FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 17, 2021

Contact: Amie M. Downs
412-350-3711 (office)
412-327-3700 (cell)
amie.downs@alleghenycounty.us

County Celebrates Newly Restored South Park Cascades with Ribbon Cutting

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald was joined today by state, county and local officials along with funders, community groups and the community at-large for a ribbon cutting to celebrate the completion of the newly restored, historic South Park Cascades.

“So many people have great memories of our parks,” said Fitzgerald. “They remember things as kids, and it brings back good memories. We are fortunate to have some amazing partners in this community that have worked alongside us to restore amenities for future generations to enjoy. The Cascades is a perfect example of that collaboration, and we are delighted to celebrate its return to South Park for our residents, young and old.”

Built in 1927, the Cascades were a manmade water feature using stratified rock quarried from the park itself. The brainchild of Paul B. Riis, the famed Swiss-born landscape architect, the Cascades were carefully composed to evoke a network of waterfalls and wading pools. Riis designed North and South Park and served from 1927-1932 as the first director of the Parks Department.

The Cascades were one of a number of original features conceived for the park and, once built, quickly became one of the park’s not-to-miss features. It made for a summertime destination for families seeking to get away from the city. In the mid-1970s, the Cascades were shut down and for the past 50 years, the massive stone walls and pools have looked more like ruins tucked away into the park’s wooded hillsides as the Cascades were reclaimed by nature.

In July of 2018, Allegheny County kicked off a restoration of the South Park Cascades with a ceremonial groundbreaking, embracing a unique partnership with funders. After a year of construction, the Cascades are now opening to the public once again. The restoration project was planned to maintain Riis’ original vision and preserve the historical significance of the feature, but the Cascades were changed to meet contemporary safety requirements. The restoration included upgrades to the original site like barrier-free access and a new fountain circulation system. The large stone pools will no longer serve as wading pools, but along with the cascading waterfalls, will serve as a water feature at which the public can soak up the sights and sounds of the park’s natural heritage and immerse themselves in nature.

The $1.2 million restoration project, including design, construction administration and construction costs, was funded by Allegheny County, PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation, Citrone 33 Foundation, Colcom Foundation, Allegheny Foundation, RK Mellon Foundation, Allegheny County Parks Foundation, Friends of South Park, and dozens of private donors. The restoration was the first of many projects through the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation’s newest initiative, Operation Restore, an environmentally conscious community project focused on restoration and upkeep throughout Pittsburgh and the surrounding region. The program was designed to engage employees of the Penguins and corporate partners, as well as residents in volunteerism.

While the Cascades are now open to the public, additional landscape restoration work will be completed in the spring. The site’s erosion control measures will remain in place until then. The fountains will be drained and winterized in the colder months although the site will remain open year-round.
LaQuatra Bonci Associate landscape architects were the principal designer and KU Resources was the civil engineer. The fountain equipment was designed by HydroDramatics. The Allegheny County Parks Foundation was instrumental in fundraising and project coordination. JS Construction served as the general contractor.

More information on the project is available on the websites of the Allegheny County Parks Foundation and the Pittsburgh Penguins Foundation.

# # #

Office of County Executive Rich Fitzgerald
101 Courthouse │ 436 Grant Street │ Pittsburgh, PA 15219
Phone: 412-350-6500 │ Fax: 412-350-6512
www.alleghenycnty.us

Follow us: allegheny alerts | facebook | instagram | linkedin | twitter | youtube