

November 16, 2023

For Immediate Release

Media Contact:

Becky Roark, Executive Director, Beaver Watershed Alliance

479-750-8007

Becky@beaverwatershedalliance.org

Fast Facts:

- Grant awarded to City of Elkins to improve city park
- Low Impact Development installations will advance Smart Growth for Source Water Protection in the Beaver Lake watershed
- Urban programming will help protect Beaver Lake, NWA's drinking water source

Grant funding to City of Elkins will Advance Smart Growth for Source Water Protection (569 words)

Beaver Watershed Alliance and the City of Elkins are working together to make improvements at a local city park. The groups are developing a Low Impact Development (LID) design for improving stormwater runoff, increasing native plants along the riparian of the East Fork – White River, increasing educational opportunities for park visitors and nearby schools, as well as developing a plan for education to residents and visitors.

Project funding is sourced from the Alliance's Smart Growth for Source Water Protection program thanks to a grant from the Arkansas Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Division and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. The federal 319 grant, totaling \$984,056, including matching and in-kind services, is being utilized to develop programming for watershed management in urban areas and install three low impact development features within the Beaver Lake watershed area. The City of Elkins will receive \$95,000 for design and implementation of LID features.

"According to our maps and historical data, Bunch Park was once a prairie, and the floodplains were full of native vegetation, earthen mounds and depressions, which all helped to alleviate flooding and manage stormwater on site," notes Becky Roark, Executive Director for the Alliance. "We are excited to have the opportunity to restore

this historic floodplain landscape with Elkins and reinvigorate this space for education, enjoyment, stormwater treatment, and to protect Beaver Lake, our drinking water source.”

Plans include a prairie restoration, pathways for residents to enjoy passive recreation, such as birding, wildlife viewing, opportunities to learn about native plants and educational signage. The site is within walking distance from Elkins schools and could also serve as a training ground for landowners that are interested in landscape conversions.

Stephanie Cowan, Elkins Parks Committee Chair stated, “This generous grant will add a beautiful enhancement to our city park while additionally showcasing examples of sustainable growth that benefit all of us through low impact development. Our city is bordered by the White River. We know that we should focus on good stewardship of the beautiful area where we live while also working to meet the needs of our growing community. Bunch Park is a place for our city residents and others in the community to enjoy the outdoors. This enhancement to our park will showcase responsible growth with low environmental impact. We feel fortunate to have this partnership with BWA and appreciate the work they have done to make this happen for our city and community. We are truly stronger together in all our ventures to serve others.”

The grant program and partnership will advance components of the Beaver Lake Watershed Protection Strategy by curbing sediment, which is the number one threat to Beaver Lake. Soil erosion from developed areas and increased drainage volume in urban and suburban streams has contributed large amounts of sediments to enter streams. These trends highlight the importance of normalizing low impact development practices throughout the watershed.

The Beaver Watershed Alliance is a non-profit organization focused on maintaining high quality drinking water in Beaver Lake and improving water quality within the Beaver Lake watershed by working with a diverse stakeholder group representing agricultural, government, recreation, conservation, water utility, business, and private landowner perspectives who all work together for the benefit of Beaver Lake and its watershed. To learn more about the Alliance, best management practices for water quality, or how you can become involved in voluntary watershed protection go to www.beaverwatershedalliance.org or contact the Alliance at 479-750-8007.