

Fall 2004

ANACOSTIA RIVER BUSINESS COALITION UPDATE

C/O ICPRB

51 Monroe Street, Suite PE-8

Rockville, MD 20850

Spotlight on LID - Pepco's Benning Service Center

With shovels and rakes in hand, 20 Eastern High School students and other volunteers helped Pepco install the second of four planned rain gardens at its Benning Service Center in Northeast Washington, D.C. Under cloudy skies, the volunteers planted hardy drought and moisture-tolerant plants in the garden bordering a heavily trafficked road in the Service Center.

A rain garden is a low impact development technique that decreases pollution by increasing absorption of stormwater runoff near its source. Rain gardens are built in low-lying areas, with specific layers of soil, sand, and organic mulch.

These layers naturally filter the rain as it runs into the rain garden. After a storm event, the soil holds the rainwater and nourishes the garden's grasses, trees, and flowers.

The Pepco rain garden is funded in part by a grant from the District of Columbia Environmental Health Administration and is the second rain garden installed at Pepco's Benning Service Center. This rain garden is the latest effort in non-point source pollution prevention and reduction efforts by Pepco in the Anacostia Basin. They have shown leadership in pollution prevention within the business community by creating filtering wetlands

on their property, diminishing storm water runoff, and instituting strong institutional recycling programs.

The garden is approximately 35 feet in length, 18 feet in width, and 39 inches in depth. During a summer thunderstorm with one inch of rainfall, the rain garden will filter about 9,000 gallons of runoff from this site. Over the course of a typical year, the facility will clean 340,000 gallons of runoff before it reaches the Anacostia River.



Before and after garden construction

The rain garden targets the major pollutants that impact the Anacostia and the Bay. Specifically, Pepco estimates that it will reduce the stormwater pollution including:

- Total suspended solids by 90%;
- Total phosphorus by 65%;
- Total nitrogen by 80-90%, and;
- Total organic wastes by 60-80%.

Up to 70 percent of the pollution in streams, rivers, and lakes comes from stormwater runoff. Our traditional system of curbs, gutters, and storm drains carries stormwater runoff directly to local streams and rivers without any bioretention filtering process. Rain gardens filter and reuse the water, reducing stormwater pollution while providing

attractive landscaping.

Reducing stormwater runoff is especially important in the Anacostia watershed, a watershed listed as one of the ten most polluted rivers in the United States. “Although there are many efforts underway to restore the Anacostia, there is still much more work to do,” said Stan Wisniewski, Vice President of Pepco Operations. “That is why we, as a business with significant land holdings in the watershed, are trying to do our part to make a difference.”



Eastern High students helped with the planting

Despite the dreary weather, the student volunteers had a great time and, more importantly, learned a lot. The pupils helped out as a part of the D.C. public schools and Environmental Health Administration’s effort to provide all students with a “meaningful Chesapeake Bay experience” before they graduate from high school.

Rachel Lettre, regional program manager with the Student Conservation Association commented that, “Through experiences such as this planting, the students become more experientially rounded.” Through this hands-on experience, they were able to learn about the impacts of stormwater pollution on the Anacostia River and the bay.

The infiltration swale was designed and constructed by Ecosite, Inc. The Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin (ICPRB) is managing the installation at the PEPSCO facility, the second it has helped install. The ICPRB also has worked on the design of three other bioretention facilities in the Anacostia Basin. Both ICPRB and Pepco are members of the Anacostia River Business Coalition.

For more information on rain gardens or other pollution reduction techniques that your business can institute, contact Steve Saari at 301-984-1908x103 or ssaari@icprb.org or visit www.arbcinfo.org.