

Low impact development has benefits

By Alison Demong/ North And South Rivers Watershed Association (NSRWA)
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When rainwater falls on roofs, driveways, roads and other impervious surfaces, it picks up pollutants such as oil, sediment, fertilizer, and trash.

This stormwater runoff has become a major threat to the health of our waterways and drinking water as residential and commercial development creates more and more impervious surface. Runoff is also a threat to our groundwater supplies; while we create more impervious surface, we lose vegetated areas and the capacity of the soils to enable rain to seep into the ground where it recharges our aquifers and water-bodies.

Most conventional development practices pipe away stormwater and deal with it 'off site' by connecting to storm drain systems or holding it in detention basins. Low Impact Development (LID) promotes a different philosophy. LID is a set of flexible land-use planning strategies that works with the land and treats rainwater as a resource, not something to be piped away. Typical LID features include green roofs, rain gardens, vegetated swales, permeable pavement and creative site design that integrates development into the landscape. LID methods aim to mimic pre-development site hydrology by storing, infiltrating, and recharging stormwater runoff. LID can be cost-effective, and can create more attractive development.

In an effort to promote LID, the North and South Rivers Watershed Association (NSRWA) applied for and received a s.319 Nonpoint Source Pollution Grant funded through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the state department of environmental protection. The project aims to encourage Low Impact Development in several South Shore communities including the towns of Pembroke, Hanover, Kingston and Plymouth.

As part of this grant project, the NSRWA is working with Comprehensive Environmental Inc. (CEI) to review local bylaws in order to identify regulatory barriers to implementing LID and to redesign a municipal location within each of the four communities to showcase how LID techniques could be used. The Kingston Intermediate School and Pembroke Town Hall are two such sites that have already received grant awards to implement the designs next year.

To learn more about the concept of low impact development, a workshop series will be held Thursday and Friday, Sept. 22-23 at the Kingston Town Hall. The Thursday evening session is geared towards municipal board members and staff, and will include presentations on local LID projects and regulatory barriers to implementing LID. Friday's morning session is geared towards municipal officials, developers and engineers and will include presentations on LID site design issues and LID case studies. Interested workshop participants can then travel to several nearby sites that showcase LID designs.

The workshops are being sponsored by NSRWA and co-sponsored by the Jones River Watershed Association, U.S. EPA, MA DEP, the towns of Pembroke, Hanover, Kingston and Plymouth and CEI. Workshops are free and open to the public, but registration is required.

For full agenda details and registration, check out the Web site: www.nsrwa.org, or contact Alison Demong, Grant Project Manager at (781)659-8168 or by email at alison@nsrwa.org.

The North and South Rivers Watershed Association is a non-profit organization, which focuses on the preservation, restoration, maintenance and conservation of the North and South Rivers and their watershed. For membership information, contact NSRWA at (781) 659-8168 or visit www.nsrwa.org.

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