

## Stormwater Management Takes Center Stage in the Panhandle

Agencies Partner for Demo Rain Garden along Interstate 81 South

If you happen to be travelling south into West Virginia from Maryland on Interstate 81 and crossing the majestic Potomac, it's always a treat to catch a glimpse of boaters and fisherman enjoying the water. As soon as you cross the state line you will see the West Virginia Welcome and Rest Center; you'll want to take the exit and check out the newest addition to the facilities' stormwater management plan, which is assisting in allowing those outdoor enthusiasts to continue enjoying the river. West Virginia Division of Highways (WVDOH) recently completed the installation and planting of a 3,560 square foot rain garden that is handling a portion of the stormwater runoff from the impervious surface of the parking area and sidewalks.

The project began with the idea of developing an area of the property that has been typically inaccessible and hard to mow and maintain into a project that would serve as a usable demonstration site. WVDOH contacted the West Virginia Conservation Agency and the Eastern Panhandle Conservation District for technical assistance. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service offered to assist with the soils investigation. The conservation partners were able to assess the site and determined that it would be perfect for a demonstration bio retention project. The structure was excavated and filled with suitable soil amendments and left to settle over the winter of 2011. A walking trail was installed around the garden including two bridges.

The Eastern Panhandle Conservation District provided a planting design and informational signage at the site. The signs direct people down to the rain garden area from the Welcome Center and also explain how the garden functions in filtering pollutants. During the month of June, employees from the West Virginia Conservation Agency and WV Division of Highways planted over 174 perennial plants within the garden. The planting is designed to showcase blooming flowers and plants for all seasons. Routine maintenance will be coordinated with local Berkeley county school programs. Brochures on the intention and design of rain gardens are being made available within the Welcome Center.

If you are passing through the Panhandle, take the time to check out how attitudes are changing as West Virginia takes steps to protect water quality. For more information on this project, please call Carla Hardy at 304.538.751.





