ECOWISE

January 2012 | Volume 10, Issue 1

www.hud.gov/offices/pih/programs/ph/phecc/newsletter/newsletter.cfm

IN THIS ISSUE

Urban Waters Program Helps Communities Improve Their Waterways

Waterways located in urban areas often end up bearing the burden of pollution from cars, trucks, residential trash, and commercial waste. City layouts often make waterways less accessible to local residents, limiting ability to enjoy them. In response, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has developed the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, which seeks to promote better federal investment in the nation's waterways.

"Right now in cities across the nation, urban waters are being threatened like never before. New and different environmental challenges are appearing everywhere from the Anacostia River in Washington, D.C. to the waterfront in Dubuque, Iowa," said Lisa P. Jackson, EPA Administrator. "The range of challenges we face are going to require both traditional and innovative strategies—and broad partnerships to address the local issues in our communities, and the national issues we all share."

Urban Waters will help community-based organizations leverage area resources by providing funding opportunities through grants. The program will also align with President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative, which advocates for safe, healthy, and accessible outdoor spaces.

The EPA is currently accepting small grant funding proposals to fund projects, training, and research that will advance restoration of urban waters by improving water quality and community access. These grants will help communities become active participants in restoration and protection by promoting public access to urban waterways. More information on the Urban Waters Small Grants can be found at: http://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters/funding/index.html.

PHAs and local communities can also incorporate the Urban Waters principals into their HUD Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) grant applications. "Urban waterways have the potential to significantly improve urban communities," said former HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims. "The Urban Waters Federal Partnership marks a significant step towards revitalizing an often overlooked resource in our urban communities."

To learn about funding options, project ideas, and lessons learned, see: http://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters/communities.html.

Green Conference Presentations are Now Available!

PowerPoint presentations from the *Going Green: Intelligent Investments for Public Housing* conference held earlier this year can be viewed here.

Going Green: Innovative Irrigation and Landscaping

One of the best ways to manage water usage in green spaces is choosing plants that require little water. Most PHAs use more water for their grass and landscaping than they do inside their housing developments. Thus, while installing energy efficient fixtures inside your housing units is certainly important, focusing on outside energy and water use should also be a priority.

A key element to designing water-wise landscapes is preserving existing plants and shrubs when building or remodeling housing. Landscaping with native plants that are adapted to the local conditions generally require less fertilizer and water to maintain. To learn which plants are native to your area, see: **http://www.enature.com/native_invasive/**.

PHAs should also consider replacing grassy areas with plants. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends limiting turf area to a maximum of 40% of the total yard to maximize water conservation. Separate irrigation systems can also efficiently accommodate different plant needs, such as drip irrigation for plant beds and sprinkler heads for turf areas. To find tutorials on irrigation techniques and systems, see: **http://www.irrigationtutorials.com/faq/savewater.htm**.

Additionally, irrigation systems should not overlap. According to the EPA, overwatering is major problem present in 62% of homes nationwide. Smart controller systems can reduce water waste by up to 40%, compared to timer-based mechanisms.

There is also an alternative source of irrigation water that is becoming increasingly popular: harvested rainwater. Collecting your own water can be as simple as connecting a rain barrel to a soaker hose or redirecting water from downspouts to plants. To learn more about harvesting rainwater, visit: **http://www.harvesth2o.com/** or **http://www.gardengatemagazine.com/extras/52droughttolerant.php**.

Resident's Corner | Water Solutions around the Home

Protecting our fresh water is becoming more important since our common waterways are increasingly becoming polluted, putting both our health and environment at risk. Want to ensure that the water you drink is the highest quality possible? Try the following tips:

- Use nontoxic household products: Purchase nontoxic cleaning supplies, laundry detergent, and paint. Look for household products with one of three ecolabels: Designed for the Environment, Ecologo, or Green Seal. If your local store does not carry natural products, ask them to start doing so.
- Dispose of hazardous household products properly: Don't toss hazardous household chemicals down the drain. Contact your local public works, sanitation, or environmental health department to find out if your neighborhood has a hazardous waste collection day. If your city doesn't have a local program, ask for one.
- Don't flush old prescription drugs (unless directed): Wastewater treatment plants are unable to remove drugs from sewer system water, even small amounts of prescription drugs end up in our rivers and streams.
- Remember, what goes on the ground eventually ends up in our water systems: Don't dump oil, gasoline, solvents, paint, or other household chemicals down your storm drain, and never sweep debris into the street or sewer.
- Recycle used motor oil and take care of your car: Throwing motor oil in the trash is not only illegal, but it is harmful to your water source. Recycling centers and many service stations accept used motor oil for recycling. Also, be sure to regularly maintain your car to prevent oil, coolant, antifreeze, or other hazardous chemicals from leaking onto the ground.
- If you have a car, take it to a car wash: A commercial car wash reclaims its wastewater using special filtration systems. This not only conserves water but minimizes the amount of polluted runoff which enters the local storm drain.

For more ideas in and around the home, see: **http://www.lastormwater.org/siteorg/residents/howucnhp.htm**.

Contact Us:

Public and Indian Housing Information Resource Center (PIH IRC)
2614 Chapel Lake Drive
Gambrills, MD 21054
Toll free number: 1-800-955-2232
Fax number: 1-443-302-2084
E-mail: pihirc@firstpic.org (Put "EcoWise" in subject line)

Follow us on:
http://facebook.com/HUD
http://twitter.com/HUDnews
www.hud.gov