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VT Department of Environmental Conservation and UVM's Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program announce new *Green Infrastructure Collaborative*

The VT Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Lake Champlain Sea Grant Program (LCSG) of the Rubenstein School of Environment and Natural Resources at the University of Vermont are pleased to announce a new *Green Infrastructure Collaborative* (GIC). The Collaborative will promote Low Impact Development (LID) and Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) practices as the preferred methodologies to manage stormwater runoff from developed lands.

Rebecca Tharp, program manager for the Collaborative is an advocate for the widespread use of GSI in Vermont. "Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI) is an important approach for managing stormwater from our developed lands. Through the use of natural features, GSI aims to slow, dissipate, filter, and infiltrate rainwater or snowmelt into the ground close to where it falls. This decentralized approach is a closer mimic to a site's natural hydrology than conventional pipe and pond stormwater systems and, when used effectively, contributes to better water quality in our streams and lakes."

Examples of green stormwater infrastructure practices include rain gardens, vegetated swales, cisterns, gravel wetlands, and pervious pavement. These practices, and others like them, reduce the volume and improve the quality of stormwater runoff associated with development while providing additional benefits and functions such as: reduced and delayed stormwater flows, enhanced groundwater recharge, stormwater pollutant reductions, reduced sewer overflows, carbon sequestration, urban heat island mitigation, improved air quality, wildlife habitat and recreational space, increased property values, and improved aesthetics.

Dr. Breck Bowden, Director of the Lake Champlain Sea Grant program, notes that research and extension on Green Stormwater Infrastructure has been a focus of LCSG for several years. "The LCSG program has invested significant resources in research and outreach to help communities in the Lake Champlain basin become more resilient to the inevitable changes that will occur in the future due to development, climate change, and their interactions. GSI and LID options are essential tools that will help these communities manage stormwater runoff in the future, which is a critical component of the plans to restore and protect Lake Champlain. The new *Green Infrastructure Collaborative* partnership with DEC is an excellent opportunity for us to further integrate cutting-edge scientific information with state policy and planning to reduce pollution associated with development."

The new Vermont Act 64 – The Vermont Clean Water Act -- focuses on efforts to reduce water quality problems statewide including phosphorus loading to Lake Champlain. When compared acre-per-acre, runoff from developed lands contributes more than three times as much phosphorus to the lake as does agricultural land – making a targeted approach to addressing the contributions from this land use a leading priority for the state.

Kari Dolan, manager of DEC's Ecosystem Restoration Program, adds "We are truly excited about this collaboration. The Shumlin Administration has been promoting clean water innovations for some time now because they can make a difference. The Governor signed an Executive Order in 2012 that established the first Interagency Green Infrastructure Council to show by example – have state government use green stormwater infrastructure approaches on state properties."

As GIC Manager, Tharp will provide support to the Vermont Green Infrastructure Roundtable - a partnership made up of state and federal agency staff, universities, municipalities, citizen groups and businesses that are working together to support GSI statewide. She will also work to promote the use of GSI on development projects of all sizes.

The Collaborative will create a shared webpage that connects the public with resources, updates on stormwater management projects throughout the state, and advances in Green Infrastructure research in cold climates. Information about green infrastructure can be found at <http://www.uvm.edu/seagrant> and www.watershedmanagement.vt.gov/stormwater/htm/sw_green_infrastructure.htm.