



Lewis and Clark Partners with Illinois American Water and Alton Middle School to Improve Water Quality in Metro East

November 13 2014 3:59 PM

More than 400 Native Plants Installed for Campus Bioswales



GODFREY – Lewis and Clark Community College’s Office of Sustainability recently partnered with Illinois American Water and Alton Middle School (AMS) to install two native planted bioswales on the L&C campus in Godfrey. Funding for the project was provided by Illinois American Water’s Environmental Grant Program, which supports “innovative, community-based environmental projects that improve, restore and/or protect watersheds and community water supplies through partnerships.”

More than 50 AMS students took a field trip to L&C’s Godfrey campus for a day of planting native species and learning about the environmental benefits of bioswales, which are shallow constructed depressions, similar to ditches but with more environmental design. Bioswales are useful for slowing the velocity of storm water runoff.

“Slower water means less bank erosion, which means less sediment getting into our waterways,” said L&C Director of Sustainability Nate Keener. “Since we loaded this bioswale with plants, the stormwater runoff has a chance to filter naturally through the vegetation, instead of transporting all the pollutants from the paved surfaces. These native plants act as scrubbers for the stormwater, which eventually ends up back in the Mississippi River – the source of drinking water for millions of Americans.”

The AMS students’ participation helped to meet the collaborative goals of the grant, but also provided a valuable educational experience for AMS, which has plans of installing a bioswale of their own.

“One focus of our science curriculum in seventh grade at Alton Middle School is understanding human impacts on the environment,” said Sig Utgaard, AMS instructor. “We are working on developing environmental education opportunities for our students in the park.”

The \$2,300 Illinois American Water grant was used to purchase more than 400 plants and landscape materials needed to conduct the project.

“We are proud to be a part of such a collaborative project,” said Illinois American Water President Karla Olson Teasley. “By working together we are able to help protect our precious water resources and support valuable education.”

The bioswale, which stands as another example of Lewis and Clark’s living laboratory, will be used by restoration ecology students as a functional educational demonstration for years to come.

“This space will help students learn about proper landscape management and native plant

cultivation,” said Restoration Ecology Coordinator Scott Moss. “Native plants have deeper roots, require less maintenance and are mutually beneficial to birds and insects, all of which are vital for a healthy ecosystem.”

For more information about the project or Lewis and Clark’s Sustainability projects, contact Keener at (618) 468-2782 or nkeener@lc.edu. To learn more about American Water’s Environmental Grant Program, visit <http://goo.gl/s8Qeb6>.