

Committed to Water Quality - SARA Awarded Grant for Guenther Building Retrofits

The Texas Commission on Environmental Quality (TCEQ) recently awarded the San Antonio River Authority (SARA) a nonpoint pollution source grant from federal Clean Water Act Section 319 funds administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The grant will allow SARA to inspire actions for healthy creeks and rivers by constructing stormwater treatment retrofits at its main office at 100 E. Guenther.

Stormwater runoff is rainfall that flows off the land and into storm drains rather than soaking into the ground. In the San Antonio River Watershed most stormwater runoff is not treated before it is carried directly to our creeks and rivers, and as a result, it is the most significant contributor to water quality degradation. Common stormwater pollutants include oils, pesticides, fertilizers, bacteria, heavy metals, gasoline and sediment. Segments of the San Antonio River and its tributaries are considered impaired for water quality due to these stormwater pollutants, particularly bacteria.

SARA's expert scientists and engineers know that sustainable development is necessary to generate improvements in the health of the San Antonio River Watershed. Therefore, SARA is promoting best management practices (BMPs), such as Low Impact Development (LID), for reducing stormwater runoff. LID is designed to treat the runoff from small storm events on-site and to limit runoff in larger storms. LID

controls pollution by reducing the volume of runoff as well as by filtering and treating it.

The stormwater retrofits being implemented at SARA's main office are a way for SARA to lead by example and to use this as a case study of LID retrofits in highly urbanized areas. The retrofits include five cisterns, seven rain gardens and 22 permeable pavement parking stalls. SARA representatives met with the King William Association in December. Based on feedback, some adjustments have been made to the design. The City's Historic Design and Review Commission reviewed the case on January 20, 2016.

SARA will submit more information, including images of the retrofits, to the KWA prior to construction beginning later this summer. An open house will be held when the retrofits are completed so KWA members can see the LID BMPs firsthand and learn how they function. SARA is confident the retrofits will improve stormwater runoff while enhancing and complementing the existing aesthetic and design of the King William Historic District.

To learn more about LID, visit SARA's website at www.sara-tx.org.

- Michelle E. Garza, Stormwater Analyst and Aarin Teague, Ph.D., P.E. Watershed Engineer

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