



Illinois Department of Natural Resources

One Natural Resources Way · Springfield, Illinois 62702-1271
<http://dnr.state.il.us>

Pat Quinn, Governor
Marc Miller, Director

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CONTACTS: Chris McCloud
(217) 785-0075
Januari Smith
(217) 558-1544

“Mud to Community Gardens” Program Helps Create Community Garden in East St. Louis

State Agencies Help Community Residents Convert River Sediment into Produce Garden Plot at East Side Health District

EAST ST. LOUIS, IL – Officials with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), and Illinois Department of Agriculture today joined local officials and citizens in a ceremony to break ground on the state’s first “Mud to Community Gardens” project at the East Side Health District in East St. Louis.

“The ‘Mud to Community Gardens’ program is Governor Quinn's answer to making state government responsive to local needs by coordinating a multi-agency effort to turn soil sediment into the base for a sustainable, healthy and readily-available community food source. Over the next few weeks, hundreds of tons of topsoil that had eroded into our waterways will be put to good use for a community garden in East St. Louis,” said IDNR Director Marc Miller.

The “Mud to Community Gardens” program relocates clean river-dredged silt for use in the development of community gardens where adequate soil may not exist or is unavailable for use.

“Soils that historically have left Illinois and other Mississippi River basin states through erosion will now be returned to beneficial use,” said IEPA Director Doug Scott. “Through this project, we are preserving this vital resource by growing healthy food locally.”

The project, located at 656 N. 20th St., is a collaborative effort among state agencies that will provide topsoil for an approximately half-acre plot at the East Side Health District on which local residents will be able to grow produce. The IDNR is providing 400 cubic yards of dredged soil from Pere Marquette State Park which IDOT trucks began transporting last week. The Illinois Department of Agriculture (IDOA) is providing a

variety of seeds to help get the garden started. The IEPA collected and analyzed soil samples to ensure that the dredged sediment is safe to use in the garden.

“Community gardens increase access to nutritious, locally-grown fruits and vegetables while also teaching people how to cultivate their very own specialty crops in their backyards,” added IDOA Director Tom Jennings.

“We are proud to be a partner in the Community Gardens program and are pleased to provide the means to bring rich soil to the local community,” added IDOT Secretary Gary Hannig. “We hope residents will embrace this initiative wholeheartedly and take advantage of the many benefits this program offers.”

The East Side Health District community garden will serve as an educational tool for local families and an inspiration for other Illinois communities interested in starting their own gardens. In conjunction with the community garden, the health district will implement a new initiative called “Teach Value in Community Garden Projects,” which will work in tandem with existing programs that promote healthy eating habits.

“This project offers a hands-on approach that will assist in teaching organic gardening practices and offer enormous benefits that promote public health, wellness and a healthier quality of life,” said East Side Health District Administrator Elizabeth Patton-Whiteside.

The “Mud to Community Gardens” program is an extension of the state’s successful “Mud to Parks” program, championed by Governor Pat Quinn. “Mud to Parks” is helping relocate river sediment for productive reuse at a number of state and local park sites throughout the Illinois River basin.

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