

2009 Regional Centers of Excellence in Green Infrastructure:

Summary Report

January 2010

Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission

Green Bay, WI
Population: 589,894
Size: 5,433 square miles
www.baylakerpc.org
920.448.2820

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Philadelphia, PA
Population: 5,486,264
Size: 3,812 square miles
www.dvrpc.org
215.592.1800

Background

The **National Association of Regional Councils** (NARC), in partnership with the US Forest Service, recognized two regional planning organizations as *Regional Centers of Excellence* (RCEs) to receive \$5,000 grants and serve as national models for regional green infrastructure planning in May 2009. The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC) in Green Bay, WI and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) in Philadelphia, PA were selected through a national call for applications. As RCEs, BLRPC and DVRPC engaged in a variety of activities promoting regional green infrastructure planning and were featured at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference and Exhibition and through Green Regions, a public awareness campaign focused on the environment. The RCEs were able to expand green infrastructure planning within their own regions while serving as national examples for other regional councils seeking to protect natural resources across small, large, urban and rural regions. This report summarizes the projects carried out by BLRPC and DVRPC during their seven-month RCE projects and the overall success of NARC's first RCE awards.

The RCE Initiative

With support from the US Forest Service, NARC held a national call for applications for regional planning organizations with green infrastructure programs to propose information-sharing and peer-to-peer communication projects. NARC received proposals from 16 well-qualified applicants, and with the assistance of its Green Infrastructure and Landcare Advisory Council, selected two recipients of \$5,000 grants to carry out their proposals. Recipients were selected based on program quality, capacity and reach, along with geographic, demographic and ecological diversity. The RCEs were required to attend, present and exhibit at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference of Regions as a kick-off activity. Following the conference, NARC staff offered informational and technical support and resources as needed, in addition to the grant funding, to assist the RCEs in carrying out their projects.

2009 RCE Projects

The two 2009 RCEs, BLRPC and DVRPC, have diverse population densities, climates and ecological resources. The BLRPC region has an average population density of 109 people per square mile, while DVRPC's is over 1,439 people per square mile. With the presence of Lake Michigan, BLRPC's eight counties contain significant coastline, floodplains and wetlands. The green infrastructure in the nine-county DVRPC

region largely consists of rolling farmland, urban greenways and community woods and forests. In both regions, the local governments have primary authority over land use planning, therefore education and outreach to the 185 jurisdictions in BLRPC's region and 353 in DVRPC's region is a critical component of their work. Both organizations seek to inform and influence local land use planning to protect their region's unique ecological resources.

With their grant, BLRPC prepared, published and distributed posters about the benefits of and tools for protecting regional green infrastructure, which were published on BLRPC's website and distributed to each local jurisdiction and key stakeholders within and around the region. The nine unique posters include one regional map and eight additional maps of each individual county within the region. With the goal of informing local land use planning, these posters included essential information on green infrastructure preservation benefits and tools, including zoning changes, transfer of development rights, conservation easements, tourism strategies and transportation planning. To reach a state and national audience, BLRPC presented at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference and Exhibition in Denver, CO and at the 6th biennial State of the Lake Michigan Conference in Milwaukee, WI; they also engaged an advisory group made up of representatives from government agencies, universities, community stakeholders and other experts.

DVRPC developed a communications and outreach strategy to increase awareness about green infrastructure and planning tools available to preserve and protect this important resource. As an RCE, DVRPC used their grant to develop print materials on their green infrastructure conservation programs and approaches, develop a new green initiatives webpage and increase the number of public presentations given on their work. DVRPC presented at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference and Exhibition in Denver, CO and is scheduled to present at the 2010 New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Seattle, WA. DVRPC targeted state, county and municipal officials, as well as environmental, transportation and land use planners and other key stakeholders in the community and beyond. DVRPC shared its communications strategies, information about programs and tools, and served as a model for other regional planning organizations developing efforts to promote green infrastructure.

2009 RCE Project Impacts

With small \$5,000 grants, each region was able to leverage additional resources to complete significant communication

and outreach activities. BLRPC developed nine distinct posters for the region and printed a total of 2,000 copies – 400 copies of the regional poster and 200 copies of each of the eight individual county posters. At the completion of the project period, over 629 copies of the posters had been distributed to all 185 units of local government and other environmental stakeholders within the BLRPC region. The posters are also available on BLRPC's new webpage devoted to green infrastructure planning, which received over 100 hits with 65 posters downloaded in the first two months that the webpage was available. BLRPC presented information about developing and promoting green infrastructure to over 45 people at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference in Denver in June 2009 and to about 25 people at the 6th biennial State of the Lake Michigan Conference in Milwaukee in September 2009.

With its \$5,000 grant, DVRPC created flyers and case studies on its Green Streets strategies, the Greater Philadelphia Food System Study, the Economic Value of Open Space Study and five groups of municipalities that successfully participated in the TreeVitalize program. Over 950 flyers were distributed during the project period and all flyers developed through the RCE project are available in the DVRPC library and will be distributed at future events. DVRPC's new webpage highlighting its "green" initiatives received over 240 page views during the project period. DVRPC also presented at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference and Exhibition in June 2009,

in Denver, CO, reaching over 45 attendees and will present at the 2010 New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Seattle, WA in February 2010.

Overall, BLRPC and DVRPC directly reached over 2,000 stakeholders during the seven month project period, including local elected officials, fellow regional planners and many others. NARC facilitated and expanded upon these efforts by including the RCEs in their Annual Conference, featuring the RCEs on the NARC website and the Green Regions Campaign website, and providing information to NARC membership, partners, federal agencies and the public through its electronic newsletter, *eRegions*, press releases and meetings, among other efforts. Beyond the project period, NARC has held a Green Infrastructure Webinar featuring the RCE projects and will continue to feature these two organizations' excellent green infrastructure planning efforts in its future publications.

Due to the nature of green infrastructure and the audiences served, the full impact of the 2009 RCE projects will go beyond the stakeholders directly reached by BLRPC and DVRPC during the project period and extend to the populations served by them, both now and in the future, as green infrastructure priorities are incorporated into local land use plans, ordinances, zoning changes and other programs at the regional and local level. For additional information on BLRPC and DVRPC's individual RCE projects, please see the two-page summary for each project.

About the National Association of Regional Councils

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) serves as the national voice for regionalism by advocating for regional cooperation as the most effective way to address a variety of community planning and development opportunities and issues. NARC's member organizations are composed of multiple local governments that work together to serve American communities – large and small, urban and rural. In 2008, NARC launched the first of four public awareness campaigns – Green Regions, Mobile Regions, Build Regions and Secure Regions. For additional information, please visit www.NARC.org or www.GreenRegions.org.

About the Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission

The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission was created to address regional land use, economic, and intergovernmental issues in northeast Wisconsin. The Commission evolved from a long tradition of state and local interest in land and water conservation and balanced economic development in the State of Wisconsin. The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission was established by Governor Patrick Lucey in April 1972 to provide advisory planning service on area-wide issues, to represent local interests on state and federal planning program activities, and to provide local planning assistance to communities in the counties of Brown, Door, Florence, Kewaunee, Manitowoc, Marinette, Oconto, and Sheboygan. For additional information, please visit www.baylakerpc.org or http://baylakerpc.org/env_corridors.html.

About the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is dedicated to uniting the region's elected officials, planning professionals and the public with the common vision of making a great region even greater. Shaping the way we live, work and play, DVRPC builds consensus on improving transportation, promoting smart growth, protecting the environment, and enhancing the economy. We serve a diverse region of nine counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer in New Jersey. DVRPC is the official metropolitan planning organization for the Greater Philadelphia Region - leading the way to a better future. DVRPC fully complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For additional information, please visit www.DVRPC.org or www.DVRPC.org/green.

About the U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service manages over 193 million acres of National Forests, has the world's largest forestry research organization, and facilitates the conservation of state and privately owned forest land across the country. The Forest Service promotes the use of Green Infrastructure and Landcare to help conserve and manage public and private forest land that spans the urban to rural continuum. For more information on the U.S. Forest Service, please visit www.fs.fed.us.

About Green Infrastructure and Landcare

Green infrastructure is the network of natural lands, working landscapes and other open spaces that are strategically planned and managed to conserve their ecological functions while also providing associated benefits to human populations. Green infrastructure includes woods, meadows, forests, wetlands, farmland, animal habitat, etc., and plays an important role in reducing air pollution, filtering stormwater, maintaining ecological balance, and increasing

the effectiveness of traditional infrastructure. Landcare, the community-based practice of holistic, cooperative and sustainable land management techniques is an integral aspect of maintaining green infrastructure.

The National Association of Regional Councils

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