

EPA Administrator Emphasizes Green Infrastructure in Milwaukee Speech

-----Original Message-----

From EPA

Sent: Tuesday, August 10, 2010 12:29 PM

Subject: EPA Administrator Emphasizes Green Infrastructure in Milwaukee Speech

Last Thursday, at a Milwaukee press conference gathered to witness the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between EPA and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson emphasized the Agency's commitment to green infrastructure as a "a fiscally responsible and environmentally sustainable answer to today's water challenges."

The Administrator's call to action is copied below, and local coverage of the event is available here: <http://www.jsonline.com/business/100085509.html> and here: http://www.wuwm.com/programs/news/view_news.php?articleid=6641

What an exciting time to be involved in the development of green infrastructure policies and projects!

I want to thank you all for inviting me to be here. I'm here today to talk about two crucial issues in the building and rebuilding of our communities – green infrastructure and clean water innovation.

We've come to Milwaukee because this city has taken a well recognized leadership role on both of those issues. That was on display for me today as we toured the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee School of Freshwater Science and the Menomonee Valley Green Business Park, and in our roundtable discussion with Milwaukee water innovation leaders. These are the product of leadership from people like Mayor Barrett, and Governor Doyle, as well as Senators Kohl and Feingold, who have been diligent in their support for research, development and innovation at the Freshwater Science School. Senator Feingold especially is a passionate advocate for ensuring Milwaukee is a hub for water quality and water security technologies, which will fuel job creation and economic development in Wisconsin.

Water quality is something I've been interested in since my undergraduate days at Tulane. I grew up in New Orleans. As we've all seen following the BP spill, water quality is absolutely essential to the way of life in that area. Since EPA was formed 40 years ago, our country has done a good job of reducing conventional pollutants in our water. Today we face challenges from less

conventional pollutants – not always oil slicks or industrial waste, but invisible pollutants that we've only recently had the science to detect. Many of these are the chemicals that have become more prevalent in our products, our water, and our bodies in the last 50 years.

We also face a challenge in dealing with less conventional sources of pollution. The contaminants in our water are not always coming from the end of a pipe. One of the most prevalent and fastest growing challenges is dealing with stormwater runoff, which carries chemicals and other debris into local waters and can damage stream ecosystems.

Right now the conventional regulatory fixes for stormwater are to store and treat it as wastewater, which can be very costly to cities and towns on a budget. Milwaukee has been through some of those costly challenges recently, with the wet weather and storms that have passed through lately.

Meeting the next generation of water challenges requires new kinds of thinking. We want to ensure that environmental innovation is a central part of the work we do at EPA. That's one of the reasons we're in Milwaukee today. The innovative efforts taking place in Milwaukee cause us to recognize that if we're going to make our water systems work harder in the years ahead, then we have to start working smarter today.

Our vision for the future is to facilitate greater collaboration and accelerate the inspiration and the commercialization of cutting-edge technologies. That will not only clean up our water – it will also promote new jobs and make our communities more livable.

Right now, EPA has some of the world's best water scientists and engineers working in our labs. We want to build on that solid foundation, and engage other innovators to develop the next generation of water technology. That is why I'm signing today a Memorandum of Understanding between EPA and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, setting out guidelines for collaboration on innovative water technology development. As one of the world's centers for clean water innovation – here in a city that is putting those ideas to work – we are excited to strike up this partnership and begin work on the future of clean water.

Today, we are also committing to a new kind of thinking in our actions and decision making. EPA is developing a strategy for incorporating green infrastructure more broadly into our clean water rules and actions.

Green infrastructure is a fiscally responsible and environmentally sustainable answer to today's water challenges. It manages stormwater by treating it like a resource – and it works with nature, rather than against it. Using soil, vegetation, permeable materials and landscape changes, we can capture stormwater, filter contaminants, beautify communities, and reduce the stormwater runoff that flows into local waterways. Green infrastructure makes our communities more attractive places to live and work at the same time it produces environmental and economic benefits.

The comprehensive strategy we're developing helps cities and towns protect water quality and stream hydrology by opening the way to low-impact development and green infrastructure solutions. Working in partnership with our federal partners, we plan to make water quality protection part of improving livability for communities nationwide. At the same time, EPA will use one of our signature initiatives, the successful Brownfields program, to make state-of-the-art water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure part of clean up and revitalization projects.

We will take steps to make green infrastructure an available tool for meeting Clean Water Act requirements for stormwater, combined sewer systems and municipal sanitary sewer collection systems. That means ensuring that Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems permits include cost-effective green infrastructure approaches; including green infrastructure in combined sewer overflow long-term control plans; and considering the incorporation of non-traditional or "green" infrastructure alternatives in Enforcement Orders/Consent Decrees. We will also encourage states to use clean water SRFs for green stormwater infrastructure and other innovative environmental projects. And we will be backing up that encouragement with funding for states, territories and tribes to mitigate nonpoint source pollution through green infrastructure projects.

Green infrastructure initiatives and clean water innovation – the very things pioneered by Milwaukee and other leading cities – will not only save money, they will protect rivers and streams and conserve water.

This city will be a model for our efforts to develop and implement green infrastructure techniques into our work at EPA, and our partner in clean water technology breakthroughs. With strong commitments to green infrastructure and new partners in innovation, we are moving ahead into a new era of clean water protection. I look forward to working with all of you.

Thank you very much.