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Green Infrastructure Summit Brings Together Communities

On October 20-22, 2013, the City of Syracuse, Onondaga County, and the Syracuse Environmental Finance Center (EFC) co-hosted a national Community Summit on Green Infrastructure in Syracuse, NY.

The purpose of the Summit was to convene communities that are advancing green infrastructure programs and to engage in dialogue surrounding implementation opportunities and obstacles. Participants including university representatives, EPA officials, New York state representatives, local and regional governments, members of the trade media, and national and local nonprofit organizations explored five key areas:

- Green infrastructure project and program development;
- Innovative financing approaches;
- Operation and maintenance;
- Performance monitoring and new technologies; and,
- Promoting adoption of green infrastructure through public outreach and education.

Each theme focused on the benefits, challenges, and opportunities that green infrastructure presents for different communities. The event facilitated robust discussion on these topics and encouraged peer-to-peer information exchanges. Participants from the cities of Baltimore, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, and others presented case studies. Summit participants also toured more than a dozen projects associated with the Onondaga County Save the Rain program, from green street practices to a constructed wetland. Discussion topics during the tour included project selection, financing and funding challenges, practice performance, and stakeholder engagement.

Recommendations

- Present an integrated suite of tools and structures that manage stormwater.
- Collaborate with other communities to advocate at the state and federal levels to get more SRF funds dedicated to stormwater management.
- Allocate funding to support and maintain the useful lifetime of green infrastructure projects.
- Standardize a method of communicating research findings with the public that prioritizes knowledge and supports informed decision-making.
- Allow non-political entities to act as discussion facilitators when looking to design new and successful projects.

EPA's Deputy Administrator Bob Perciasepe announced the agency's new Green Infrastructure Strategic Agenda to the audience. The agenda outlines five major areas of focus to help further the growth and success of green infrastructure approaches to address water quality issues across the

nation: federal coordination, regulatory support, research and information exchange, funding and financing, and capacity building. Since 2011, EPA has established partnerships with 10 communities and has provided technical assistance to more than 20 communities.

The Syracuse EFC is compiling recommendations incorporating best management practices that emerged from the Summit. The report will be available to interested communities, with the goal of accelerating the adoption of green infrastructure practices across the country. The full report can be accessed at <http://efc.syracusecoe.org/efc>.