EPA Region 4's Rain Catcher Awards

USEPA Southeast Region announces the fourth annual Rain Catcher Awards for excellence in implementation of stormwater green infrastructure (GI) projects. Nominations will be accepted in four categories: Municipal, Commercial, Tribal, and Neighborhood/Community levels. Winners will be announced and presented with awards at the fourth annual joint International Erosion Control Association Region 1 and EPA Region 4 Municipal Wet Weather Stormwater Conference in Charleston, SC on May 17, 2017. Winners will be notified no later than April 14, 2017, and will be encouraged to attend the Conference. Criteria for consideration are explained below.

Deadlines

January 17, 2017	Competition opens
March 15, 2017	Deadline for submissions
April 14, 2017	Winner notification
May 17, 2017	Award Ceremony at IECA/EPA Conference in Charleston, SC

Background

Using the EPA definition, GI uses natural systems and/or engineered systems designed to mimic natural processes to more effectively manage urban stormwater and reduce receiving water impacts. EPA and its partner organizations have promoted the use of GI for many years as part of a comprehensive approach to achieving healthier waters. GI reduces the volume of stormwater discharges by managing rainwater close to where it falls and removes many of the pollutants present in runoff, making it an effective strategy for addressing wet weather pollution and improving water quality. Although some definitions of GI refer to ecosystem connectivity and services, in this context EPA is only interested in those practices that contribute to achieving the goals of Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits.

In order to provide the best examples and information to the public, EPA Region 4 has developed the Rain Catcher Awards to collect information on implemented practices, and recognize those projects that exemplify GI excellence.

Authority

Section 501(e) of the Clean Water Act authorizes a program for official Agency recognition of and outstanding technical achievement of an innovative process, method, or device in waste treatment and pollution abatement programs. 33 U.S.C. § 1361 (e). The purpose of the section is to authorize a program which will provide official recognition…to…industrial organization and political subdivisions of States which demonstrated an outstanding technical achievement or an innovative process, method, or device in their waste treatment and pollution abatement programs…[N]o applicant shall be eligible for an award…if such applicant is not in total compliance with applicable water quality requirements under [the Clean Water Act], or otherwise does not have a satisfactory record with respect to environmental quality.

As stated, GI techniques are used to manage stormwater with Best Management Practices (BMPs) that promote infiltration, absorption, evapotranspiration, mimicking the natural hydrology of development or redevelopment sites. The reduced run-off mitigates peak flows in receiving streams and reduces pollutants such as nutrients, bacteria and oil products typically contained in urban runoff. A GI treatment train can also passively remove pollutants based on design. Adoption of GI techniques is at the forefront of EPA's national strategy for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits. The status of science in design, monitoring and maintenance of GI BMPs is developing rapidly. Knowledge of technical innovation in design and maintenance of GI projects, is therefore, critical for EPA's success in assisting permittees and the nonregulated community to achieve the protection and restoration goals of the Clean Water Act. Green stormwater infrastructure may also prove a less expensive alternative to traditional stormwater controls in many circumstances, alleviating regulatory or development cost burdens for the public and private sectors. GI techniques can also promote community health, mitigate urban heat island effects and aesthetically improve communities, positively affecting the quality of life.

In addition, EPA's *Green Infrastructure Strategic Agenda 2013*, under the Goal of Partnerships & Capacity Building states, "Early adopters have demonstrated the viability of green infrastructure approaches for wet weather management. Many other communities are interested in green infrastructure but still require additional technical and institutional information to integrate green infrastructure into their current approach. Goal: Communities across the country are networking and exchanging information on the best green infrastructure approaches."

The Rain Catcher Award will help build a database of region-specific best practices that will be used for knowledge transfer and building a GI community of practice.

Eligibility

Projects submitted for consideration must meet all of the following criteria:

1. Must have been installed in the ground within the last 10 years: January 17, 2007 – January 17, 2017.

2. Must be located in EPA Region 4, that is, located in North or South Carolina, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, Florida, Alabama or Kentucky.

3. Must not include a proprietary practice.

Submissions:

All submissions need to include the following information:

1. Project Data Form - please complete the form to the best of your ability.
2. Brief narrative (2 pages, 1,300 words maximum) that explains how the criteria are met.
3. Photographs (4) - This includes a minimum of one of the site before the BMP(s) was installed. All photograph submittals should be in jpg/png format. Each photograph should be labeled with a descriptive file name to explain what they are trying to portray or participants should include an additional document that provides this information.
4. Supporting Materials - Participants have the option to submit additional photos and minimal documentation including design plans or maps that provide greater detail that will be helpful for reviewing the project. Please keep this material to a minimum and limited only to those items you feel relate to the criteria.

Supporting materials will not be returned. By submitting a nomination, the applicant agrees to authorize EPA to use enclosed photographs in web, print and social media publications.

Nominations should be sent to: RainCatcherAwards@epa.gov or must be received by courier by 5:00 p.m. March 15, 2017 at:

USEPA Region 4
Water Protection Division
Sustainable Communities and Watersheds Branch
61 Forsyth Street, S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30303
C/O Kacy Sable

Criteria:

Points total to 100.

1. **Quality of the Nomination** (30 points total): Nominations will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which they describe project(s) that are part of larger watershed assessments and plans; or, address stormwater runoff from a larger area than the foot print of the project; and, reflect a watershed-based approach to conservation and restoration. Reviewers will evaluate whether the approach is technically/scientifically

sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and measurable objectives. Nominations will be evaluated based on the following sub-criteria:

i. **Design in the Watershed Context** (15 points): The extent and quality to which the applicant demonstrates an understanding of priority water resource problems within the watershed, and the project is designed to address those water quality and quantity concerns. Reviewers will look at the documentation provided to see if the design of the BMPs was driven by larger watershed goals.

ii. **Innovation** (15 points): The extent and quality to which the applicant has proposed unique, creative, or novel approaches to design, materials, maintenance, monitoring or protection of GI. Emphasis is placed on how well the nomination demonstrates a thoughtful and strategic approach to problem-solving including, but not limited to incentive-based programs. Innovations can be scientific or legal in nature.

2. **Results** (30 points total): Nominations will be evaluated based on the extent and quality to which a nomination has clearly articulated a set of performance and progress measures and identified measurable indicators; and, shows results consistent with those expectations. Nominations will be evaluated on the following sub-criteria:

   i. **Water Quality/Quantity Results** (20 points): The extent and quality to which the nomination demonstrates results achieved consistent with the expected outcomes. Results may be demonstrated in terms of changes in water quality in receiving waters, volumes retained, quantitative demonstration of reduced flooding, photographs of BMPs in action, or other means.

   ii. **Social Results** (10 points): The extent to which the nomination demonstrates changes in behavior as demonstrated through levels of involvement with BMP installation, changes in land use, or political support for GI ordinances. Projects benefiting underserved communities will receive a minimum score of 7.

3. **Environmental Significance** (5 points): Nominations will be evaluated based on: (a) the extent and quality to which the nomination demonstrates relevance to solving an important environmental problem in that watershed and reflects state and federal environmental priorities and goals (2.5 points) and (b) the extent and quality to which the nominated project(s) are interrelated to improve the water quality and water resources, including wetlands, within the watershed (2.5 points).

4. **Broad Support (**10 points): Nominations will be evaluated based on how well they show the nominee's leveraging of strong collaborative partnerships and document

effective working relationships among state, tribal, local entities with broad-based community involvement. Scores will be based on the extent and quality to which the nominee has shown a wide variety of public, private, and non-profit participation, and the level to which the nominee can demonstrate strong and diverse stakeholder stewardship and support (5 points). Reviewers will also consider interjurisdictionality, that is, the extent to which the project actively involved more than one entity (i.e., federal, state, tribal, local government, nonprofit or community group entity) (5 points).

5. **Peer Outreach and Information Transfer** (5 points): Nominations will be evaluated based on the design and breadth of their outreach component. The score will be based on the extent and quality to which the nominee has demonstrated a clear strategy for transferring the knowledge and experience garnered to other watershed organizations and agencies with similar environmental challenges both within and beyond the affected watershed.

6. **Financial Integrity/Budget** (10 points): Nominations are to be evaluated on cost efficiency relative to the problem addressed (5 points). The budget should be reasonable and clearly presented. The score will increase with the extent to which the applicant can demonstrate a broad range of leveraging in the implementation of the project (5 points).

7. **Regulatory Integrity** (10 points): Nominations are to be evaluated on whether or not the project is consistent with the authorities in effect at the project site (i.e., NPDES MS4 permit, Superfund Redevelopment or Reuse Agreements, Brownfields grants, etc.). If consistent with the governing authority, projects receive a full score unless there are outstanding EPA enforcement actions against the nominee, or the project area is involved in an on-going negotiation for settlement. Severity of other infractions will determine deductions in score.

Thank you for your interest and participation and for protecting our southeastern water resources.

EPA Region 4's Rain Catcher Award Nomination Form

Project Name:	Nominee (Name, Address, Telephone Number, email):

Project Address/Location: (Lat./Long. or mailing address)	City	County	State

Watershed Name:	Watershed Number (12-digit HUC):	Name of Improved Waterbody:

Drainage Area (acres):	% Impervious Cover in Drainage Area:	Project Square Footage/Footprint:

Run-off volume treated by the BMPs (cubic feet):

*Costs of Land:	*Costs of Design/Planning:	*Construction Costs:	*Legal costs:	*Costs of maintenance (If maintenance has not occurred yet, planned costs should be included):

Brief Project Description (2-4 Sentences Maximum):

* Approximate costs suffice for the purposes of this nomination.

Please do not forget to attach your:

1. Project Narrative (Maximum of 2 pages or 1,300 words)
2. Photographs (Minimum of 4, with at least one photograph of the site prior to installation of BMPs in jpg. Format).
3. Supporting Documentation (additional photos, maps, design renderings, letters from contributing partners, etc.) in pdf. Or jpg.