

MEDIA ADVISORY

Northeast Iowa Resource Conservation and Development
101 E Greene St • P.O. Box 916 • Postville, Iowa 52162
Phone: (563) 864-7112 • Fax: (563) 864-7113 • Web: <http://www.northeastiowarcd.org>

Contact: Tori Nimrod, Watershed Guardian Project Coordinator

Phone: 563-864-7112

E-mail: tori@northeastiowarcd.org

Northeast Iowa RC&D Connecting Communities and Youth to Urban Conservation through New Demonstration Site and Watershed Guardian Program!

POSTVILLE, IOWA - September 2018 – This summer, construction of several innovative urban stormwater conservation practices was completed as a part of a new Regional Urban Stormwater Demonstration Site at Northeast Iowa RC&D. The site, across from City Hall in Postville, Iowa, provides real-life examples of several different urban stormwater conservation practices, which were installed as a part of a partnership between the City of Postville, Northeast Iowa RC&D, the US Fish and Wildlife Service, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, Alliant Energy, and other funders. It features several urban conservation practices, including rain gardens, bio-swales, soil amendments, and tree plantings, as well as bilingual interpretation depicting each practice. Each of the practices works independently and in tandem to reduce flooding and improve water quality but perhaps more importantly, the site is an outdoor classroom for community leaders, teachers and students from around the region. The RC&D has also developed correlating lesson plans and hand-on learning for teachers and students who visit the site.

Northeast Iowa RC&D Executive Director Lora Friest noted, *“We have been working to help communities and schools understand water quality and flood prevention concepts for decades. This new demonstration site and the associated Watershed Guardian Program will help us expand learning and outreach through fun hands-on learning. It also has provided an opportunity for us to create a new grant program that will empower classrooms around the region who may want to implement urban conservation practices at their school or in their community. Also, what child wouldn’t love to be a “Watershed Guardian”!”* Through funding from US EPA, Northeast Iowa RC&D is able to offer grants to schools from around the region who visit the Regional Urban Stormwater Demonstration Site at the RC&D and take part in the *Watershed Guardian Program*. Through the *Watershed Guardian Program* classes visit the demonstration site, learn about urban stormwater runoff management and watershed ecology, and implement urban conservation practices at their school or in their community. The RC&D Watershed Guardian Program Coordinator, Tori Nimrod, noted that, *“The Program is geared toward upper elementary and middle school students, but all age groups are invited. We also hope teachers incorporate the curriculum we are providing, and that students have fun and feel empowered to make a difference in their own communities.”*

Nimrod explained that community leaders and students who visit the site will learn about the effects stormwater runoff has on water quality and flooding. Classes that visit the site will receive a tour of the conservation practices and will participate in a variety of hands on learning activities. Teachers will receive a *Watershed Guardian Teacher’s Packet*, which includes a variety of activities for teachers to incorporate watershed health and urban stormwater conservation into their curriculum. The lessons in the packet also help prepare students to implement their own stormwater practice. Retired high school science teacher Larry Berland from Decorah, who helped develop the curriculum packet, is also excited about the new Watershed Guardian Program noting,

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“I have been in the school system for 45 years, and I am always looking for hands on activities that relate to real world circumstances. The Watershed Guardian Program does just that.” After visiting the site, teachers are eligible to apply for a small, up to \$500 and/or a large, up to \$5,000, Watershed Guardian Grant to implement urban conservation practices at their school or in their community. Nimrod noted, *“We understand that these teachers have limited funding for classroom activities, so there is no match required for the grant.”* After implementing a conservation practice as a class, students become *“Watershed Guardians”* and will receive a watershed emblem and recognition through press releases. Nimrod noted *“We believe that students that take part in the Watershed Guardian Program will directly impact and become leaders in their community, by designing and implementing stormwater practices that reduce flooding and improve water quality. Students will provide an example for other classes, schools and community members around the region.”*

To schedule a class tour, be a Watershed Guardian Sponsor, or for more information on the Watershed Guardian Program visit www.northeastiowarcd.org/projects/stormwater or contact Tori Nimrod at Northeast Iowa RC&D at 563-864-7112.

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