

PHLUSH Annual Report 2017



Hurricanes, homelessness, and human needs - a year of new awareness

Public toilet and hygiene facilities protect human dignity, public health, and the attractiveness of shared urban space. The year 2017, however, will be remembered for San Diego's epidemic of Hepatitis A, a disease spread via the fecal oral route. Public health authorities scrubbed the streets with bleach, set up portable toilets and hand washing stations, vaccinated 10,000 people, and ultimately blamed the vast majority of the 20 deaths on the lack of restrooms serving homeless residents. This should not have happened in an affluent American city.



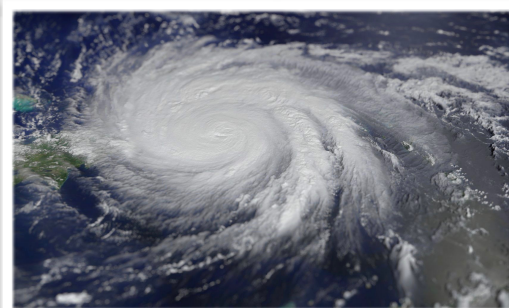
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Urban areas of the United States enjoy complex sewer systems and sophisticated wastewater treatment plants. A variety of onsite technologies serve rural households. But unless the vulnerability of sewer infrastructure and the failure of many septic systems are firmly on the policy table, the risks remain.

2017 will also be remembered for the devastation brought by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria. Hundreds of wastewater treatment facilities in low-lying areas of Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico were rendered inoperable. Flooding also caused septic tanks to overflow, sully soils and ground and surface

waters. Now Texans and Floridians struggle with staggering repair costs and thousands of Puerto Ricans are still unable to return to their homes.

As we move through 2018, the West Coast housing shortage continues to push adults and children into homelessness. Public hygiene facilities can help them stay in jobs and school. Meanwhile, climate change, unpredictable weather systems, seismic risks, and sea level rise threaten America's infrastructure. As people start to question the use of drinking water to transport pee and poop, there is growing interest in codes for rainwater harvesting, greywater use, container-based toilet systems, and treatment through composting.



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Eating and excreting are activities essential to human life. One activity is a popular subject of everyday conversation, the other remains shrouded in silence and taboo. Societies strive to meet both physiological needs, yet often fail in the latter case. Greater public awareness of how we manage our urine and feces can help us address and avoid some of the tragedies that marked 2017.

Our outreach continues while we strengthen PHLUSH governance.

The events of 2017 underline the urgency of our mission: *Through education and advocacy, PHLUSH helps local governments and citizen groups to provide equitable public restroom availability and to prepare for a pipe-breaking seismic event with appropriate ecological toilet systems.*

It's been exciting to see local communities using our *Public Toilet Advocacy Toolkit* as they support human rights and urban livability in their effort to increase restroom availability. Other groups come to us for information on ecological sanitation systems that make sense as we face climate change, fresh water shortage, sea level rise and natural events that disable traditional wastewater treatment systems.

While our outreach continues, PHLUSH remained busy behind the scenes. In 2017, we strengthened the governance of our volunteer-powered non-profit, writing policy, implementing systems and growing our board. And research continues as we complete our new Disaster Sanitation Planning Guide and review the latest studies for the accompanying resource list.

Hats off to Angela Southwick!



2017 could be seen as the year of Angela Southwick. Without the singular expertise of our Treasurer and expert advisor to the Finance Committee, PHLUSH would not be on such firm governance footing. Angela Southwick tutored us in the basics of nonprofit finance, put in place fiscal policies that will guide our growth, and set up our financial management system online.

Angela is a seasoned all-around nonprofit professional working on hot issues. Employed full time with the Multnomah Chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), she also serves on the City of Portland's Public Involvement Advisory Committee and volunteers with Write Around Portland.

Equipped with an MS in Urban and Regional Planning from Portland State University with a focus on Community Development, Angela is a strong advocate for citizen involvement, where the community has an opportunity to influence public decisions. After spending 10 years working for Portland's well-respected neighborhood system, Angela is especially interested in helping vulnerable populations.

The First Annual Jamaica Toilet Summit features Hayley Joyell Smith

For World Toilet Day in November, PHLUSH President Hayley Joyell Smith travelled to the Jamaican Toilet Summit, an initiative of USAID's Farmer-to-Farmer program. Her mission was to assess the toilet and sanitation situation in the community and make recommendations. In addition to leading an eco-sanitation workshop at the Source Farm EcoVillage, she spoke at a symposium at Kingston University, where presenters

and participants spent the day learning from one another.

Stories were exchanged among past government employees, students, women from a small town where Habitat for Humanity implements sanitation projects, the Chairman of Jamaica Organic Agriculture Movement, the Country Director of Jamaica Sustainable Farm Enterprise, and a compost toilet entrepreneur who sells units to Red Stripe. With each insight shared, the collective awareness of the importance of toilets in our culture became more clear.



We must take a critical look at how development of wastewater systems impacts culture, the environment, and people's resilience in the face of change.

Carol McCreary represents PHLUSH at SuSanA meetings in Stockholm



The Sustainable Sanitation Alliance, affectionately known as SuSanA, is a global sanitation network of which we're a proud partner. SuSanA helps PHLUSH stay abreast of innovative technologies relevant to the United States.

In August, Program Manager Carol McCreary attended SuSanA's 24th meeting, which was held prior to Stockholm World Water Week. As a member of the Project Advisory Board for SuSanA's Knowledge Management Project funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, she spent additional days meeting with the project team.

During World Water Week itself she worked at the SuSanA booth in the thick of the busy convention center. "I was completely energized — on my feet and in my element," says McCreary, most of whose weeks are spent at a computer screen. Here she's with SuSanA's Director and future sanitation experts from Kazakhstan and the Netherlands.

Spotlight on the Sustainable Sanitation Alliance

With 310 organizations and 9000 practitioners, this international think tank develops ideas to accelerate progress toward Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG6), which is to provide access to water and sanitation to all by 2030. While the focus is on developing nations in which advanced R & D is underway, SDG 6 also applies to the United States where there serious gaps in sanitation coverage. Americans living in poor rural districts face the indignity and expense of failing septic systems while 2017 saw sophisticated infrastructure disabled by Hurricanes Harvey, Maria and Irma.

Jack Sim of the World Toilet Organization and Carol McCreary of PHLUSH co-lead the Working Group 9: Public Awareness, Advocacy and Civil Society Engagement and are members of the alliance's governing Core Group.

FLUSH: The movie premieres on World Toilet Day

To celebrate World Toilet Day in November, we sponsored the official premiere of FLUSH In partnership with documentary filmmaker Karina Mangu-Ward and Shawn Shafner of The POOP Project.

Mangu-Ward starts by asking what happens to her poop after flushing. She follows it downstream, interviewing many experts along the way. The documentary delves into the interlinked problems of sewer infrastructure and stubborn taboos about talking about poop. FLUSH raises the public awareness that is a precondition for fixing America's sewer infrastructure and addressing human equity and environmental sustainability.



Through social media we promoted screenings in New York, Portland, at the Jamaica Toilet Summit and in living rooms everywhere since FLUSH was made freely available for the week of World Toilet Day. You can read our detailed film review at <http://www.phlush.org/2017/11/13/flush>.



partner of

**sustainable
sanitation
alliance**

PHLUSH

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PHLUSH is a member of the World Toilet Organization
and a Sustainable Sanitation Alliance partner.