



DENISE MERRILL
SECRETARY OF THE STATE
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-NEWS RELEASE -

**SECRETARY MERRILL, SAVE THE SOUND
UNVEIL NEW URBAN RAIN GARDEN
PROJECT**

SECRETARY OF THE STATE URGES CONNECTICUT HOMEOWNERS TO INVEST IN
RAINWATER IRRIGATION TO PREVENT MILLIONS OF GALLONS OF POLLUTED
RUNOFF

HARTFORD, CT — Today, Secretary of the State Denise Merrill and Save the Sound, a program of Connecticut Fund for the Environment, along with UConn, Park Watershed, Inc., and Dubay Design, held an event unveiling Secretary Merrill’s new residential bioswale/rain garden. At the event, experts explained the benefits of implementing green infrastructure techniques, like rain gardens and bioswales, and demonstrated how the bioswale/rain garden works. They also highlighted the difference citizens can make on state-wide problems—like river pollution and beach and shellfish bed closings—when they do their part.

“I am proud to be the first household in my neighborhood to showcase this creative and cost effective way to both irrigate the yard and reduce water pollution,” **said Secretary of the State Denise Merrill.** “If we could convince homeowners in every city and town in Connecticut build their own rain gardens, we could prevent millions of gallons of polluted storm runoff from flowing into our multiple river watersheds and ultimately Long Island Sound. I am very happy to spread the word about this fantastic program. We might not be able to make rain, but we know rain makes a good garden!”

Secretary Merrill recently constructed a new 201-square-foot bioswale/rain garden combination on the front lawn of her house in the West End of Hartford. The garden includes many varieties of vegetation, such as Tussock sedge (*Carex Elata/Carex stricta*), native *Pennisetum alopecuroides* ‘Little Bunny,’ *Liatrus spicata* ‘Floristan White,’

Veronicastrum virginicum ‘Culver’s Root,’ Asclepias tuberosa ‘Gay Butterflies’ (Butterfly Weed), and Veronica longifolia ‘Pink Eveline.’ These water-loving, attractive native plants will not only absorb and filter rainwater, but will attract butterflies, birds, and other wildlife by providing shelter and food sources.

Stormwater runoff is one of the biggest water quality problems facing our waterways currently. Due to the large amount of impermeable surfaces in our cities and towns, huge volumes of water pool on hard surfaces rapidly and then run off into our waterways, carrying greases, salts, fertilizers, and pesticides that can kill fish and damage shellfish beds and aquatic plants.

“We are thrilled to be joining Secretary Merrill as she takes action to protect the Connecticut River and Long Island Sound,” **said Leah Schmalz director of legislative and legal affairs for Save the Sound.** “It is a beautiful rain garden that will do its small part to control stormwater runoff into our state’s waters and stop raw sewage here in Hartford. We are proud to have an elected official that not only talks the talk, but walks the walk and we hope others step up to do their part. Having neighborhoods, like hers, that take charge to piece together individual green infrastructure techniques will help put Connecticut on the path to less expensive sewer projects and fewer closed beaches.”

In Hartford, stormwater has the added problem of causing combined sewer overflows, a problem that causes raw sewage to pour into the Connecticut River and residents basements. While the MDC and DEEP are trying to remedy this situation through Clean Water Fund upgrades, steps like residential rain gardens can have a major impact. Green infrastructure techniques enable stormwater to penetrate our normally impermeable surfaces and filters out the harmful substances before the water flows into our water bodies or combined sewage system pipes.

“Working together through collaboration with state and local governments, property owners and non-profits, Connecticut communities can further improve water quality in the Long Island Sound,” **said Mary Rickel Pelletier, executive director of Park Watershed, Inc.** “This process starts with recognizing how landscapes of our own yards impact small tributaries of regional watersheds, like the North Branch Park River.”

Green infrastructure not only helps to clean up our stormwater runoff and dramatically cut raw sewage discharges in combined sewer overflow communities, but it is also economically beneficial. National studies demonstrate that adding GI to curb sewage and stormwater pollution can be more cost-effective than using grey infrastructure like new piping alone, with savings ranging from \$0.89 to \$4.08 per gallon of treated water. Additionally, green infrastructure can help municipalities reduce energy expenses, can reduce flooding and related flood damage, and improves public health by reducing bacteria and pollution in waterways.