PRESS RELEASE:SANITARY SEWER OVERFLOW FOUND AT LAKE ROLAND AFTER HEAVY RAINS JULY 31, 2025

Posted on August 18, 2025 by Patty Mochel

A Green Towson Alliance (GTA) volunteer discovered a manhole cover laying on the ground next to a sanitary sewer stack on the afternoon of Friday August 1, 2025. Upon further investigation, sanitary sewer debris such as toilet paper, flushable wipes and tampons were found in the surrounding vegetation along a hiking trail indicating that raw sewage overflowed from the manhole. The SSO was reported to Blue Water Baltimore and Baltimore County Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT). This is the third such raw sewage overflow event discovered below the dam in Lake Roland by our volunteers. To our knowledge there is no SSO protocol assigned to a single agency, as recommended in 2019, for detecting, reporting to the public and regulators, testing, posting warnings, clean-up, repairs, quality control and inspection.

GTA and other advocates have challenged the sanitary sewage capacity in the Jones Falls Sewershed (JFS) since we published our 2017 White Paper "Is Raw Sewage Contaminating Our Neighborhood Streams? Both Baltimore City and County are under a Consent Decree to fix the causes of SSOs. The county's work was to be completed in 2020, but SSO's are ongoing while sewage loads continue to be added to the existing undersized sanitary sewer system. GTA estimates almost 2.2 million square feet of development have been added since 2012 in the JFS and more development is in-line to be approved.

DPWT reviews each development proposal for adequate sanitary sewer, but their reviews do not account for how much stormwater enters the system through defects in the pipes during storms, although such consideration is required by the Maryland Department of the Environment. In Baltimore County, an Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) makes the final decision on approving new development. On July

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ANNOUNCEMENT:

31, 2023, the ALJ denied approval of Greenspring Manor, a proposal for 61 new homes in the JFS because expert testimony proved that there are not adequate facilities to safely convey the sewage to a treatment plant. This is the second development that has been denied for this reason; Bluestem was the first, in 2019. DPWT continues to approve new development and refuses to acknowledge the error in its methods.

A 2012 consultant evaluation commissioned by Baltimore County recommended adding capacity to the Lake Roland Interceptor with a relief sewer as part of the Consent Decree work. Additional capacity would prevent sewer overflows during larger storms, like the ones Baltimore County is experiencing withincreasing frequency. In fact, the consultant predicted this very manhole would overflow 1 million gallonsin an intense storm. Rather than build the relief sewer recommended by the consultant, Baltimore County is planning to reline the existing pipes at a cost of $11 million. There is no evidence that relining these pipes will add the additional capacity that is needed in order to prevent overflows.

Overflows are a costly and dangerous threat to public health and aquatic life. We call on Baltimore County to clean up the debris from this SSO, investigate and publicly report the results of an investigation into the causes and magnitude of the overflow and provide model-predicted corrective actions that will prevent future overflows.

Please note that GTA is in the process of fixing our website. Please pardon our dust!

OUR CALENDAR

(Click calendar to enlarge)

The Green Towson Alliance puts on an annual contest celebrating native plant gardens in our community, and the people who create them!

The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The next best time is now.

Photo credit: Rob Mulally on unsplash.com

Manhole with cover on the ground, photographed August 1, 2025 by GTA member Beth Miller