

**Sponsor:** NASCA Policy Committee

**Title:** Green Infrastructure

**Subject:** **Proposing actions to promote the use of Green Infrastructure in urban and rural landscapes, and to recognize that work accomplished through soil and water conservation districts and Section 319 nonpoint source grants are important contributors to success of Green Infrastructure.**

**Action requested to be taken by NASCA:**

- Support funding for USDA NRCS Farm Bill Programs for urban agriculture which can be an important component of Green Infrastructure.
- Increase soil and water conservation districts' capacity to provide technical assistance for Green Infrastructure projects by pursuing funding, training, and information sharing opportunities.
- Support continued funding for Clean Water Act Section 319 Nonpoint Source Management Program grants to states, and encourage projects which implement Green Infrastructure practices.
- Support Green Infrastructure policy initiatives that are compatible with and leverage agricultural land use.
- Promote improvement of soil health as a component of Green Infrastructure. Soil health is of paramount importance for maintaining soil structure, fertility, climate resilience, production capacity, and protection of water quality and quantity.
- Partner with agencies or organizations that provide information, training, and financial resources to Green Infrastructure initiatives.

**Supporting material and/or documentation:**

Urban and suburban communities are faced with ever increasing local, state and/or federal regulations dealing with improving water quality, reducing stormwater runoff, increasing infiltration, and improving wildlife habitat. Stormwater basin retrofitting,

wetland mitigation, installation of dry wells, bio-swales, rain gardens, green roofs, permeable parking lots, and street trees are all forms of Green Infrastructure used to comply with these regulations.

Green Infrastructure uses vegetation, soils, and other landscape features to restore some of the natural processes required to manage and treat water and create healthier environments. Green Infrastructure can be useful across the country where there is a wide range of runoff conditions, soils, quality of receiving waters, and community development. Green Infrastructure capitalizes on opportunities to improve infiltration, evapotranspiration and reuse of stormwater runoff; it reduces and treats stormwater at its source.

Urban agriculture, a form of Green Infrastructure, can provide multiple environmental, societal and cost-effective benefits. Many urban areas have vacant and unused lots that serve no purpose to the city or surrounding neighborhood, and are typically made up of poor quality soils that are compacted due to years of development and are therefore not conducive to water infiltration. Planning for urban agriculture with appropriate conservation practices on these lots can greatly reduce the amount of stormwater runoff through reduced soil compaction, the addition of organic matter and vegetative practices.

An important focus of soil and water conservation districts is assisting agricultural landowners with conservation practices which prevent soil erosion, protect water quality and improve soil health. Many soil and water conservation districts throughout the country are located in urban or urbanizing counties; the National Association of Conservation Districts estimates that close to 70 percent of the nation's conservation districts are involved in some form of urban and community conservation.

Soil and water conservation districts are taking a lead role in the effective implementation of Green Infrastructure best management practices in both agricultural and non-agricultural settings through outreach, education, technical assistance and in some cases inspection and oversight. Soil and water conservation districts can also play a key role in informing policy decisions with respect to Green Infrastructure initiatives to ensure that they are compatible with land use i.e. are not sited to take agricultural land out of production. Soil and water conservation districts can leverage technical and financial resources to further voluntary, incentive-driven natural resource conservation programs that benefit all citizens.

Urban agriculture practices can also: 1) improve the local economy by creating jobs and increasing property values, 2) provide nutritional health and physical benefits of underserved communities by providing access to nutritional foods, and 3) connect residents to their food supply and their environment by providing greenspace to enjoy.

#### References

[https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure.](https://www.epa.gov/green-infrastructure/what-green-infrastructure)

<https://www.americanrivers.org/2015/06/urban-farms-providing-food-and-protecting-watersheds/>

[https://s3.amazonaws.com/pnmresources/pID-235/topic-104415/25812210-RUaf-UAM+27\\_Urban+Agriculture+as+Green.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/pnmresources/pID-235/topic-104415/25812210-RUaf-UAM+27_Urban+Agriculture+as+Green.pdf)