# 4/16/26 Negley Run Watershed Task Force Meeting 2026-04-16 19:09(GMT-4:00)

Manual notes | Transcript

## Key Outcomes

David Rounce (CMU) presented 5 years of stormwater modeling research showing that **model calibration decisions have impacts comparable to climate change projections** on flood predictions [1] [2]. The group is coordinating letters of support for a **DCNR trail connectivity grant** application (due end of April) to integrate open space planning with major infrastructure investments by Pittsburgh Water and Alcasan [3] [4].

## Technical Findings from Stormwater Modeling

### Model Performance and Calibration

- **Local measurements are critical**: Models calibrated at upstream sites perform poorly downstream, requiring site-specific data for neighborhood-scale green infrastructure design [5] [6] [7]
- **Model uncertainty equals climate impact**: Updating calibration with 2022 monitoring data changed flood predictions by the same magnitude as adding climate change factors (e.g., 30% increase in flooded nodes) [2] [8]
- **Non-linear climate response**: An 18% increase in precipitation intensity can produce >2x increase in flooded street length; impacts don't scale linearly [7] [9]

### Future Climate Projections

- **10-year storms become 6-year events**: Historical 10-year return period storms will occur every 6 years on average under future climate; 100-year events become 15-20 year events [10] [11]

- **Current Pittsburgh code underdesigns for large storms**: The 1.15x multiplier in stormwater code adequately addresses 10-year events, but 100-year events require higher factors (1.3x used in study) [11]
- **Continuous monitoring needed**: 9 months of data (March-December 2022) captured only up to 5-year storms; longer monitoring programs needed to validate 10+ year event models [7] [12]

### Washington Boulevard Flooding

- Model shows **flooded nodes and system saturation** at Washington Boulevard, indicating pipes at capacity [13] [14]
- Alcasan stated flooding resolution is **not their responsibility**; falls to Pittsburgh Water and Army Corps coordination [13]
- Stephanie flagged stormwater management coordination with Rebecca Zito at Pittsburgh Water [15] [16]

## Alcasan Regional Tunnel Project Updates

### Timeline and Scope

- **Allegheny River Tunnel project approximately 5 years away** [17]
- **Geotechnical test borings happening within weeks/month** at three locations: two in Hess Run watershed, one at Negley Run/Washington Boulevard [17] [18]
- **Councilwoman Deb Gross secured 4-week extension** on Alcasan easement agreements [15]

### Critical Infrastructure Conflicts

- **Drop shaft relocated** from north side of Hess Run bridge to south side (north end of parking lot) due to engineering constraints [19]
- **Grit chamber planned at Hess Field** will impact one of few remaining forested areas in Hess Valley [17]
- **Hess Run Vision Plan at risk**: Alcasan needs "real commitment, not a wish list" for future grade plans; easement extension provides window to advance vision plan to dependable

status [19] [20]

### Coordination Gaps

- Pittsburgh Water not present at site visit due to short notice (few days); Ryan requested meeting summary and action items be shared [21] [22]
- Army Corps indicated 2018 Washington Boulevard flooding work was "tabled" [15]

## Brilliant Waterways and Woodlands Coalition

### Coalition Formation

- **22 stakeholders convened** at Allegheny River Trail Park to coordinate open space projects across Negley Run, Hess Run, and riverfront areas [23]
- **Consensus on connectivity**: Groups agreed to highlight and promote interconnected open space and nature-based infrastructure [23]

### Trail Connectivity Grant Application

- **City Planning (Shoshana) applying to DCNR Community Conservation Partnership Program** with submission due end of April [3]
- **Focus areas**: Lincoln-Leamington-Belmar to Highland Park via Brilliant line; Washington Boulevard crossing; Hess Run connecting Morningside and Highland Park; cross-river connections [4]
- **Letters of support needed** from Upstream, HPCC, HPCDC, Morningside, Point Breeze organization [4] [24] [25]
- **Quality over quantity**: Letters must specify organizational role, history with project, and specific stake (not generic support) [26]
- **Quotes needed urgently** from consultants; Christine Mondor, Sarah, and Patrick identified as contacts [25]

### Strategic Integration

- **Master plan needed** to demonstrate "credible reality" and civic commitment when Pittsburgh Water and Alcasan move forward with projects [27]
- Goal: ensure infrastructure investments integrate seamlessly with community open space vision and create regional natural assets [3] [27]

## Highland Park Reservoir Slope Stabilization Update

- **Update scheduled at Highland Park Community Council meeting** (7pm following this meeting) [28]
- **Key announcements**: No full trail around reservoir; staging location for construction work determined [29]
- **Zoo coordination**: Additional discussions since February Tree Pittsburgh workshop [29]

## Negley Run Watershed Ambassador Program

### Upcoming Events

- **April 22**: Tree Pittsburgh hike through ravine below River Roots; walking former developed path to raise awareness and clear for official pathway status [30]
- **March event completed**: Re-walked One Water Trail concept in Highland Park [30]
- **Communication system**: QR code registration available for event notifications and schedule updates [31]

### Additional Community Events

- **May 2, 12:30-2:30pm**: Rain Reclaim watershed walk viewing Chadwick and Deary Street projects in Lincoln-Leamington-Belmar [32]
- **May 9, 11am-1:30pm**: Rain Reclaim design feedback session at Paulson Rec Center (lunch provided) [32]
- **May 2**: Allegheny Cleanways Highland Park litter walk [32]

## Decisions Made

- **Trail connectivity grant application will proceed** with City Planning as lead, focusing on Brilliant Waterways and Woodlands Coalition footprint 3 4
- **Model calibration approach validated**: Use all available monitoring data rather than single-storm calibration for better transferability 33

## Pending Confirmation

- **Alcasan easement process**: Deb Gross and Stephanie meeting to clarify engagement process and 4-week extension implications 15
- **Hess Run Vision Plan commitment level**: Need to advance plan to status Alcasan considers "dependable" for their drop shaft grade design 19 20
- **Pittsburgh Water coordination on Alcasan designs**: Review in progress for impacts on existing facilities and stormwater planning 21

## Action Items

- **Shoshana**: Complete DCNR trail grant application by end of April; coordinate with John Stevens on project scope and quotes 3 24 25
- **David Hance (HPCDC)**: Draft letter of support for trail grant focusing on Hess Run role; send draft to Shoshana for review 25 26
- **Upstream (Aaron)**: Provide letters of support from both Upstream and Task Force for trail grant 25
- **Point Breeze organization (Swain)**: Provide letter of support for trail grant 25 34
- **Shoshana**: Reach out to HPCC and Morningside for letters of support 24
- **Shoshana**: Obtain consultant quotes from Christine Mondor, Sarah, and Patrick on short notice 25
- **Aaron**: Forward site visit notes to Ryan (Pittsburgh Water) to ensure coordination on Alcasan project 22
- **Stephanie**: Follow up with Deb Gross on Alcasan easement extension and Hess Run Vision Plan strategy 20 21

- **Ryan (Pittsburgh Water)**: Review Alcasan design set for coordination on existing facilities and stormwater planning [21]

## Open Questions

- **Tunnel system climate resilience**: Will multi-billion dollar regional tunnel investments designed for "yesterday's 100-year storms" provide adequate future protection? [35]
- David Rounce and Ryan indicated green/gray infrastructure at local scales can "take the edge off" climate impacts, but more planning needed for neighborhood-level stormwater issues like Homewood [35] [36]

## Next Meeting

**Quarter 3 meeting** (July or August, date TBD); notification via email list [37]