officers during the busier hours.

The most important factor has been to ensure the safety of all officers during incidents where there is a higher risk of danger to the officers. The Police Department is grateful to our partners from the Indian Valley as well as the North Penn area for their willingness to assist Franconia officers.

[Visit the Township's website to view the full report.](#)







April 2016

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# Recycling Day

## Anything with a Plug™



**Saturday, June 4, 2016**  
**Lower Salford**  
**Towamencin, Hatfield,**  
**Franconia Townships**  
**Souderton Area High School**  
**625 Lower Road**  
**9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.**

The Townships of Lower Salford, Towamencin, Hatfield and Franconia are proud to offer local residents the opportunity to responsibly recycle obsolete electronics on Saturday, June 4, 2016.

This service is available to all residents and small businesses with fewer than 50 employees.

**On-site paper and document shredding will also be available!**

Electronics will be recycled by eForce Compliance, Philadelphia's first Certified Responsible Recycler.

We will accept all electronic devices with a plug, **NO SMOKE DETECTORS, LARGE APPLIANCES or PROJECTION TVs** will be accepted.



### ACCEPTED ITEMS INCLUDE:

- |             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| Laptops     | Dehumidifiers    |
| Peripherals | Computers        |
| Typewriters | Mice             |
| Telephones  | Small Appliances |
| Microwaves  | Fax Machines     |
| Cameras     | Keyboards        |
| Cell Phones | Printers         |
| Calculators | Air Conditioners |

**\$20 fee per TV**  
**or computer monitor**  
**\$50 wood console TVs**

**All Data Media Will Be Destroyed or Wiped!**





April 2016

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## Tips For Better Waste Disposal

Whether your property is connected to public sewer or you maintain an On-Lot Disposal System (OLDS), proper management can minimize problems and reduce costs. In addition, managing your waste disposal will have a positive environmental impact on you and your neighbors. Let's look at three potential wastewater inputs and how they should be managed.

### WATER

All water generated from toilets, showers/baths, sinks, washing machines, and water softeners is required to be discharged into your wastewater system, either public or OLDS. However, water from rain gutters, floor drains/sump pumps (not from sewage-generating connections), foundation drains, and surface water must be kept out of sewer systems. Additionally, water from these sources must be directed around drain fields used with OLDS. Discharging sewage without proper treatment is a major health concern. Adding rain and surface waters to sewage systems increases public sewer costs and can cause OLDS to fail.

### SOLIDS

Sewage treatment systems are designed to treat solids to reduce health risks. But some solids pose no health risk and only overload treatment systems. Plastics, hair, bone and grease, etc. will break down either slowly or not at all in sewage treatment systems. There is no benefit in washing them down the drain, only cost. These materials merely accumulate and have to be pumped out.

### CHEMICALS

Pouring paints, pesticides and cleaning solvents can potentially damage the operation of the treatment system. Many of these chemicals do not break down easily and end up being discharged into the environment. That's bad when the wastewater effluent discharges to a stream, but scary when it enters the ground through an OLDS, where there is a risk that it could enter a well water aquifer.

Every resident needs to manage wastewater to protect the environment and reduce costs. Make sure that all water that is supposed to be entering a treatment system does and that non-sewage water stays out. Handle garbage (plastic, bones, grease, etc.) as garbage and throw it into the trash. Use garbage disposals sparingly, if at all. Dispose of chemicals properly. Never put them into a sewer treatment system.

If cost and environmental stewardship are not enough incentive to manage wastewater correctly, realize that there are state and local laws addressing the above points that carry substantial penalties. If you have any questions regarding this article, please contact George Witmayer, Executive Director of the Franconia Sewer Authority.



## FRANCONIA TOWNSHIP

671 Allentown Road  
Telford, PA 18969-2205

PSRST STD  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
PERMIT #117  
SOUTHEASTERN PA  
19399

[www.franconiatownship.org](http://www.franconiatownship.org)

## Keep In Touch With ReadyMontco

Emergencies and disasters strike quickly and often without warning. They can disrupt our lives, force us to leave our homes, or even confine us for days without essential services like electricity, phones, or water. How ready are you and your family?



One of the first things you can do is sign up for ReadyMontco notifications. This program delivers alerts about severe weather and other important events in Montgomery County to the devices of your choice. Whether you prefer emails, text messages or even an old-fashioned phone call, alerts will be sent directly to you.

There is no direct cost to sign up for ReadyMontco. However, there may be charges for certain features (like receiving text messages) so it's best to double check with your service providers.

ReadyMontco is the notification system used by the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety, along with its emergency management partners in the Southeastern Pennsylvania region.

**Visit [www.ReadyMontco.org](http://www.ReadyMontco.org) to register.**



## Sign Up For The Township's Email Newsletter

The Township plans to start an email newsletter to help improve communication. All you need to do to receive the newsletter is visit the Township's website at [www.franconiatownship.org](http://www.franconiatownship.org) and click on the "Sign up for Email Notification" link. Your address will only be used for the Township's email newsletters.