

## ***Water at Risk: Who's in Charge of Your Water?***

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**CAPTION: Signage at Middle Smithfield’s community building explains how simple “green solutions” protect the Marshalls Creek.**

You might answer that question with two words: “I am.”

It’s true that most folks in our area have private wells and septic systems. And as a homeowner, it’s up to you to keep the well and septic in good repair.

But water has a mind of its own. Grungy runoff from a parking lot way upstream from you can make its way into the same aquifer that your well draws on. And someone who’s careless about maintaining their septic system can pollute far beyond their own property lines.

So how land is used all around you, even miles away, can affect how safe and pure your water is and even how well your septic system works.

Local elected officials make decisions about what can be built, how big, where, and, crucially, exactly how water will be protected. That means that your local representatives — supervisors, council members, commissioners, and committees — are your partners in protecting your personal “water system.”

It’s a complicated job, and honestly, you’ll need a lawyer, an engineer, and a very thick dictionary to understand what most local water ordinances mean.

On the other hand, many townships demonstrate ways they — and you — can help protect water quality.

Middle Smithfield, for instance, uses “pervious” pavers at the community center on Route 209. Pervious pavers allow water to infiltrate naturally, rather than running off carrying oil, gas, and debris into the creek. Even the driveway asphalt is pervious. There’s a rain garden there, too, with native plants instead of invasive exotics. Trees have been planted, and native meadows restored.

Stroudsburg Borough has a pocket park on North Sixth Street that demonstrates similar strategies. Barrett Township has rain gardens at Barrett Paradise Friendly Library. Smithfield Township has a fascinating story-walk trail at Minisink Park, with signs describing 10,000 years of native American life there — and how the entire park protects the Brodhead Creek.

Just about the best way to protect pure water is to conserve natural, forested land for the public. So, if your local government has public parks, preserves, or “open space,” that’s a big step toward keeping our creeks clean and safe.

Some people may take clean water for granted. But not you, right?

***Did You Know?*** The CDC Foundation estimates that more than two million people in the U.S. don’t have running water or basic plumbing in their homes. Millions more live with substandard, unsafe sanitation facilities.

***For More Information:***

About the global water crisis <https://water.org/our-impact/water-crisis/>

About water & health in America <https://www.cdcfoundation.org/blog/addressing-growing-water-crisis-us#:~:text=>

If you have an environmental emergency in the Brodhead watershed, call the PA Water Emergency hotline, 24 hours a day 570-826-2511

***Brodhead Watershed Association protects water quality and quantity throughout our area. Get involved! Become a member! [www.brodheadwatershed.org](http://www.brodheadwatershed.org)***