

Alliance RIVER Award

It isn't just the rookies that are "Green" these days. All developers, now, seem to be adhering to environmentally friendly building standards. They're orienting windows to get passive solar heat, using recycled building materials, heat pumps, and solar panels. "Insulate, insulate, insulate," is the mantra. Reducing a building's carbon footprint is becoming an obsession among designers and builders. But let's not forget our building site itself.

On June 5, 2009, the Ohio EPA issued Alliance its first NPDES Permit for discharging storm water into the public rivers and streams of Ohio. This is not a permit for treated sewage or an industrial discharge (considered "point sources"), but rain water collected off the streets and properties in Alliance. The EPA has found that one of the largest contributors of pollution in our streams and rivers is storm water carrying sediment and contaminants washed in from a multitude of "non-point" sources.

In order to retain our ability to discharge our storm water into streams, the City has adopted a plan to 1. Educate the public, 2. Get the public involved, 3. Inspect for and eliminate illicit discharges from storm sewers 4. Regulate construction site runoff, 5. Manage post construction site runoff, and 6.

Practice pollution prevention on our own land. Alliance has been practicing many of the requirements of the NPDES Permit for years. The City's new Planning and Zoning Code address the new construction site to do's and what businesses should keep doing after construction.

Construction site runoff control is simply reducing the amount of loose dirt that blows away or washes away during a storm. Some easy methods are: Seed a stockpile of topsoil that will sit for more than 21 days. Maintain gravel entrance and exit to keep mud from tracking onto streets. Develop a site in phases instead of clear cutting acres. Everyone's favorite is silt fence. There are many ways to keep sediments on site. All construction sites must do it. Those larger than one acre must submit an official storm water pollution prevention plan (SWP3) to spell out how they intend to do it.

Commercial sites can continue to help reduce sediment and pollution after they are built. One source of pollution is oil and antifreeze that leak onto parking lots and get washed directly into storm sewers, which are the fast tracks to the river. A simple placement of a grass swale or landscaped island before the catch basin can filter many of these pollutants into the soils where

they break down in time. This is "putting green in between" impervious surfaces and the storm system. Retention and detention basins can be designed not only to prevent flooding but to give sediment time to settle. Where good soils exist, an infiltration trench or basin can recharge groundwater and filter out sediments.

In 2010, the Alliance Planning Commission introduced the RIVER Award, which stands for Reclaiming and Improving Vital Environmental Resources. Developers can view a list of methods to use on their site for post construction runoff control at <http://www.cityofalliance.com/index.aspx?nid=353>. The methods are worth varying points that add up to qualify. As an example: If you redevelop an existing site keeping most of the existing mature trees, use grass swales and an infiltration basin, your site qualifies. That's an automatic RIVER Award hanging proudly on your wall.

Pick your hue, be it emerald, jade, olive, or sea. We're all changing the way we do business and in many ways it's our Alliance that wins.

Contributed by:
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