

Session C1: Creative Collaboration and Restoration in Baltimore

by Ashley Traut

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Blue Water Baltimore History:

- Baltimore has the lowest grade in the Bay
 - o How do we respond to a challenged environment?
 - Through education
 - Collaborative restoration projects
 - Water Audit Program (2010-2015)
 - Blue Water Congregations
 - Deep Blue

*What does success look like in the Urban Environment?

Water Audit Program

- Given \$450K from NFWF for 3 years
- Implement and monitor cost effective nutrient and bacteria reduction strategies for small urban watersheds in Baltimore
 - o Have the community embrace stormwater
 - o Make it easily approachable
 - Outreach (community associations, schools)
 - Provide solutions and options
 - o Incentive systems to install solutions
 - Money for rain gardens, rain barrels etc.
- Funded a second time by NFWF
- Turns out no one wanted downspout disconnections (not 'sexy')

- Originally residential program, moved to institutions to make a real change
- Work with neighbors
- Small rain gardens can be cheap but efficient (\$1,500-\$5,000)
- Cylburn Arboretum (institutional scale)
 - o Sediment and stormwater loads
 - o Need to find funding for design and install
 - o Need passive education via signs (not just about landscaping- habitat and reducing stormwater load)
- Results: ~19,000 Rain Gardens, ~169 Rain Barrels, 130,000 sq. ft. impervious surface removed, 7,600 people educated, 10,000 turf turned into conservation gardens, 60 downspouts disconnected, 376 green roofs
- Lessons Learned:
 - o Residential interest tapered after 4 years
 - Low hanging fruit already reached
 - Perhaps twice the financial incentives or different outreach is needed to get over that hurdle
 - Moved to institutional properties

Blue Water Congregations

- Partnership with Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake and 84 institutions over 3 years
- Engage faith based community to help understand why stormwater fee was necessary
- Have meaningful conversations
 - o Realized handholding with the community is key
 - o Start of long-term engagement
- Congregations as community leaders allows for:
 - o Cross denominational collaboration
 - o Education
 - o Spiritual reflection
 - o Legislative engagement

- Want partners to develop technical capacity
 - o Have partners (congregations) write the grant and BWB advise
 - o Work through struggles (blow outs, lack of funding)
- Partner with residential properties adjacent to church
- Be creative with situation and community needs
- Have multiple projects and keep them diverse to keep the community engaged and learning about a wide array of solutions

Deep Blue

- Focus on 5 underserved communities
- Intense involvement
 - o Community
 - o Government (help permits go through process quickly)
- Goal: use green infrastructure as a framework for collaborative community planning
- Ask what they want to see- spend time listening to them
- Look at institutions to help with engagement (churches, schools)
- Street trees: easy quick
 - o Build effective processes for long term progress (change misconceptions about trees and crime, environment etc.)
 - Hire neighborhood kids to water (increased investment and care)
- Private projects: blue water Baltimore handles
- Public projects: given to Baltimore city to help them reach their WIP goals
- Progress:
 - o Strong synergistic partnership
 - o Community driven
 - o One on one connections (get peoples trust*)
 - o Adaptive management
 - o Investment in the process (everyone needs to be on board)

- o Creativity
- o Patience
- Success- what is it?: increased quality of life, quantitative hard to measure

Q&A

- Maintenance process: big concern with BMP's everywhere and how do we fund long term care?
 - o City wont fund public restoration maintenance
 - o Community associations commit but don't have technical expertise
 - o City handles harder technical fixes (create MOU's)
 - o Direct community association to grants for maintenance
- Need to be clear with partners that we can't solve all of their problems
- Learn as you go
 - o Need long term community buy in
 - o Surveys to assess engagement