



Connecticut Fund
for the Environment

Save the Sound®

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Youth build green infrastructure skills at Beardsley Zoo planting

Hands-on rain garden planting workshop teaches benefits of green infrastructure while combatting river pollution

Bridgeport, Conn. – Bridgeport youth volunteers gained green infrastructure skills recently at a hands-on rain garden planting workshop led by Save the Sound, a bi-state program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment. Saturday's workshop at Beardsley Zoo is part of Save the Sound's ongoing efforts to spread the word about the benefits of green infrastructure, and builds upon rain gardens previously installed at the zoo by Save the Sound and volunteers.

Green infrastructure uses natural principles and landscaping to manage stormwater, reduce flooding, and filter pollutants. The rain gardens built at the Beardsley Zoo slow the flow of rain water runoff and helps filter polluted rainwater before it reaches the Pequonnock River and Long Island Sound.

"The beauty of rain gardens and other green infrastructure is that they are mostly above ground, so they're visible. And because rain gardens are visible, they both have value in beautifying neighborhoods and serve as great tools for educating people about sustainable water management," **said Kevin Dahms, Save the Sound's Green Infrastructure project manager.** "The new rain gardens combined with installations of porous pavement in the Zoo's parking lot filters 1,000,000 gallons of urban runoff annually. With the completion of the rain gardens, more than fifty percent of the Zoo's parking lot is now sustainably managed."

The Beardsley Zoo green infrastructure project, a partnership between Save the Sound and Connecticut's Beardsley Zoo, first broke ground in spring 2016. Save the Sound and partners installed a rain garden and a porous walkway that allows stormwater runoff from the Zoo's parking lot to percolate into the soil. Area youth and Save the Sound have since followed up with multiple rounds of plantings to reinforce the garden.

About 40 volunteers, including local young people from Beardsley Zoo Youth Conservation Discovery Corps, Groundwork Bridgeport, and BuildOn Bridgeport participated in the Saturday morning workshop. They learned about the harmful effects of stormwater runoff and how green infrastructure prevents flooding and water pollution, then gained hands-on experience by planting native perennials to filter runoff from the zoo's parking lot. Species included joe-pye weed, coreopsis, bee balm, and switchgrass, among others. All are tolerant of both wet soil and periods of drought—critical as climate change is expected to generate less-frequent, but higher-intensity storms that drop a great deal of rain in a short amount of time.

Together, the porous pavement and rain gardens provide a two-step process for capturing and filtering stormwater runoff, and releasing clean water into the Pequonnock River. In addition, the

rain gardens and porous pavement's prominent location in a highly-trafficked Connecticut tourism destination function as a public education site.

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Additional photographs of rain garden planting workshop are available upon request.