Stormwater solutions coming to Cheboygan

Contributed

CHEBOYGAN - Excess stormwater can cause flooding, infiltrate sewer systems and wash pollutants into Northern Michigan waterways, and to work on preventing these environmental and health concerns, the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council will present a series of workshops in 2020 on green infrastructure to promote stormwater programs in the City of Cheboygan.

Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council is the recipient of a $15,000 grant from the Great Lakes Commission as part of the Great Lakes Green Infrastructure Champions Program. The grant will support educational opportunities for Cheboygan officials and citizens to learn how to tackle stormwater problems with green infrastructure. Green infrastructure projects use diverse landscaping tactics,

See WATER, A2

Rain barrels can store water for use in landscaping and reduce the amount of stormwater flowing across a property.

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such as permeable surfaces in urban areas or rain gardens, to reduce the harmful effects of excess stormwater.

As an added benefit, the Watershed Council and city are paired with a mentor, Claire Schwartz. Schwartz is a senior civil engineer with Fishbeck, Thompson, Carr and Huber. She has helped to steer statewide low-impact development initiatives and assisted many communities in developing stormwater standards and regulations incorporating green infrastructure.

"Claire's experience and knowledge will help set Cheboygan on a much clearer path to practical solutions," said Caroline Keson, the Watershed Council's monitoring programs coordinator.

Schwartz places importance on outreach so that engineers and developers are aware of their options. "Demonstration of techniques and products that have worked elsewhere in Michigan is an effective way to share ideas and prompt local innovation to manage stormwater using green infrastructure," said Schwartz.

The grant the Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council received will fund multiple workshops in Cheboygan to prepare the city for potential future green infrastructure projects. These workshops will be designed to reach public officials, city, county and adjacent township staff, and the public.

The first workshop will be an introduction to green infrastructure, presented by experts from communities with successful stormwater diversion projects.

The second workshop, a visioning session, facilitated by Huron Pines, will identify areas in Cheboygan with stormwater and flooding issues.

The third workshop will be a 55-gallon rain barrel art installation for individuals and businesses. Rainwater collected in barrels can be used for landscaping, and using barrels reduces the flow of stormwater on properties.

The fourth workshop will be a hands-on demonstration of a green infrastructure installation.

Options for the installation include a rain garden, a green roof or native planting, and attendees will learn installation and maintenance techniques.

These workshops are in the planning stages, and Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council will send out announcements as dates are set.

The Watershed Council will also monitor stormwater outfall at approximately 10 sites around Cheboygan. Testing stormwater for salts, E. coli bacteria, nitrogen and other materials will inform decision-makers of key areas of potential stormwater pollution.

For questions about the project, contact Caroline Keson from Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council at (231)-347-1181.