



Beaver Water District



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NW AR Rain Garden Projects Receive \$350,000

Three-year EPA Grants Awarded to Beaver Water District, Illinois River Watershed Partnership

On July 1, the Arkansas Natural Resources Commission (ANRC) and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) awarded two grants totaling \$350,000 to build rain gardens to improve water quality. Beaver Water District was awarded \$139,000 and the Illinois River Watershed Partnership (IRWP) will receive \$211,000 to build rain gardens in Northwest Arkansas over the next three years. Rain gardens will be located in the Illinois River Watershed and the West Fork-White River/Beaver Lake-White River Watershed.

“We’re very excited about this opportunity to optimize resources and build rain gardens in Northwest Arkansas,” said Dr. Robert Morgan, Manager of Environmental Quality for Beaver Water District. “We titled our grant proposal ‘Rain Gardens for Beaver Lake: A Blooming Good Idea,’ and that’s not just a title. It means something. Rain gardens help keep rain where it falls so that nature has a chance to filter pollutants from storm runoff that is headed to Beaver Lake, our drinking water source. The cleaner that water is when it reaches the lake, the less money it costs for the District to clean the water for drinking.”

As for IRWP, the rain gardens located in the Illinois River Watershed will improve water quality by filtering rainwater runoff into creeks and streams that flow into the Illinois River.

“The goal of the Partnership is to reduce nutrient and sediment load into the Illinois River Watershed and to educate the public on how we can improve water quality,” said Dr. Delia Haak, Executive Director of IRWP. “When we do that, we enhance the aquatic life in the river, as well as improve habitat.”

Some stream reaches in both of these watersheds are listed as impaired on what’s known as the 303(d) list of the Arkansas Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ). Projects such

as this are designed to slow “non-point source” (NPS) urban and rural runoff and improve water quality in streams.

While the two grants were awarded separately, both entities must provide local match. The projects will share a part-time Rain Garden Resource Specialist. The Rain Garden Resource Specialist will work with a cooperative project steering committee on selection of sites for rain gardens, conduct six Rain Garden Academies to train volunteers, and help install rain gardens with the assistance of volunteers. Over the course of three years, the two grant projects will:

- train 300 people in rain garden design and installation,
- implement 60 demonstration rain gardens in public/quasi-public locations in the two watersheds, and
- institutionalize rain gardens as a best management practice in Arkansas.

Dr. Morgan said the two organizations will be able to measure the success of the rain gardens through a monitoring program that will include water quality analysis, photo-monitoring both before and after each rain garden is built and annual site visits conducted by the Rain Garden Resource Specialist.

For more information about the rain garden project, call 479-238-4671.

Beaver Water District supplies drinking water to more than 300,000 people and industries in Fayetteville, Springdale, Rogers, Bentonville and surrounding areas. The District’s mission is to serve customers’ needs by providing high quality drinking water that meets or exceeds all regulatory requirements and is economically priced consistent with our quality standards. Visit bwdh2o.org. The Illinois River Watershed Partnership is a diverse group of men and women who work to improve the water quality of the Illinois River. Visit irwp.org.

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