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Green infrastructure planning pumped up by stimulus funds

DNR/DEC to offer \$80,000 in grants to Alaska communities

(Juneau, Alaska) Alaska communities have an opportunity to jump start their green infrastructure planning efforts to prevent water pollution and improve water quality thanks to a new grant program supported by economic recovery funds.

The Department of Environmental Conservation received \$236,000 in stimulus funds out of \$39 million nationally for Water Quality Management Planning. DEC is using some of the funds to develop water-related elements of an Alaska Climate Change Adaptation Strategy with the rest going to the green infrastructure grants.

Stormwater runoff from large areas of impervious surfaces like parking lots, buildings and roads pollute our lakes, rivers and oceans. Green infrastructure mitigates the pollution by using soils and vegetation to infiltrate, evaporate and recycle polluted stormwater run-off. It includes practices such as green (vegetated) roofs, porous pavements and vegetated swales.

"We want communities to use these grants to evaluate whether green infrastructure projects are feasible and cost effective in Alaskan environments," said Lynn Kent, DEC's water division director. "We hope that this relatively small amount of grant money will be an early step to bigger improvements in protecting the quality of our rivers, lakes and streams."

Because the stimulus funds are required to be spent quickly DEC is partnering with the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) urban forestry program to distribute the grants as soon as possible. "We are gathering all the grant information now and intend to have the grant solicitation go out in November," said Patricia Joyner, DNR's community forestry program coordinator.

Communities interested in the grants will be able to get more information at: www.forestry.alaska.gov/community/grants.htm or can contact DEC's Cindy Gilder at (907) 269-3066 cindy.gilder@alaska.gov or Patricia Joyner at (907) 269-8465 patricia.joyner@alaska.gov



Photo caption: Green infrastructure projects do not have to be difficult or complicated, but they do require planning and good design. In Cuddy Family Midtown Park in Anchorage, the park landscape is contoured to channel water into the pond. The pond is now a holding area for storm water rather than having sediment filled water quickly discharge directly into a stream. It also is an attractive water feature for park visitors. More photos available upon request.
Photo credit: Alaska Department of Natural Resources