

## NUCFAC Narrative Reporting Form

**Date:** 05/31/2012

**Report Period:** 09/01/2010 – 03/31/2012

**Grant Project Period:** Entire Period

**Grant Recipient:** National Association of Counties Research Foundation

**Grant Number:** 08-DG-11420004-298

**Recipient Contact Person:** Phillip Rodbell

**Principal Investigator/Project Director:** Carrie Clingan; James Davenport

**Progress Achieved in Accomplishing Project Goals & Objectives** (*Goals and objectives should correspond to the goals and objectives in the approved grant application.*)

**Goal/Objective 1:** (A) promote project to NACo members, affiliate organizations and state associations of counties; (B) assess county urban and community forestry training and education needs; and (C) collect best practices for workshops, webcasts and publications by polling relevant NACo committees of county officials and partner organizations; and (D) review materials previously produced by industry groups, associations and partners.

**Goal/Objective 8:** Conduct ongoing education and outreach through NACo's: (1) publications (including County News with 26,000 bi-weekly subscribers), (2) national conferences (with 6,500 county participants annually) and (3) website.

### **Overview of Activities (Goals 1 & 8):**

- NACo staff researched basic information and case studies of counties using green infrastructure to determine where more information is needed, found very little information geared towards the particular issues that counties face with these issues. Gathered information to fill in identified gaps to gear basic introduction information to counties.
- Identified case studies on county green infrastructure programs in NACo's Achievement Awards records, and selected Alachua County as our case study for the intro brochure. This brochure gives information on how green infrastructure helps counties save money and protect the environment. This publication also points county officials towards more resources online to help them develop county capacity.
- Published an item in NACo's online publication E-News, readership: 25,000.
- Promoted the project at NACo's Legislative Conference (Washington, DC March 7-11) and at NACo's Annual Conference (Nashville-Davidson County, TN July 24-29) through a green infrastructure booth with new brochures.
- Brochures were distributed both at the booth as well as at sustainability-themed workshops and committee and subcommittee meetings. Combined attendance in March (1,853) and July (3,159) was 5,012 attendees at these conferences.
- Published an article in NACo's County News publication both in print and online about the grant project.

- Solicited feedback from county practitioners at committee and subcommittee meetings at both NACo Legislative and Annual Conferences. Discussed the project via email and in person with county officials.
- Directly engaged the National Association of County Planners (NACP) and the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials (NACPRO) to discuss input and support for project activities.
- Promoted the project at NACo's Legislative Conference (Washington, DC March 2010) and at NACo's Annual Conference (Washoe County, Nevada July 2010) through a green infrastructure booth with brochures, webinar recordings and related issue briefs.
- Brochures were distributed both at the booth as well as at sustainability-themed workshops and committee and subcommittee meetings. Combined attendance from March (1,569) and July (2,363) was 3,932 attendees at these conferences.
- Updated the NACo Energy, Environment and Land Use Steering Committee on the status of the project and promoted the scholarships provided through the grant to committee members.
- Promoted the project through two webinars and at the NACo Forum on the Green Economy.
- NACo staff promoted the project at NACo's Legislative Conferences (Washington, DC March 2011) and at NACo's Annual Conference (Portland, Oregon July 2011) through a green infrastructure booth with brochures, webinar recordings and related issue briefs. Combined attendance from March (1,514) and July (2,226) was 3,740 attendees at these conferences.
- Created and disseminated a brochure and an in-depth issue brief on green infrastructure for distribution to county officials and staff. NACo distributed brochures and issue briefs at the booth as well as at sustainability-themed workshops, forums and committee and subcommittee meetings.
- Updated the NACo Energy, Environment and Land Use Steering Committee on the status of the project and promoted the scholarships provided through the grant to committee members.
- Promoted the project through four webinars.
- Promote webinar recordings both online and via CD distributed at our 2011 Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon, and our 2012 Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. Conference attendance at the 2012 Legislative Conference was 1,491 attendees.
- Even though the grant period has ended, we still will distribute and promote the webinar recordings, brochure and issue brief at NACo's 2012 Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

**Results:** Raised awareness of officials in NACo's member counties as well as state associations of counties and affiliated associations such as the National Association of County Planners and the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials both of the project and partnership as well as of green infrastructure principles and practices.

Created and fostered discussion on green infrastructure and community forestry among conference attendance. This discussion has led to greater awareness of these topics and has interested county policy makers into researching and discussing green infrastructure in their counties.

**Goal/Objective 2:** Plan and conduct two national webcasts on urban forestry and green infrastructure. Instructors will include staff from the Conservation Fund and county officials to describe best practices.

**Goal/Objective 4:** Plan and conduct four workshops in collaboration with state associations of counties to provide state-specific information on urban forestry and green infrastructure. Select states based on needs, interest by executive directors of state associations of counties and NUCFAC priorities. Instructors will include staff from the Conservation Fund and county officials to describe best practices.

**Difficulties Encountered:**

NACo experienced some difficulty getting this program running due to increased demands on existing staff members and as a result has hired a new Community Services Assistant to research and develop project deliverables.

Cindy Wasser started at NACo on August 31, 2009 and has supported the project with in-depth research on case studies, analysis and planning of events such as workshops and webinars.

Due to the economic downturn and its effects on local governments, county officials had travel and education budgets slashed and frozen, making it very difficult for county officials and staff to travel to forums, conferences and events. As a result, NACo experienced a decline in attendance at our annual conference the past few years, impacting the attendance at all workshops, so our workshop attendance was lower than anticipated over the course of the grant.

NACo staff realized this problem and adapted by creating webinars on nationally and regionally specific topics and marketing them to national and regional audiences.

**Overview of Activities (Goals 2 & 4)**

- NACo held the first green infrastructure webinar on December 3, 2009. Kendra Briechle from The Conservation Fund introduced participants to green infrastructure principles and the benefits that green infrastructure provides counties. BJ Adigun, Onondaga County, NY, described Onondaga County's "Save the Rain" green infrastructure program, which has a particular focus on stormwater runoff and resident education. Chris Bird, Alachua County, FL, described Alachua's strategies for investing in low-impact development and land conservation.
- **Webinar description:** Counties are discovering innovative new systems for using county parks and open spaces to conserve water, treat stormwater runoff, protect homes and businesses in floods, remove air pollutants and save energy. Learn how counties can save by investing in green infrastructure.
- **Attendance:** 53 people participated in this program.
- **Post-webinar survey results:** 22 of the 53 registered attendees responded to the follow-up survey NACo sent out after the webinar. Respondents rated six items and three open-ended questions related to the webinar. The ratings averaged 4 out of 5.
- NACo hosted a second webinar on Developing County Greenways on May 27, 2010. Will Allen of the Conservation Fund discussed the importance of green infrastructure projects being connected to county-wide or regional greenways or wildlife corridors and noted

resources and case studies for additional information. Julie Clark, Mecklenburg County, NC, presented Mecklenburg's strategy for planning and funding a county-wide greenway system. Dennis Sandquist, McHenry County, IL, described McHenry's use of a Conservation Design Ordinance to guide land conservation efforts.

- **Webinar description:** Learn how your county can strategically enhance infrastructure with greenways and corridors. Planning county greenways and wildlife corridors help your county control energy usage, conserve habitat, abate flooding, filter water runoff, revitalize neighborhoods and business districts while encouraging healthy communities. Speakers will outline creating a regional partnership, securing funding opportunities and training to help your county make the most of your natural resources.
- **Attendance:** 123 people participated in this program.
- Post-webinar survey results: 61 of the 120 attendees responded to the follow-up survey NACo sent out after the webinar. Respondents rated six items and three open-ended questions related to the webinar. The ratings averaged 4.2 out of 5.
- NACo held a series of four webinars with a regional focus in spring 2011.
  - Webinar dates, descriptions and speakers:
    - Included in all webinar descriptions: "Green Infrastructure has been utilized by counties to address regional issues, such as flooding, drought, stormwater runoff, and habitat fragmentation."
  - **April 28, 2011:** Western Regional Webinar Join this webinar to learn how Northwestern counties are adopting county-specific habitat conservation plans to maintain wildlife populations in the midst of growth. This webinar program was directed to counties in the following states: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, California, Nevada and Arizona.
    - Speakers: Will Allen, Conservation Fund, Jodi Bechtel, Clark County, Nevada, Maria Wong, Yolo Natural Heritage Program.
  - **May 12, 2011** Southern Regional Webinar: Green Infrastructure has been utilized by counties to address regional issues, such as flooding, drought, stormwater runoff, and habitat fragmentation. The webinar will explore how Large Landscape-Scale Plans (regional plans impacting several states) impact county-level planning. Hear from leaders involved in planning projects in the Southeast. This webinar program is directed to counties in the following states, although all are welcome and encouraged to participate: Louisiana, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi.
    - Speakers: Will Allen, The Conservation Fund, Laurie Fenwood, Fish and Wildlife Service.
  - **May 26, 2011** Northeast and Great Lakes Regional Webinar: Green Infrastructure has been utilized by counties to address regional issues, such as flooding, drought, stormwater runoff, and habitat fragmentation. Join the webinar to learn how urban metropolitan regions are planning green infrastructure to manage stormwater and environmental services. This webinar was directed to counties in the following states: Illinois, Indiana, Mississippi, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia, and Ohio.

- Speakers: Phillip Rodbell, U.S. Forest Service, Ole Amundsen, The Conservation Fund, Nancy Williamson, Illinois Department of Natural Resources and member of the Chicago Wilderness Task Force, and Michael Stokes, Assistant Director of the Planning Commission in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania.
- **June 09, 2011** Central Regional Webinar: Green Infrastructure has been utilized by counties to address regional issues, such as flooding, drought, stormwater runoff, and habitat fragmentation. Join the webinar to learn how counties in the Central region are utilizing green infrastructure principles to minimize flooding along large rivers. This webinar program was directed to counties in the following states: Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Utah, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, Arkansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri
  - Speakers: Phillip Rodbell, U.S. Forest Service, Kendra Briechle from The Conservation Fund, Tom Jacobs, Director of Environmental Programs for the Mid-America’s Regional Council, Kimberly Watanabe from Denver County, CO, Wastewater Management.
- **Total Series Attendees:** 152.
- NACo also provided CD recordings of each webinar along with presentations and presenter contact information to attendees at NACo’s 2011 Annual Conference in Portland, Oregon.

**Results:** Educated about 325 county officials and staff through presentations by county and regional practitioners as well as industry partners and The Conservation Fund’s educators and trainers.

**Goal/Objective #3:** Plan and conduct two national workshops on urban forestry and green infrastructure. Instructors will include staff from the Conservation Fund and county officials to describe best practices.

**Overview of Activities (Goal 3):**

NACo created and put on two workshops and two national forums incorporating green infrastructure practices.

- NACo coordinated the design of a green infrastructure planning and valuation workshop at the NACo Annual Conference in Nashville, Tennessee with the National Association of County Parks and Recreation Officials (NACPRO) and the National Association of County Planners (NACP). NACPRO identified a speaker from Mecklenburg County, North Carolina, Michael Kirschman, who spoke about valuing green infrastructure benefits for a county. NACP brought in Cindy Wood from Nashville- Davidson County, Tennessee, who discussed planning for green areas and infrastructure in Nashville – Davidson County.
  - **Workshop description and speaker bios:** Date: 7/27/2007 9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m. Getting Green from Green: Maximizing the Value of Your County’s Green Infrastructure County parks, open spaces, streams and rivers are an important resource for clean water, habitat protection and human health and safety. This workshop presents the social and economic value of these spaces by experts who have successfully planned and managed these areas for counties. Learn how

sustainable infrastructure is valued, planned, managed and sustained so you can help your county invest in the renewable resources already growing.

- **Moderator:** Supervisor Penny Gross, Fairfax County, Virginia
- **Workshop feedback:** The workshop was well attended, with about 80 attendees. Feedback from attendees was very positive, with the average rating of 4.4 out of 5.
- NACo coordinated the design of a green infrastructure planning and valuation workshop at the NACo Annual Conference in Reno, Nevada. NACo identified a speaker from Washoe County, Nevada, Lynda Nelson, who spoke about Washoe County's green infrastructure and tree cover plans and how this type of infrastructure benefits for a county. Kendra Briechele from The Conservation Fund spoke about national green infrastructure trends, plans and example projects as well as training opportunities. Lori Cary-Kothera from the NOAA Coastal Services center discussed coastal green infrastructure and resources for both coastal and non-coastal counties for assessment and training.
  - **Moderator:** Supervisor Penny Gross, Fairfax County, VA, moderated the workshop.
  - **Workshop Description:** How can your county capitalize on existing natural areas, parks and greenways to leverage your taxpayers' resources? Natural lands supply a large variety of services to human communities, including water filtration, drought mitigation, energy savings and flood buffering. A green infrastructure strategy can guide counties as you develop and implement multi-dimensional land use plans. This presentation will begin to help you identify approaches you might be able to take to address these questions. These strategies will help your county target and leverage investments in natural resources to create healthy communities, increase economic development and lower energy usage.
- **Workshop feedback:** The workshop hosted about 15 attendees. Feedback from attendees was very positive, with the average rating of 4.73 out of 5.
- NACo coordinated a panel discussion on "Increasing Economic Competitiveness through Sustainable Design & Planning" at NACo's County Forum on the Green Economy held June 16-17, 2010 in Cook County, Illinois. Jim Nash, Oakland County, MI described Oakland's process for estimating the economic value of the county's green infrastructure. Paul Mendolsohn, American Institute of Architects (AIA), announced opportunities through AIA's Design Assistance Program for counties to receive multi-disciplinary design help. Aaron Lande, USGBC, discussed the economic benefits of green building. The Green Economy Forum was attended by 75 people.
- NACo staff designed and executed a forum in October 2011 on coastal resilience and green infrastructure for coastal communities in Savannah, Georgia at the University of Georgia's Coastal Georgia Center.
- This forum hosted about 40 county officials and staff from coastal counties all over the US and provided information and resources from NACo's federal, non-profit and corporate partners about green infrastructure, strategic partnerships, and county resiliency.

**Results:** NACo efforts educated 95 attendees firsthand through these workshops. The programs engaged county officials in dialogue with practitioners and experts and helped to develop

relationships among interested county decision makers while opening up relationships between county officials and green infrastructure experts.

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**Goal/Objective 5:** Produce and distribute a publication on County Best Practices. Print and distribute hard-copies free of charge. Distribution will include copies distributed at our upcoming forum in October 2011 on Coastal Counties and Resiliency in a green infrastructure context. The remaining copies will be distributed during NACo conferences and through state associations of counties (especially during workshops and committee meetings). In addition, an electronic copy will be posted on NACo's website. Information in the guide is available for others to use with permission. The guide will not be copyrighted.

**Progress to date (Goal 5):**

- NACo researched and published a fully designed, 16-page issue brief entitled *Building Resilient Communities: Green Infrastructure for Counties*.
- NACo printed 500 copies of this brief and published it on the NACo website.
- The brief provides an overview of green infrastructure practices and techniques and will include case studies drawn from our webinar and workshop participants and panelists.
- NACo anticipates that the release of the final brief occurred at the 2011 Coastal Forum, because the brief will cover both coastal and non-coastal green infrastructure information.
- NACo staff also introduced the brief to the NACo Energy, Environment and Land Use Steering Committee at our 2012 Legislative Conference in Washington, DC. The brief was also on display at the Green Infrastructure booth, where all 200 available copies were taken by conference attendees.
- NACo plans to distribute the remaining copies at our 2012 Annual Conference in Pittsburgh, PA.

**Results:** Informed at least 1,000 county officials who read both the hard-copy and electronic guide. This guide was highly in demand at its debut at the NACo 2012 Legislative Conference, with numerous county officials requesting copies for staff and other officials.

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**Goal/Objective 6:** Provide tuition scholarships for county officials to attend two national *Strategic Conservation Planning Using a Green Infrastructure Approach* trainings by the Conservation Fund at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's National Conservation Training Center. Fees for trainings held at the Center cannot be changed. Staff from the Conservation Fund recommended that the national training would be the best venue for county officials to learn the full spectrum of green infrastructure planning.

**Difficulties Encountered:** Because county officials and staff continue to face difficulty traveling, NACo did not receive the amount of applications for this training expected.

**Overview of Activities (Goal 6):**

- NACo designed an application for scholarship funds with The Conservation Fund. The competition ran from May 2010 to August and NACo staff received eight applications for tuition scholarships. Six county staff members from all over the US were able to attend this

training session in September 2010. Scholarships were given for six participants with a full cost of \$5,600 paid directly from NACo to The Conservation Fund.

- **Participants:**
  - a. Les Beck, Planning & Development Director, Linn County, IA
  - b. Jeff Cox, Development Coordinator, Sierra County, NM
  - c. Jamie MacLean, Development Planner, Montgomery County, VA
  - d. Heather Schmidt, Water Quality Specialist, Johnson County, KS
  - e. Jay Sikes, Senior Planner, Harnett County, NC
  - f. Kenneth Ward, Public Works & Engineering Project Manager, Caddo Parish, LA
- All six recipients participated in the full training and reflected positively on their experience:
  - Trainer Margarita Carey, Conservation Fund: *“From our part, we really enjoyed having the NACo members in the course, and I think they got a lot out of it too!”*
  - Les Beck: *“I thought it was a great experience. Intense, but great. First, you can’t beat the setting. Beyond that, the course was very well laid out and the instructors extremely knowledgeable. Although the concepts are not all that new to me (40 years ago we called it “landscape suitability analysis”), the sophistication of modeling used in the analysis has obviously made huge advances. I have a conference call set for next week to try to bring some training on the optimization modeling to Linn County. Also, I’m involved in organizing a conservation symposium for December here in Cedar Rapids, and I have recommended that we try to bring in one of the speakers for that. Additionally, I can see immediate application of the training locally as we undertake an extensive update of our Rural Land Use Plan, and regionally in our watershed management efforts in response to flood events over the past few years in Iowa. I thought the small-group exercises were very helpful, and the final project helped pull it together.  
I would strongly encourage NACo to continue to offer scholarships for this training, and I will suggest to other key staff and elected officials in Linn County that they attend next year’s training session.  
Thanks so much for NACo’s support to allow me to attend.”*
  - g. Ken Ward, Caddo Parish: *“It was great. A very different idea, but a lot of concepts that we can incorporate in what we do already. I am going to look to tie in our stormwater and road projects to our parks and their projects for Green Infrastructure. Thank you for getting us to attend. Great facility as well.”*
  - h. Jeff Cox, Sierra County, NM: *“The training was great. It was much more in depth and comprehensive than I had expected. The presentations by the officials who had actually implemented similar plans was the most valuable aspect. The real world approach was very educational and provided information that can be used right away. I am going to implement several aspects of green infrastructure into our existing subdivision regulations. Thank you so much for the opportunity. Let me know if any other opportunities become available in the future.”*
  - i. Jamie MacLean, Montgomery County, VA: *“Thank you (and NACO) very much for the opportunity to attend this course. The course was extremely informative. As you know we are working on a regional green infrastructure plan here in the NRV, and I can’t wait to share what I learned last week with the rest of the steering committee.”*



*I particularly enjoyed the structure of the course, we learned about so many facets of writing and implementing GI plans, and then we asked to work in groups to create our own. Also one of the most valuable parts of the course were my classmates. There were folks from such a wide range of disciplines (FWS, DOT, Planners, Grant Writers, etc) and experiences it helped me to critically think about how GI might expand to other sectors.*

**Results:** Six county staff members now have the experience of education about these techniques and access to experts and field practitioners who can help them implement these techniques. These individuals also participated in the entire program, working with peers and colleagues from many different backgrounds and positions.

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**Goal/Objective 7:** Offer four mini-grants of \$2,500 each on a competitive basis to county officials who complete the national training described in Task 6. The mini-grants would be specifically for implementation of county green infrastructure plans. Counties would be selected in consultation with NUCFAC as appropriate and represent geographic and population diversity. Mini-grant recipients will agree to serve as ‘living laboratories’ for NACo and NUCFAC in the future.

**Difficulties Encountered:** In early discussions of this grant, NACo, The Conservation Fund and the Forest Service all agreed that these mini-grants would be too onerous to award and may not result in what the original proposal had suggested. In particular, The Conservation Fund had more experience with this size grant and, in their experience, it was difficult for the grantees to create or implement green infrastructure plans on such a small scale. The grant administrator agreed that the funds would be best pent on other activities.

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**Signature of Authorized Official**



James Davenport  
Program Director, Community Services  
National Association of Counties

**Attachments:**

NACo Issue Brief: *Building Resilient Communities: Green Infrastructure for Counties*  
NACo Green Infrastructure Brochure