



[www.pgwi.net](http://www.pgwi.net)

## The History of Philadelphia's Water Supply and Sanitation System

### A report on **Lessons in Sustainability for Developing Urban Water Systems**

Written by two graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania as a project of the Philadelphia Global Water Initiative, this report examines the fascinating history of Philadelphia's water supply and sanitation system to discover lessons developing urban areas can apply.

Philadelphia pioneered pivotal technologies and institutional changes that fueled the revolution of water and sanitation services in the United States. Developing cities today have access to far superior technologies than in Philadelphia 200 years ago, but water managers can learn from Philadelphia's unique experiences in water and sanitation systems.



This study explores Philadelphia's water history and summarizes the lessons learned to inform efforts to meet the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals for clean water and sanitation in developing urban areas. Of particular interest are four universal challenges:

- **the public health-water-sanitation link;**
- **shortages of clean water obstructing economic development;**
- **politics and institutional delays; and**
- **ineffective political leadership.**



The report examines these issues from **technological, institutional, social, and financial perspectives**, and is intended for anyone interested in infrastructure planning, urban history, or water and sanitation issues. It also presents clear recommendations for planners in developing urban areas.

Available for download at  
[www.pgwi.net/Philalessonsinsustainability.pdf](http://www.pgwi.net/Philalessonsinsustainability.pdf)

The Philadelphia Global Water Initiative is a group of interested organizations and individuals committed to helping to meet the UN Millennium Development Goals for water/sanitation throughout the world. It includes the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia Water Department, Water for People, Aqua America, Pennoni Associates, US Environmental Protection Agency, Uhl, Baron, Rana and Associates, the United Nations Association - Greater Philadelphia Chapter, and Meta Quality of Life Improvement Foundation.