

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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CONSTRUCTION BEGINS ON THE DR. MICHAEL CONTI SCHOOL NO. 5 PROPERTY

Green infrastructure project expected to manage over 185,000 gallons of stormwater annually

(Jersey City, NJ): The Dr. Michael Conti School No. 5 broke ground on an innovative stormwater management project! The project, completed in partnership with the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program, Jersey City Board of Education, and the Jersey City Green Infrastructure Team, represents one of the first green infrastructure projects to be constructed in Jersey City to address stormwater runoff and reduce flows to combined sewers.

This project, funded by the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority through a New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust low-interest loan, is part of a larger community-based green infrastructure initiative for Jersey City's Year of Water. This fall, students will have the opportunity to work with the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program staff to plant native species in the downspout planter boxes that they had envisioned for the school. Once complete, the downspout planter boxes as well as porous asphalt will provide storage for stormwater runoff, allowing it to slowly release back into the sewer system to reduce localized flooding and combined sewer overflows.

Green infrastructure practices like downspout planter boxes and porous asphalt are an environmentally friendly approach to stormwater management for Jersey City. In addition, these downspout planter boxes will provide ecological benefits, beautify the school for students and their parents, and provide an outdoor living lab for STEM education.

"This is an exciting collaboration between the school district, the municipal utilities authority, the city, and the state of New Jersey. This project will manage over 185,000 gallons of stormwater annually and educate the next generation of Jersey City residents," **said Christopher Obropta, Extension Specialist in Water Resources, Rutgers University.**

"Green infrastructure not only plays a natural role in preventing pollution from entering our local waterways, such as the Hudson River, it also beautifies the community and brings attention to the need for improved water infrastructure," **said Debbie Mans, Executive Director, NY/NJ Baykeeper.** "Our goal is to have rain gardens, cisterns, bioswales, and other natural systems brought to every community in order to improve water quality and resiliency."

The Beginning of the Partnership

In October 2013, Mr. Albert Padilla, science teacher at Public School No. 5, contacted the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program to assist his students with planning for a water conservation or stormwater management practice that can be installed on school grounds. The Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program met with 7th and 8th grade students and Mr. Padilla and provided an overview of sustainable stormwater management through green infrastructure. A preliminary site evaluation to identify the possible green infrastructure practices on school grounds was also conducted with Mr. Padilla and the students. The Passaic Valley Sewerage Commission, as part of a green infrastructure pilot outreach program, supported this effort, and a city-wide green infrastructure feasibility study was developed for Jersey City. Following this program, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program continued to support Mr. Padilla's curriculum goals for the student project by providing resources, data, and information on sustainable green infrastructure practices. Mr. Padilla's students were excited to learn about green infrastructure practices, and they identified what they wanted to see at their school and presented their ideas to the City Council.

The students' vision for Public School No. 5 was to become one of the first schools in Jersey City to implement green infrastructure practices and address the local flooding issues experienced by the student body during rain events. In collaboration with the students' vision, the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program began to develop designs of sustainable green infrastructure practices that would have the greatest impact on not only reducing the flooding that occurs in front of the school, but also on reducing nonpoint source pollution, or people pollution, into the Hudson River. The support from the school administration, the student body, and families and the technical assistance provided by the Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program was enough for the Jersey City Municipal Utilities Authority to support this effort to pursue a New Jersey Environmental Infrastructure Trust low-interest loan to implement a large-scale green infrastructure project, a first for the city.

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About Jersey City Green Infrastructure Team

The Jersey City Green Infrastructure Team is a community-based collaboration advocating for green infrastructure to improve water quality and reduce combined sewer overflows, using stormwater management and education. To learn more, visit:

<https://www.water.innovatejerseycity.org/>

About Rutgers Cooperative Extension Water Resources Program

The Rutgers Cooperative Extension (RCE) Water Resources Program's mission is to identify and address community water resources issues using sustainable and practical science-based solutions. The RCE Water Resources Program is funded by the New Jersey Agricultural Experiment Station

(NJAES), which receives state and federal financial support. For more information, please visit: <http://water.rutgers.edu/>

About NY/NJ Baykeeper

The NY/NJ Baykeeper is the citizen advocate of the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary. Since 1989, we've worked to protect, preserve, and restore the environment of the most urban estuary on Earth – benefiting its natural and human communities. Through our Estuary-wide programs we seek to end pollution, improve public access, conserve and restore public lands, restore aquatic habitats, encourage appropriate and discourage inappropriate development, carry out public education, and work with federal and NY/NJ state regulators and citizen groups as partners in planning for a sustainable future for the NY-NJ Harbor Estuary watershed. For more information, please visit: www.nynjbaykeeper.org