

# Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission: Regional Center of Excellence in Green Infrastructure

January 2010

Philadelphia, PA

Population: 5,486,264

Size: 3,812 square miles

[www.dvrpc.org](http://www.dvrpc.org)

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## Background

The **National Association of Regional Councils** (NARC), in partnership with the US Forest Service, recognized two regional planning organizations as *Regional Centers of Excellence* (RCEs) to receive \$5,000 grants and serve as national models for their regional green infrastructure programs in May 2009. The Bay-Lake Regional Planning Commission (BLRPC), and the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) were selected through a national call for applications. As RCEs, BLRPC and DVRPC engaged in a variety of activities promoting regional green infrastructure planning and were featured at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference and Exhibition and through Green Regions, a public awareness campaign focused on the environment. This profile summarizes DVRPC's green infrastructure program and its achievements during the seven-month RCE project.

## DVRPC and Green Infrastructure

With a long history of engagement in green infrastructure activities, DVRPC recently made significant strides in integrating green infrastructure planning and preservation efforts into its core work, building a strong connection between land-use, transportation and conservation planning. DVRPC integrated green infrastructure into its most recent Long-Range Plan (LRP), *Connections – The Regional Plan for a Sustainable Future*, as well as its previous LRP, *Destination 2030*, and several other major programs. *Connections* calls for preserving 500,000 acres of green infrastructure – natural resources, farmland and greenways that create an interconnected network of greenspace in the Greater Philadelphia region – as a key principle. Previously *Destination 2030* created the 2030 Greenspace Network and the 2030 Conservation Focus Areas, which identified 100 corridors of green infrastructure, as well as high-priority ecosystems and a significant portion of the region's most valuable agricultural land for protection. At the local level, DVRPC offers open-space planning to

New Jersey municipalities that assesses the state of the municipalities' environmental resources, develops a vision with the public and community stakeholders and then designs tools that the municipality can use to achieve this vision. DVRPC has a Green Streets planning program that recommends green infrastructure such as green roofs, rain gardens, bioswales, retention basin redesign, and dry wells to integrate runoff into the built environment and imitate natural processes to infiltrate stormwater, reduce flows, improve water quality, and enhance community livability.

DVRPC is also an active partner in Pennsylvania's TreeVitalize Municipalities initiative, with the goal of helping county government and local municipalities better incorporate tree management into their overall responsibilities. DVRPC works closely with many of the 353 member municipalities,

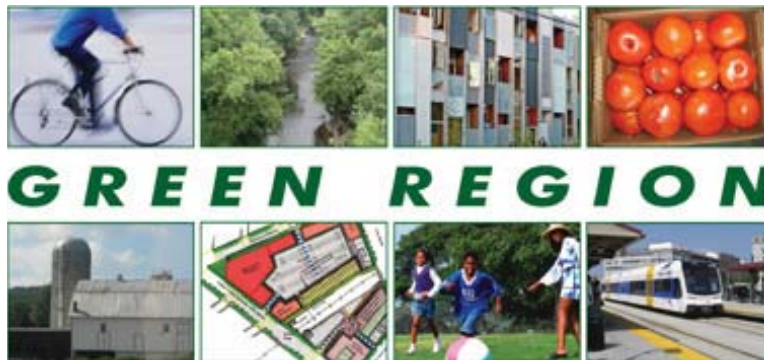
holds regular meetings with planning and conservation stakeholders to coordinate activities, shares information and assesses progress toward meeting regional green infrastructure goals.

With a newly developed environmental screening tool, DVRPC now quantifies the impacts of transportation projects

on the region's environmental features, including those features identified for protection in its LRP. The tool overlays an appropriate buffer for each transportation project with 10 key environmental data layers, which are rasterized into a grid of 30-meter cells. The value of the cells within the project's buffer area produces a score that indicates the project's potential environmental impacts.

## DVRPC's RCE Project

Utilizing its strong communications program and large staff, DVRPC developed a communications and outreach strategy to increase awareness about green infrastructure and planning tools available to preserve and protect this important resource. As an RCE, DVRPC used their \$5,000



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grant to develop print materials on their green infrastructure conservation programs and approaches, develop a new green initiatives webpage on their website, and increase the number of national and regional public presentations given on their work. DVRPC targeted state, county and municipal officials, as well as environmental, transportation and land-use planners and other key stakeholders in the community. DVRPC worked to share its communications strategies and serve as a model for other regional planning organizations developing efforts to promote green infrastructure.

### Project Impacts

With the support of the RCE grant, DVRPC created flyers on DVRPC's Green Streets strategies, the Greater Philadelphia Food System Study and the Economic Value of Open Space Study. Over 200 copies of these flyers were distributed to fellow regional and local planners during the project period. DVRPC also created five case studies on DVRPC communities and multi-municipal efforts that have successfully used TreeVitalize grant money to improve their green infrastructure through tree planting programs, distributing over 150 of each case study to local planners, shade tree commissions, and municipalities. To date, several have featured the case studies and web materials on their municipal websites. All flyers developed through the RCE project are available in the DVRPC library and will be distributed at future events.

Beyond the print materials, DVRPC created a new webpage for all materials related to its "green" initiatives through its

RCE project. The webpage highlights DVRPC's programs, policies, studies and partnerships related to its green infrastructure and other environmental programs. Over six months during the project period, the webpage received 243 page views. DVRPC will continue to promote this webpage to its regional partners, local governments and other regional planning organizations across the country.

DVRPC also developed a new presentation on their green infrastructure programs and presented it at NARC's 43rd Annual Conference and Exhibition in June 2009, in Denver, CO. This presentation drew over 45 attendees and many more visited DVRPC's exhibit booth throughout the conference. DVRPC will also present on regional leadership in green infrastructure and sustainability at the 2010 New Partners for Smart Growth Conference in Seattle, WA. Both presentations are available for interested parties and will be re-used and re-packaged for future presentations promoting regional green infrastructure across the country.

Overall, DVRPC reached over 1,200 stakeholders through its RCE project, and will continue to reach many more through its print materials, website and future presentations. The full impact of DVRPC's project goes beyond the planners and stakeholders reached directly during the project period and will extend to the populations served by them, both now and in the future, as green infrastructure priorities are incorporated into local land-use plans, ordinances, zoning changes, and numerous programs on the regional and local levels.

### About the National Association of Regional Councils

The National Association of Regional Councils (NARC) serves as the national voice for regionalism by advocating for regional cooperation as the most effective way to address a variety of community planning and development opportunities and issues. NARC's member organizations are composed of multiple local governments that work together to serve American communities – large and small, urban and rural. In 2008, NARC launched the first of four public awareness campaigns – Green Regions, Mobile Regions, Build Regions and Secure Regions. For additional information, please visit [www.NARC.org](http://www.NARC.org) or [www.GreenRegions.org](http://www.GreenRegions.org).

### About the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission is dedicated to uniting the region's elected officials, planning professionals and the public with the common vision of making a great region even greater. Shaping the way we live, work and play, DVRPC builds consensus on improving transportation, promoting smart growth, protecting the environment, and enhancing the economy. We serve a diverse region of nine counties: Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery and Philadelphia in Pennsylvania; and Burlington, Camden, Gloucester and Mercer in New Jersey. DVRPC is the official metropolitan planning organization for the Greater Philadelphia Region - leading the way to a better future. DVRPC fully

complies with Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and related statutes and regulations in all programs and activities. For additional information, please visit [www.DVRPC.org](http://www.DVRPC.org) or [www.DVRPC.org/green](http://www.DVRPC.org/green).



### About the U.S. Forest Service

The U.S. Forest Service manages over 193 million acres of National Forests, has the world's largest forestry research organization, and facilitates the conservation of state and privately owned forest land across the country. The Forest Service promotes the use of Green Infrastructure and Landcare to help conserve and manage public and private forest land that spans the urban to rural continuum. For more information on the U.S. Forest Service, please visit [www.fs.fed.us](http://www.fs.fed.us).



The National Association of Regional Councils

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Catalog Number: 10-03