

FOIL receives award for use of Low Impact Design in development of the Oak Island Lighthouse Site.

The fourth annual Lower Cape Fear Stewardship Development Awards Banquet was held on November 12th in Wilmington, NC to recognize land development projects that emphasize eco-friendly concepts and employed “green” technologies. FOIL took home a “special recognition” plaque for its efforts to restore the land around the historic lighthouse with low-impact design.

The low-impact development (LID) concept used by FOIL entails using natural processes for handling stormwater as opposed to the often invasive, conventional methods of big, concrete pipes and offsite retention ponds. Around Oak Island Lighthouse, we constructed a system of small bio-retention ponds and porous surfaces that will benefit water quality because it dramatically cuts down on runoff. When the ground absorbs the rainwater through the low-lying retention basins, the vegetation filters out many of the pollutants. Additionally, the parking lot is gravel, most of the land is undisturbed and the walkway to the lighthouse’s entrance is slatted wood—not solid concrete—that water can funnel through.

Our site designer, Heather Burkert emphasized the pervious walkway and parking lot, the bio-retention areas and native vegetation to hold back erosion and our use of native plants provides a sturdy, low maintenance site. Landscape architect Heather Burkert created the site’s conceptual design in June, 2007, based on our enviro-based vision. While the initial cost of completing the site development carried an estimated price of \$100,000, FOIL changed the turn-key operation into one utilizing extensive volunteer help and as a result reduced that total by 75-percent.

Months of fundraising netted the project \$28,000 through merchandise sales and donations. But as revenue slowed, we thought that we should, at least, search for alternative ways of getting the work accomplished. We stretched what monies we had by using inmate labor, scouting good deals on plants and corralling a league of volunteers. The \$28,000 covered the entire project.

LID has paved a way of acceptance in recent years, having been in heavy practice in the Pacific Northwest while recruiting followers in southeast North Carolina’s development community. FOIL is exceptionally proud to be one of the first in our area to employ these

techniques in our project. Architects like Burkert and coastal stewards like the N.C. Coastal Federation call LID the answer that could restore impaired waters like the Lockwood Folly River. Currently, more than half of the Lockwood Folly River is closed to shell fishing, and scientists are blaming the inflows of polluted runoff from surrounding, conventional developments.

The Brunswick County Board of Commissioners on November 3rd adopted a resolution supporting the concept and a guidance manual that local developers could use to implement its tools. The state is drafting a similar LID manual. LID participation would be voluntary, but resolutions of government support offer encouragement. New Hanover County and the City of Wilmington are also on board in that regard, having participated in the guidance manual's formation.

On Thursday, November 13th we presented the special recognition plaque to the Town of Caswell Beach for display in Town Hall. Please drop by to see it. Everyone should be proud that our Town and Lighthouse have received recognition for being good stewards of a national treasure.