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EPA Launches New Strategy to Promote Use of Green Infrastructure for Environmental and Economic Benefits

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is launching a new strategy to promote the use of green infrastructure by cities and towns to reduce stormwater runoff that pollutes our nation’s streams, creeks, rivers, lakes and coastal waters. Green infrastructure decreases pollution to local waterways by treating rain where it falls and keeping polluted stormwater from entering sewer systems. In addition to protecting Americans’ health by decreasing water pollution, green infrastructure provides many community benefits including increased economic activity and neighborhood revitalization, job creation, energy savings and increased recreational and green space.

“Through this agenda, we’ll help cities and towns across the nation clean up their waters and strengthen their communities by supporting and expanding green infrastructure,” said Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe, who announced the agenda at a Green Street, Green Jobs conference focused on fostering green infrastructure in the Washington, DC metropolitan area. “Green infrastructure changes improve the health of our waters while creating local jobs, saving communities money and making them healthier and more prosperous places to raise a family and start a business.”

Stormwater is one of the most widespread challenges to water quality in the nation. Large volumes of polluted stormwater degrade our nation’s rivers, lakes and aquatic habitats and contribute to downstream flooding. Green infrastructure captures and filters pollutants by passing stormwater through soils and retaining it on site. Effective green infrastructure tools and techniques include green roofs, permeable materials, alternative designs for streets and buildings, trees, rain gardens and rain harvesting systems.

As part of the strategy, EPA will work with partners including local governments, watershed groups, tribes and others in 10 cities that have utilized green infrastructure and have plans for additional projects. EPA will encourage and support expanded use of green infrastructure in these cities and highlight them as models for other municipalities around the country. The 10 cities are: Austin, Texas; Boston, Mass.; Cleveland, Ohio; Denver, Colo.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Kansas City, Mo.; Los Angeles, Calif.; Puyallup, Wash.; Syracuse, N.Y.; and Washington, DC and neighboring Anacostia Watershed communities.

Energy savings is one of the greatest benefits of green infrastructure. On and around buildings, green infrastructure can reduce heating and cooling costs. For example, green roofs reduce a building’s energy costs by 10 to 15 percent, and an additional 10 percent of urban tree canopy can provide 5 to 10 percent energy savings from shading and windblocking. Green infrastructure also conserves energy by reducing the amount of stormwater entering combined collection and treatment systems, which reduces the amount of wastewater processed at treatment plants.

EPA will continue to work with other federal agencies, state and local governments, tribes, municipalities, and the private sector to identify opportunities for using green infrastructure and provide assistance to communities implementing green approaches to control stormwater. EPA will also provide additional tools to help states and communities leverage green infrastructure opportunities within other innovative environmental projects.

For more information on EPA’s green infrastructure agenda: <http://epa.gov/greeninfrastructure>