

Chesapeake Conservation Landscaping Council's  
3<sup>rd</sup> **Turning a New Leaf** Conference  
Friday, December 4, 2009  
George Washington University, Washington, DC

**TRACK C: GETTING IT DONE WITH LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

**Session C2. Panel. *Local Government Incentive Programs and Technical Assistance***

**Jennifer Guillaume, District of Columbia Department of Environment**

**Ann English, Montgomery County, Maryland Department of Environmental Protection**

**Aileen Winqvist, Arlington County, Virginia**

**Ron Bowen, Anne Arundel County, Maryland Department of Public Works**

**Moderator: Pam Rowe, Montgomery County, Maryland**

**Overview:** This session detailed the different programs undertaken by four area jurisdictions (DC, Montgomery County, Maryland, Anne Arundel County, Maryland and Arlington County, Virginia) to educate homeowners in green practices and in some cases offer them financial incentives for home improvements which deal wisely with stormwater.

**Presenter: Jennifer Guillaume, District of Columbia**

River Smart Homes is a district-wide program giving incentives to homeowners who want to reduce stormwater runoff. "Clean Water Starts in Your Yard."

Background: They want to reduce stormwater runoff and recharge groundwater. The impervious area in DC is huge. Over 34 miles of rivers do not allow swimming due to pathogens caused mainly by sewer overflow and urban runoff. One-third of DC land is federal land, giving DC a smaller tax base. It is difficult to coordinate with the federal government to do work on these lands. Residential properties are the biggest land use in DC, and the slowest areas to be redeveloped. Thus reaching individual homeowners is key to stormwater management.

Problems: 35% of homeowners do not have cars in DC, and rain barrels don't fit on bikes. People are reluctant to disconnect their downspouts. Until recently, plumbers had to disconnect a downspout.

The Program: DC residents can enroll in the program online or by calling. Program staff conduct a stormwater audit and make recommendations. One-on-one site assessment works well. The homeowner selects which practices they want to install. The program may match them with non-profit partners, including such as Casey Trees for tree installation; DC Greenworks rain barrels; Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay for rain gardens. Many backyards don't have space for a rain barrel. A financial credit is given for installing shade trees and rain barrels. Not completely free; homeowners pay about ten percent of cost.

There is high interest in the program. Over 1200 homeowners are interested. Over 400 audits have been completed. They are working to set up a marketplace so homeowners don't have to wait to make desired improvements. They made a list of contractors. Homeowners can get estimates from the contractors. The program does day-long trainings for contractors, teaches them about Bayscapes, etc. Homeowners pay the contractor directly for improvements, and then the credit is taken off their bill.

Web site: <http://ddoe.de.gov/riversmarthomes>

**Presenter: Ann English, Montgomery County, Maryland**

Montgomery County, Maryland is located at the headwaters of the Potomac River. The county has a Rainscapes Program. They conduct outreach workshops and training on rain barrels and rain garden design. There are rebate incentives in most of the county. They are trying to quantify the benefits from these programs. They also do programs for landscape contractors.

Background: 30-40% of impervious surface is from roofs. Driveways are also a problem. They want to reduce runoff, pollutants and recharge groundwater.

The Program: The residential program gives a rebate of up to \$1200. Commercial limit is \$5,000. People pay up front for improvements, then after inspection they are rebated. The program wants to treat a minimum of a 1.5 inch storm. Improvements may cost only \$400-500 if homeowner did the work rather than a contractor.

Conservation landscaping: they give \$500 per property for converting 500 square feet of turf to 75% native plantings.

Tree canopy rebate: up to \$600 per property, \$200 per native canopy tree giving shade.

Permeable pavers: \$1200 per property, if converting an existing hardscape.

Green roof: \$1200 per property for a green roof on an existing roof covering at least a quarter of the roof. Must be installed by a contractor. New construction actually adds to impervious surface so they don't rebate for it.

Rain barrel: \$200 per property if it holds 200 gallons.

Cistern: \$500 for a cistern capturing 250 gallons (for external irrigation only).

Drywells: \$300 per property.

All participation must be voluntary.

The program is targeting neighborhoods in which contractors will install rain gardens from template designs. Homeowners can add to the template at their own cost.

Training programs: They teach people about rain barrels, rain gardens, etc. Make and take rain barrel workshops – bring a big car to haul it away! Rain garden program –learn basics and plants to use, site design help. A list of designers is provided if they want help. Contractor training – contractors are taken to see a rain garden installed, learn how to assess a property.

People who do business in Montgomery County are also welcome, don't have to live there. Funding for incentives comes from a portion of property taxes. The goal is to reduce runoff to zero.

Q&A

*Why exclude new construction green roofs?* Because with new additions, impervious surface is added. This is still under discussion.

**Presenter: Ron Bowen, Anne Arundel County, Maryland**

Background: 65% of their impervious surface is private property, whether residential or commercial.

The Program: They seek to help people understand where Anne Arundel County fits in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, and that what goes into their stream will go into the bay.

The county identifies and trains community leaders who go back into their communities and engage others: watershed stewards. Watershed stewards conduct public education and coordinate action – e.g. doing projects on private property – rain gardens, etc.

Certification course has been developed in tandem with professionals and educators. Professionals, local government and academy staff train people. They are trying to reach citizens, organizations and businesses. They are currently working to form a nonprofit advisory board after running the program for three years, to become self-supporting. Advisory board is working on 501(c)3 status, finding funding, awarding grants,

They provide ongoing professional education for these stewards – networking opportunities, workshops, etc. Support professionals give training support, technical assistance and have formed a speakers bureau. The program has created a small army of engagement and involvement.

They will create a toolbox of knowledge – how-to guides. They are working to consolidate resources to a manageable number. The Executive Director of the Watershed Stewards Academy will maintain a library of resources.

There were about 32 in the original class. Amazing bunch of people. They will reduce the next class size.

Other activity in Anne Arundel County: a new stormwater management tax credit. This is a credit against property tax. 10% of material and installation cost per year over 5 years. So, up to 50% credit. Maximum credit \$10,000. No credits for projects required under law. They must maintain the improvements or county can collect the credit given plus 20%.

Online handout: Stormwater Management Tax Credit form (posted).

**Presenter: Aileen Winquist, Arlington County, Virginia**

Green workshop series started in 2007. They do 30-40 workshops each year on home, garden, stormwater and energy. Very hands on. No financial rebate program yet.

The Program:

*Rain barrel program.* Partnering with Arlington, Alexandria, and Fairfax Counties. Make and take workshops- \$50 per barrel, 40 people per workshop. Pre-made barrels - \$60 per barrel and up to 150 people per workshop. Anyone can come. Workshops are 90 minutes long. They recruit volunteers and give them a free rain barrel. Partner with businesses and Scout troops.

To date, they have sold 2000 rain barrels. 33% of people have completed a survey. 78% of people install their barrel, and 91% are satisfied. 85% of people wanted a rain barrel for water conservation, 41% want water for dry periods, 37% wanted to reduce runoff. Most people don't know how much water comes off their roofs. After taking a workshop, 71% redirect their downspouts.

*Rain garden workshops.* Six held to date. Usually they are full. One training was held for landscape professionals. 27% of participants completed a survey after the workshop. 20% installed a rain garden after the workshop. 50% had decided their site was not appropriate. 37% were thinking they would still do one later. People asked for financial incentives and help with choosing plants. Rain Garden site tour held in October.

*Green home and garden tours.* Happens every June with 15-20 sites. They list the destinations and people can go around to them. Several hundred people come. They also have a resource list on creating green homes.

## **Discussion**

What about the soil underneath pervious paving? Will it absorb water? If not you have not improved function. Might have to underdrain lousy soil.

Half of people in the audience were not aware of the financial incentives. What is the best way to get the word out? To get the volume of people, it will have to be a private/public partnership, Start with nursery contractors to get the word out.

Audience member: can this happen through licensed peoples' needs for CEUs?

Ann English: response to rain-garden-build day. Contractors liked it being hands-on. Now two contractors want to use it.

Contractors are the ones selling this...should they get a financial incentive? They will have to train a whole staff in new techniques. They are the ones who will push it.

Audience member: Zoning codes push you to get water off the property. Homeowners often think they don't have a choice. Virginia is working on changing stormwater requirements for homes.

What about a tax credit for a good tree and a tax debit for an invasive tree?

Montgomery County has had only 1 or 2 applications for a green roof so far. Pretty small.

Montgomery County offers "Promoting the Tree" coupon for free tree.

Audience: Jobs are created by these projects. Now the government wants game-changing ideas. Where federal money is involved, they want to know how many jobs will be created. DC's program was created by stimulus funding. They are keeping statistics on how many jobs are being created, and this will be publicly available.

[Summaries prepared by Carol Cavanaugh and Elena Harvith]