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Green infrastructure recommendations for Clean Water Act sent to governor, General Assembly leaders

Goal is to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff; documents available online

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The Times Record
Posted Jul 07, 2010 @ 12:17 PM

Springfield, Ill. — A series of recommendations to further protect Illinois' water resources from pollutants carried by stormwater runoff has been sent to Gov. Pat Quinn and the leaders of the Illinois General Assembly by Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director Doug Scott pursuant to the 2009 Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act.

The recommendations, along with supporting documents, including a University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) study report on using green infrastructure to manage urban stormwater quality, an addendum from the Illinois Department of Natural Resources on Green Infrastructure, and public comments are available online at www.epa.state.il.us/green-infrastructure/index.html.

The Green Infrastructure for Clean Water Act initiated a process that included a stakeholder meeting in January attended by a wide variety of representatives from numerous organizations in both the public and private sectors and reports from UIC, the Center for Neighborhood Technology, and Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning, as well as Illinois EPA staff.

The recommendations resulting from the process include: State-wide Performance Standard—Illinois EPA is seeking additional technical and stakeholder input in setting performance standards to retain stormwater runoff that would be applicable in urban and urbanizing areas statewide. Illinois EPA recommends that a workgroup be formed over the next 12 months that includes stakeholders from all sectors to assist the Agency with this effort. In addition, Illinois EPA will conduct

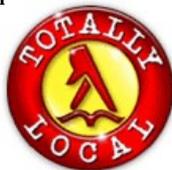
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a legal review of its current statutory authorities to determine if additional authority would be required to establish performance standards and how that would need to be structured.

Education and Outreach—The first step in promoting green infrastructure is an aggressive and comprehensive education and outreach campaign for municipalities and counties. However, Illinois EPA will use the opportunities it has in administering its programs (for example: planning/permitting related to reducing combined sewer overflows or CSOs, watershed-based planning, facility planning, etc.) to promote the use of green infrastructure. Over the next six months, Illinois EPA will identify and work with partners to design and deliver education and outreach on green infrastructure.

State Revolving Loan Fund (SRF) Funding—Illinois EPA is already committed to using the Green Project Reserve for green infrastructure projects. There is a federal requirement for Fiscal Year 10 and beyond that a state reserve of 20 percent of its annual capitalization grant for its SRF program be directed toward green infrastructure, energy or water efficiency, or environmentally innovative projects.

This is called the Green Project Reserve. Illinois EPA is committed to educating municipalities and other eligible loan recipients about the value of green infrastructure and soliciting applications for green infrastructure projects to be funded through the Green Project Reserve. Illinois EPA is currently developing an Illinois Green Infrastructure Grants program (separate from the SRF program) to be implemented in Fiscal Year 11 that will yield a prioritization approach that could also be used for ranking green infrastructure projects under the SRF program. Further, Illinois EPA has a Clean Water SRF Advisory Committee, which is actively working on updating many aspects of the existing SRF program. Illinois EPA will use this Advisory Committee to help decide the degree of subsidization appropriate for SRF funding of green infrastructure projects under the SRF Green Project Reserve.

Working with County and Municipal Stormwater Management Agencies—Illinois EPA's role is to promote green infrastructure as a cost effective tool for reducing water pollution caused by stormwater and improving water quality in urban and urbanizing areas. It is not Illinois EPA's role to recommend how local government funds their activities.

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Therefore, Illinois EPA is eager to work with local officials on implementing state goals for managing stormwater to improve water quality through their existing, new or improved local programs and ordinances.

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