

Illinois River Watershed Partnership
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For immediate release

**2021 Northwest Arkansas Low Impact Development Conference
(NWA LID Conference) Announcement**

[Traditional stormwater management addresses water quantity issues during major rain events, but leaves out water quality. The added quantity from even small rain events can threaten infrastructure and cause taxpayers and downstream landowners to pay the price for urbanization little by little each time it rains. LID is one way Northwest Arkansas can address system-wide degradation of streambanks and water quality in our region.]

The Illinois River Watershed Partnership will host a two-day Low Impact Development conference at Thaden Fieldhouse and virtually via ZOOM on November 3rd and 4th, 2021. The intent of the conference is to connect Northwest Arkansas' decision makers with proven planning, implementation, and funding ideas and methods for managing stormwater, reducing flooding and erosion, and subsequently improving water quality. Speakers from across the country will provide national perspectives on stormwater management in the context of the rapidly urbanizing region.

Members of region-wide city councils, municipalities, planning commissions, engineers, architects, landscape architects, and professionals from related industries are invited to attend free of charge. Speaker information and the full agenda will be released in September. Those interested in attending are encouraged to register early as there will be limited in-person spots available. Continuing education units for professional development will apply for some organizations.

In 10 years, what will we wish we had done to protect the Illinois River and the watershed?-- a question the Illinois River Watershed Partnership (or IRWP's) staff and directors want to help answer by bringing in nationally-recognized experts in low impact development, or LID.

"We have to do more to address watershed-wide degradation of streambanks," said Nicole Hardiman, Executive Director of the Illinois River Watershed Partnership, "These conversations are getting started, so we hope this conference propels this initiative forward by educating the right people about issues facing our region and giving them the tools needed to successfully implement practices that sustain long-term benefit."

As the name implies, the conference will focus on developing Northwest Arkansas to have as little impact on natural resources as possible; this includes learning how human behavior impacts the land and how those land changes impact waterways -- the

lifeblood of our communities. Other topics to be covered include prioritizing large and small conservation efforts, how to identify stormwater risks, regionally-coordinated projects as case studies, public-private and community-based partnerships, and the dos and don'ts of managing and stabilizing river corridors. In addition, the conference will stress the importance of our floodplains, prairies, and wetlands with a wetland field tour.

Traditional stormwater management addresses flow during rain events, but the resulting additional water quantity leads to flooding and erosion that threatens infrastructure, endangers lives, and impacts water quality. The problem is exacerbated by increasing rates of rainfall regionally and Northwest Arkansas's rapid urban expansion, which causes downstream landowners to pay the price in the form of loss of productive, agricultural lands. Fortunately, LID is one way Northwest Arkansas can address these compounding factors to prevent system-wide degradation of streams, decrease risk for development projects, and improve water quality in our region.

"This conference is a part of a larger initiative by IRWP to connect with those making decisions on development, zoning, and code. We held a webinar titled 'We All Live Downstream' in May that was an introduction to some of what will be covered at this conference," said Morgan Keeling, Community Relations Manager at IRWP. Those interested in attending are encouraged to watch the video found on Illinois River Watershed Partnership's YouTube channel.

This conference is the first-of-its-kind to be hosted by IRWP. Funding is provided by Walton Family Foundation and the Natural Resources Division of the Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

If you have questions regarding the conference or need to verify that CEUs for your accrediting organization will apply, please contact Morgan at morgan@irwp.org.

Registration Link: <https://forms.gle/NXRHxemR1kJoLU4w5>

Facebook Event: <https://fb.me/e/1rD2VrIR9>

Link to *We All Live Downstream* Webinar:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qnwCiTMdKSo>

IRWP is a 15-year-old nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve the integrity of the Illinois River Watershed, a region covering rapidly urbanizing Northwest Arkansas and Eastern Oklahoma, through public education, outreach, and the implementation of conservation and restoration practices.