

Smart Growth Through Open Space Planning

A National NEMO Network Initiative



A New Initiative Linking Smart Growth and Open Space

EPA Administrator Christine Todd Whitman recently announced a new initiative called *Open Space Preservation Strategies for Promoting Smarter Growth and Environmental Protection*. The initiative is comprised of two key components. The first component builds on the EPA's successful Brownfields program by providing additional funds to approximately ten existing brown-field pilot communities to apply smart growth principles in their redevelopment process. The second component provides training, education, and technical assistance to communities grappling with the myriad of issues associated with open space planning processes.

The new initiative provides the context for an exciting collaboration between the **EPA Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation, Division of Development, Community and Development**, also known as the "Smart Growth" Office, and the **National NEMO Network**. The Smart Growth office works with a wide variety of organizations and agencies to promote development that serves the economy, community, and the environment. The National NEMO Network is a group of affiliated projects that educate local land use decision makers on balancing growth and natural resource protection (see box on reverse).

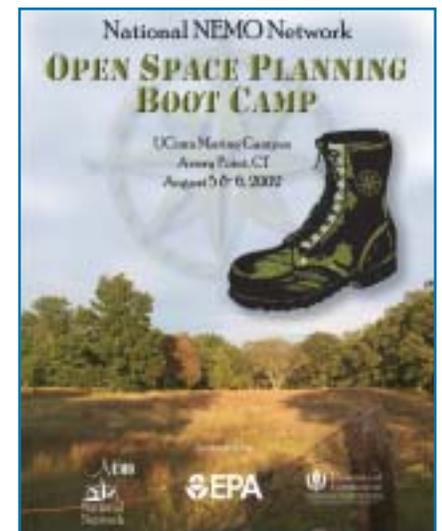
Through the *Smart Growth through Open Space Planning* partnership, selected NEMO Network projects from around the country are educating and assisting communities to develop plans for open space conservation. These open space plans will be implemented as part of a resource-based planning process that helps communities determine what areas to preserve, and where to direct growth. The plans will provide the framework for long-term, locally-driven open space conservation efforts.

Open Space Planning: Training the Trainers

To initiate the project, representatives from 14 NEMO projects in 13 states attended the Network's first "Open Space Boot Camp," held at the University of Connecticut marine campus in the summer of 2002. Attendees were trained on educating local officials on two key processes necessary to local open space preservation: creating an open space plan and conducting a natural resource inventory. The NEMO approach to open space planning emphasizes the need for communities to clearly define what is meant by "open space," and reach agreement on goals for land to be protected. Open space planning is demystified for local leaders through a series of practical steps that outline the information gathering, prioritizing, public input and public outreach phases of planning. Finally, the role of well planned and executed open space programs in providing opportunities for recreation, preserving important environmental and ecological

Key Facts on the EPA-NEMO Open Space Planning Initiative

- 14 Network projects participating
- 13 states represented: Alabama, Texas, Massachusetts, Delaware, Maine, New York, Tennessee, Connecticut, South Carolina, Georgia, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota.
- A focus on the need for open space protection based on a plan, built on the foundation of a community resource inventory.
- During 2002-2003, trainees will incorporate presentations and information on open space planning and conducting natural resource inventories into their existing NEMO educational programs for local officials. Many states are already working with local partners.





functions, and enhancing community quality of life is stressed. Since it's impossible to know what to protect if you don't know what you have, Network projects also learned about assisting communities to conduct an inventory of cultural and natural resources.

Turning Education in Local Action

Participating Network projects were tasked with preparing "game plans" for working with specific communities in their state on initiating open space planning. In many cases, NEMO project staff had already identified their target communities; in some cases partners from these communities came to the training. Targeted areas, several located in some of the most rapidly growing areas in the country, include: Knox County, Tennessee; Nissequogue River watershed, Long Island, New York; Town of Northport, Maine; City of Lewes, Delaware; Scott County, Minnesota; Ogeechee River watershed, Georgia; Beaufort County, South Carolina; Hendricks County, Indiana, and; City of Fairhope, Alabama. As these projects get underway, National NEMO and EPA Smart Growth staff will participate in open space planning events organized by Network projects and their local partners.

The Future

The goal of the *Smart Growth through Open Space Planning* partnership is to foster the development, adoption, and implementation of good open space plans in selected communities throughout the country. As these communities realize the many benefits of open space conservation, they will also provide tangible examples to surrounding communities of the value of this critical element in achieving smart growth.

For More Information on the Smart Growth through Open Space Planning, contact: Lynn Richards, EPA Office of Policy, Economics and Innovation, Division of Development, Community and Development: (202)566-2858 Richards.Lynn@epa.gov, or John Rozum, National NEMO Network Coordinator: (860)345-4511, jrozum@canr.uconn.edu.

nemo.uconn.edu/national

About Smart Growth

Smart growth is development that serves the economy, community, and the environment. It provides a framework for communities to make informed decisions about how and where they grow. Smart growth makes it possible for communities to grow in ways that support economic development and jobs; create strong neighborhoods with a range of housing, commercial, and transportation options; and achieve healthy communities that provide families with a clean environment. For more information on smart growth and EPA's Smart Growth office, visit: www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/

The National NEMO Network

The National NEMO Network is a group of affiliated projects that share a common educational philosophy and a target audience of local land use decision makers. There are currently 25 projects in 23 states and territories. Support for the projects comes from a number of sources, including EPA, NOAA and USDA. The University of Connecticut, with advice and support from the *National NEMO Network Interagency Work Group*, provides coordination for the Network. For more information visit: nemo.uconn.edu/national

The National NEMO Network is a group of affiliated projects that educate local land use decision makers about the relationship of land use to natural resource protection. The Network is coordinated by the University of Connecticut Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) Project, with funding from USDA/CRSEES, EPA/OWOW and NOAA/NOS. NEMO is an educational project of the University of Connecticut, Cooperative Extension System, Connecticut Sea Grant College Program and Natural Resource Management and Engineering Department. The Connecticut Cooperative Extension System is an equal opportunity employer. © 2002 University of Connecticut 9-02