

Green Infrastructure in a Small Unregulated Community: Process and Lessons from Clarkesville, Georgia

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Abstract. The City of Clarkesville is a small unregulated MS4 in Habersham County GA. The Soque River, the drinking water supply and waste receiving stream for the City, has documented water quality impairments attributed to non-point source pollution and urban runoff. The Soque is a major tributary to the Chattahoochee River, the primary drinking water supply for millions of people downstream. Clarkesville has demonstrated a strong commitment to water quality by serving as the lead organization for the Soque Partnership, a local stakeholder group implementing a series of Clean Water Act §319(h) grants since 2004. Additionally, the City is seeking the WaterFirst designation from the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, a voluntary program which acknowledges communities across the state who engage in a rigorous protocol including watershed assessment and stormwater master planning. In an effort to address the causes and sources of the known impairments, the City completed a stormwater inventory. The purpose of the inventory was to document existing stormwater infrastructure conditions and identify potential green infrastructure implementation opportunities. As a small city, Clarkesville does not have the in-house technical capability to design and implement the practices needed to best control stormwater using green infrastructure. EPA technical assistance, provided via contract by Tetra Tech, resulted in the development of Clarkesville's Green Infrastructure Implementation Strategy to guide prioritization of stormwater BMPs in and around the City center, an area high in impervious surfaces and with documented stormwater problems. This process may serve as a guide for other small, unregulated communities.