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Expanding, Focusing and Evaluating Nebraska's Stormwater Management Education Program

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Abstract:

The Clean Water Act's Phase I and II Rules regulate municipalities with populations of 10,000 or larger to effectively manage urban stormwater by reducing the volume of stormwater, slowing run-off, and decreasing nonpoint source pollution in stormwater. Well - designed, implemented and managed properties and green infrastructure are key components of successful urban stormwater management. Increased surface permeability as well as increased bioretention and infiltration are experiencing broader interest and implementation in landscape and development projects. Small scale actions at the individual property level are recognized as having significant impacts on the way water is managed in developed environments.

To provide research based information to green industry, municipalities, home and business owners, the UNL Extension Stormwater and Greenspace work group was organized in 2006 with the goal of providing and developing educational outreach focused on stormwater management through green infrastructure and best management practices for greenspace.

Phase I and II communities are required to develop public education and outreach programs as part of their NPDES permits. These efforts need to be focused and based on research information shown to positively impact water quality and quantity. The work group is also focusing on teaching greenspace industry personnel about opportunities that exist to provide value-added design and management services focused on water related issues, such as installing rain gardens, cisterns used for drip irrigation, grass swales, green roofs, all which positively impact water resources.

This poster presentation will show educational outreach developed and implemented by the UNL- Extension Stormwater Work Group and impacts made. Our goal is to stimulate discussion about ours and others experiences with successful stormwater management education, share resources developed, and explore stormwater education and research needed to further develop and implement outreach.

Impact Statement:

Since 2006, work group efforts have resulted in green industry personnel, municipal workers, Master Gardeners, and homeowners increasing awareness and knowledge of urban stormwater issues and the use of green infrastructure and best greenspace practices to manage stormwater volume and nonpoint source pollutants. Outputs include a stormwater management publication series with 7 new Nebguides and one Extension Circular written and published; greenspace and stormwater workshops reaching over 400 municipal and green industry people; property design and landscape management content pages on the new UNL water website; development of a 1:24-scale operating residential rain garden model; and production of a DVD on 'Home Landscape Water Management'. Partnerships have been formed with staff across University Departments, with municipalities, and with green industry professionals. An action team grant of \$7500 was received.

As the project has developed, the key lessons learned have been the challenges inherent in: 1. responding to a highly diverse audience (relative to training and perspectives); 2. the effective delivery of information at many required learning levels; and 3. how to best prioritize the focus of the UNL Stormwater Working Group to maximize outcomes with available resources.

Category: Other Water Resource Topics

Type of Presentation: Poster Presentation