



Protecting Texas waterways with green infrastructure

Support SB 2063/ HB 3261 and HB 1059/SB 1381

Runoff pollution and flooding have been growing threats throughout our state in recent years. Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI), also known as Low Impact Development, can help reduce both problems by cutting runoff. GSI features — which include rain gardens, green roofs, rain harvesting, and permeable pavement — can also store rainwater for later use, and can add beauty to urban settings.

As we cover more of our state’s land with buildings and roads, we decrease the amount of ground that can absorb rain, and we increase the amount of runoff. As this runoff flows over roofs, parking lots, and yards, it picks up whatever’s on those surfaces — chemicals, oils, trash, animal waste — and carries those pollutants into our creeks, rivers, and lakes.

GSI features can reduce runoff by catching rain where it falls. Rain gardens then let this water slowly soak into the ground, while green roofs let it gradually evaporate into the air. And rain harvesting cisterns can collect water in wet months, and store it for use in dry months.

Examples of GSI can be found at locations across Texas, including the George W. Bush Library in Dallas, the UT/Dell Medical School in Austin, and the Federal Reserve Bank in Houston. But many Texans don’t know what GSI is, or why it’s worth using.

HB 1059 (Lucio) and SB 1381 (Rodriguez) direct the Texas Commission on Environmental Quality to prepare a biennial report on the use of Green Stormwater Infrastructure, inventorying existing GSI installations in the state, estimating how much stormwater is managed by these features, setting goals and providing recommendations for increasing the use of GSI. Identical legislation passed the Texas Senate 27 – 4 in 2017.

SB 2063 (Menendez) and HB 3261 (Ramos) would require use of GSI in new state buildings. A 2011 law requires new state buildings to use rainwater harvesting where cost effective, but unfortunately no state building has done so. These bills would amend the law to allow new state buildings to use other GSI techniques, which can be cheaper than rainwater harvesting, to comply.

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