



Pritzker Administration Awards \$919,869 To Develop A Watershed Plan To Help Address Flooding In Cahokia Heights

March 23 2021 1:17 PM

SPRINGFIELD — Illinois Environmental Protection Agency Director John J. Kim today announced that HeartLands Conservancy has been awarded the Prairie du Pont Watershed grant. The two-year grant of almost \$920,000 will be used to develop a community-endorsed watershed-based plan and support voluntarily implementation of demonstrative projects designed to reduce stormwater runoff and fix minor sewer system infrastructure issues within the 95,000-acre project area.

Cahokia Heights (the new municipality formed with the merger of the communities of Cahokia, Centreville, and Alorton) and the surrounding area currently experience significant flooding and sewage backups following heavy rain events. These problems are due to a combination of natural causes, urban development, and the ineffective operation and maintenance of older sewer systems. A watershed-based plan will help identify the existing watershed conditions (such as natural resources, land use, and stakeholder concerns), including sources of stormwater runoff, and the best management practices, activities, and programs that stakeholders are willing to support to control the stormwater runoff. Reducing stormwater runoff will lessen the number and duration of flood events and help provide long-term relief to the existing sewer collection system.

“This grant from IEPA is a first step towards ensuring Cahokia Heights residents have the community they deserve,” said Governor JB Pritzker. “The persistent flooding and sewage local residents have experienced are entirely unacceptable, especially in a pandemic when home has never been more sacred. The Illinois Emergency Management Agency has already submitted a \$22 million grant request to the Federal Emergency

Management Agency that prioritizes funding and fixing the situation that has been allowed to fester in this community for too long – and I'll use every tool at my disposal as governor to push FEMA to give this project the support it deserves.”

“Illinois EPA is pleased to award this grant to begin to provide the residents of Cahokia Heights with assistance in the development and implementation of a watershed-based plan, projects to reduce the impacts of stormwater, and fixes of minor sewer system infrastructure problems. Heartlands Conservancy has experienced staff with the requisite knowledge to be able to work with residents and other local watershed stakeholders. This grant will help provide guidance to local, State and federal partners to secure and coordinate technical and financial assistance to provide lasting relief to area residents, furthering the Illinois EPA's commitment to the principles of environmental justice,” said Director John Kim.

The Prairie du Pont project will engage local stakeholders (including residents) to develop the plan while implementing demonstrative best management practices including traditional stormwater runoff control measures and minor sewer system infrastructure repairs. These projects will help the watershed planning committee and residents understand how these practices work and help them identify which types of practices should be recommended in the watershed-based plan. Heartlands Conservancy will work with the local watershed stakeholders (citizens, businesses, organizations), and local, State, and federal partners to determine the types and best locations for the demonstrative practices.

“Heartlands Conservancy looks forward to making sure residents of the watershed have a strong voice in how stormwater will be managed into the future. This watershed plan will be the 10th plan Heartlands has worked on in southwestern Illinois. We are pleased to provide this service as a part of our mission toward cleaner water and healthier land for the people of our region” said Heartlands Conservancy President and CEO Mary Vandevord.

"Since taking office, I have worked with the governor to ensure that the challenges my community faces due to sewage backups are addressed," said Sen. Christopher Belt (D-Centreville). "This nearly \$1 million in funding to address those challenges is a step in the right direction. I will continue to do everything I can to make sure this issue is alleviated, and I believe the governor shares that mission."

“The residents of Centreville - now Cahokia Heights- have made their voices heard about an issue that has been public health crisis for our area. I am delighted that the numerous phone calls, meetings, and discussions on the local, state, and federal level to

address this issue have finally produced the beginning of getting this issue resolved. I thank the Governor for answering the call to address this critical need for investment in this community,” said Rep. LaToya Greenwood (D-East St. Louis).

“On behalf of the residents of Centreville, I am grateful for this Illinois EPA award of nearly \$920,000 that will be used to help identify problems and solutions for the stormwater runoff problems that has long plagued our community. This is an important investment in the stability and future viability of the newly merged communities of Cahokia, Centreville, and Alorton. Along with Governor Pritzker, I am also grateful to Senator Christopher Belt and Representative LaToya Greenwood for their unwavering support,” said Mayor Marius Jackson, Centreville.

The total project budget is \$1,019,391, with Illinois EPA providing \$919,869 in grant funds and HeartLands Conservancy and project partners providing \$99,522 in match. The watershed-based planning portion of the Prairie du Pont grant award is funded through Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. The Section 319 Grant Program is a competitive financial assistance grant program established to help control nonpoint source pollution. For additional information on Illinois’ Nonpoint Source Management Program and the 319 Grant Program, please visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/epa/topics/water-quality/watershed-management/nonpoint-sources/Pages/default.aspx> .