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More information and conference registration can be found at [www.aridlid.org](http://www.aridlid.org).

**Arid-lands Conference Draws Diverse Speakers from across Nation to Set Greener Agenda for Southwest's Future**

TUCSON, Ariz.—Some 200 professionals from arid regions across the United States will gather in Tucson in March to focus their diverse expertise on a challenge of growing national significance: using nature's "green infrastructure" to make cities more healthy, sustainable, and livable. The innovative conference will culminate in working sessions to set a research agenda for green infrastructure in the arid Southwest, in collaboration with representatives from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Tucson-based nonprofit Watershed Management Group and several partners will host the third annual Arid Low Impact Development Conference (AridLID) March 27-29, 2012.

*Green infrastructure* and *low impact development* are closely related terms that describe use of natural systems like plants, soils, and rainfall to provide services like cleaning air and water, creating wildlife habitat, and calming traffic. From Philadelphia to Los Angeles, cities across the United States are tapping into strategies like rain gardens and other "green streets" features that capture and utilize rainwater in vegetated areas close to where it falls, instead of sending it downstream where it can contribute to flooding and pollution. While green infrastructure tackles challenging urban issues from "heat islands" to bicycle and pedestrian safety, in the process it has also saved municipalities and developers millions of dollars in reduced infrastructure costs.

"At this conference, we're looking at the unique challenges and opportunities of putting green infrastructure to work in arid regions," said James MacAdam, the conference's lead organizer and Green Streets Program Manager for Watershed Management Group. "Here in the Southwest, for instance, we have so much untapped potential for communities to use stormwater runoff to irrigate urban green spaces — while cleaning that stormwater at the same time."

"It's a big opportunity to reap the benefits of growing urban forests—like shade, cooling, beautification, and increased property values—while reducing the impact on limited water supplies," MacAdam said.

The AridLID conference will gather some 200 diverse professionals, including engineers, landscape architects, urban planners, stormwater managers, urban foresters, academic researchers, and community activists, for two-and-a-half days of learning and discussion. Special conference sessions will include field trips to Tucson-area green infrastructure sites, with an opportunity for all participants to collaborate in the Southwest research-agenda session with the EPA.

The conference, which was held in Albuquerque its first two years, has a theme this year of “Integrated Approaches to Green Infrastructure,” in recognition of the need for collaboration among many disciplines in order to successfully implement projects.

Keynote speakers include City of Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild; Andy Lipkis, Founder and President of Los Angeles-based TreePeople; and Benjamin Grumbles, President of the Clean Water America Alliance. Additional presentations will be made by Tucson-based world-renowned rainwater harvesting expert Brad Lancaster, celebrated Phoenix-based landscape architect Christine Ten Eyck, Hal Sprague from the innovative national group Center for Neighborhood Technology, and many other experts from across the Southwest.

More information and conference registration can be found at [www.aridlid.org](http://www.aridlid.org).

Partners and major sponsors presenting this year’s conference include Watershed Management Group; U.S. Forest Service; Pima County (AZ) Regional Flood Control District; Pima Association of Governments; Pima County Department of Environmental Quality; Arizona Department of Environmental Quality; Bernalillo County (NM); University of Arizona (UA) Water, Environmental and Energy Solutions Program; UA Biosphere 2; UA Water Resources Research Center; Stantec; and Ciudad Soil and Water Conservation District.

*Watershed Management Group develops community-based solutions to ensure the long-term prosperity of people and health of the environment. We provide people with the knowledge, skills, and resources for sustainable livelihoods.*