Center for Watershed Excellence - 2010 Spring/Summer News

Clemson University

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The Center for Watershed Excellence was established to identify watershed issues, develop site-based solutions toward economic and environmental sustainability, procure funding sources and provide "one-stop-shop" watershed planning and management support to South Carolina communities. The Center also provides faculty expertise in the areas of environmental and ecological sciences, engineering, community planning, marketing, behavioral sciences, economics and computer sciences such as cyberinfrastructure.

**MISSION**
To promote local stakeholders' involvement in protecting and improving the natural and economic resources of their watershed.

**VISION**
To involve Clemson University faculty and students in statewide watershed research and education programs which support the development and implementation of community-based, cost-effective watershed management programs.

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**SAND RIVER HEADWATERS GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECT**
_Incorporating Sustainable Development Practices in Aiken_

The Sustainable Sites Initiative™ (SITES™) recently announced the selection of the Clemson University Sand River Headwaters Green Infrastructure Project in Aiken as one of the first landscapes to participate in a new program testing the nation’s first rating system for green landscape design, construction and maintenance (www.sustainablesites.org). The Sand River Headwaters Green Infrastructure Project will join 174 other pilot projects from 34 states, as well as from Canada, Iceland and Spain, as part of an international pilot project program to evaluate the new SITES rating system for sustainable landscapes, with and without buildings. Sustainable landscapes can clean water, reduce pollution and restore habitats, while providing significant economic and social benefits to land owners and municipalities.

On February 18th, Aiken city leaders, along with EPA Region IV, SC DHEC and Clemson officials, kicked off the construction phase of the **Sand River Headwaters Green Infrastructure Project** to control the impact of rainwater on the surrounding environment. The headwaters infrastructure project was developed during workshops that generated the **Sand River Ecological Restoration Master Plan**. The Green Infrastructure Project incorporates sustainable development practices to capture and treat stormwater in downtown watersheds. The City of Aiken received $3.34 million under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and awarded the Center $293,187 to assist in design of bioswales, rain gardens, permeable paving and other low-impact retrofit practices. Separately, the city paid the Center $126,359 to develop a research and monitoring program that taps into Clemson University’s Intelligent River™ research program.

Bioretention areas made up of rain gardens and bioswales will collect runoff and allow the water to infiltrate through a special bioretention soil mix, reducing pollutants and the amount of water leaving the downtown area. Monitoring equipment will be installed to measure the change in stormwater flow and detect pollutants. This project enhances the city’s environmental health and demonstrates community leadership toward sustainability. To view construction photos and project videos and learn more about on-site elements, please visit [www.clemson.edu/watershedcenter/aiken_green](http://www.clemson.edu/watershedcenter/aiken_green).
UPCOMING EVENTS

The second biennial South Carolina Water Resources Conference (www.scwaterconference.org) will be held at the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center on October 13–14, 2010. The purpose of the conference is to provide an integrated forum for discussion of water policies, research projects and water management in the state. The event focuses on research and policies vital to the quality of life and economic prosperity of South Carolina and seeks to build productive collaboration among key stakeholders and interested citizens from across the state. The 2008 conference brought together 350 attendees from municipal water authorities, environmental engineering and consulting firms, colleges and universities, state and federal agencies, nonprofits, economic development organizations, utility companies, land trusts and governmental entities.

PROJECT HIGHLIGHTS

The Intelligent River™ (www.intelligentriver.org) will bring two new projects online in the coming months to provide real-time data from monitoring equipment onsite at the Sand River Headwaters Green Infrastructure Project and in first order streams in partnership with the National Parks Service in Wears Valley, TN.

The Center recently developed an online ‘Watershed Stewardship’ mapping tool to help connect concerned residents in South Carolina with local groups that are active in protecting water quality and quantity (www.clemson.edu/watershedcenter/stewardship).

Last year, Carolina Clear’s stormwater pollution awareness program reached 2 million people in the state (www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear). Through roadside billboards, television and radio commercials, classes, fairs and other events, Carolina Clear reminds us that it’s everyone’s responsibility to become part of the pollution solution — because “we all live downstream.”

The new SC Low Impact Development (LID) Map online map developed by SC NEMO in partnership with SC Sea Grant and Clemson University highlights low impact development projects within the state to share information for communities trying to address stormwater and growth-related issues (www.clemson.edu/carolinaclear/lidmap).