

Watershed Project Plants Trees, Provides Flooding Control

The Challenge:

The city of Watertown, NY, draws water from the Black River for drinking. Its surrounding communities and Fort Drum also rely on water from the Black River for drinking. The Black River flows into Lake Ontario, which is an economic driver for tourism and fisheries.

Intense rainfall can increase the concentration of sediment and nutrients in water that communities use, which can reduce water quality. Trees and green infrastructure, such as rain gardens and bioswales, serve to slow down, filter, and reduce the amount of water going into local storm sewers that ultimately drain into local waterbodies like the Black River. This slowing down and filtering of rainfall otherwise pouring down storm sewers reduces the concentrations of sediment and harmful nutrients in the water, which reduces local water treatment costs.

The Solution:

The Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District and the Jefferson County Stormwater Coalition used a USDA Forest Service grant to reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff and protect water quality. Project partners planted trees, posted signs, and installed rain gardens.

The USDA Forest Service provided \$148,000 in Great Lakes Restoration Initiative funds for the project. The total project budget was \$195,000.

Resulting Benefits:

The District planted a total of 1,279 trees, including 317 ball-and-burlap trees, 482 shrubs, and 480 bare-root species. They installed two rain gardens and a bioswale in an urbanized area of the Jefferson County Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems. The District also installed educational signs at all tree planting, rain garden, and bioswale locations.



This rain garden in the Village of Black River in Jefferson County, New York, collects roof water from the village municipal office that originally flowed across the parking lot and directly entered the Black River. (Courtesy photo by Jefferson County SWCD)

Sharing Success:

Newsletters for the Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District (JCSWCD), Tug Hill Commission, and Black River Watershed featured the project in their publications. Project personnel gave presentations at the 2017 and 2018 Black River Watershed Conference. The Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District website and Facebook page, as well as the JC Stormwater Coalition website, also highlighted the project. The projects were also highlighted on a field tour during the 2016 Black River Watershed Conference and the 2017 JCSWCD Conservation Tour.

Nearly 1,300 recently planted trees protect water quality following storms.

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