New York State
ENVIRONMENTAL FACILITIES CORPORATION

MATTHEW J. DRISCOLL, President and CEO

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EFC Contact: Jon Sorensen | 518.402.6924 | 518.956.2297

Garden Roof on ESF Gateway Center Selected for Design Award by the New York Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects

Unique Green Roof is One of 12 Local Projects Selected for Funding in New York State's Green Innovation Grant Program

The green roof atop the Gateway Center of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) has been awarded a Merit Award from the New York Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA-NY).

The ESF project was funded with a $413,000 Green Innovation Grant from the New York State Environmental Facilities Corp. (EFC). It is one of 12 sustainable projects in Onondaga County that have been awarded a total of more than $6.6 million from the Green Innovation Grant Program (GIGP), part of Governor Andrew Cuomo's regional economic development initiative.

The ESF roof features plant species from the shores of Lake Ontario (furnished by Motherplants, an Ithaca-based supplier of green-roof materials).

Designed by Andropogon Associates of Philadelphia, the stormwater-management project was selected for one of 13 Merit Awards judged by a panel from the Northern California Chapter of the ASLA.

"In the face of global climate change, catastrophic, ecosystem-altering superstorms and ever-evolving technology that is driving us to re-think the way we live, work and play, the field of landscape architecture continues to stand at the forefront of the planning, design and care of our natural and man-made environments," said ASLA-NY Director Kathy Shea. "Nothing epitomizes that better than this year's recipients of the American Society of Landscape Architects, New York Chapter's Annual Design Awards."

This year's awards will be presented at a ceremony April 3 at the Center for Architecture in Manhattan. The ESF roof design and the other award-winning project designs will be on display at the Center for Architecture through the end of the month.

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625 Broadway, Albany, New York 12207-2997
518.402.6924 • 800.882.9721
www.efc.ny.gov

"Dozens of native plant species from the shores of Lake Ontario are being used for the first time and we will be monitoring their effectiveness over the next three years, said EFC President and CEO Matthew Driscoll. "We hope the ESF Gateway roof will ultimately improve the technology and construction techniques for these rain-absorbing roof systems."

The Green Innovation Grant Program has awarded more than $102 million to 138 sustainable, stormwater-control projects across New York State. GIGP funds are awarded each year as part of the job creation and community development strategies developed by one of the 10 regional commissions. ESF's green roof was recommended by the Central New York Regional Economic Development Council as part of its strategic plan for the region.

"Green roofs are inherently harsh growing environments," said Dr. Donald Leopold, chair of the ESF Department of Environmental and Forest Biology.

"To meet temperature extremes, moisture and nutrient stress, as well as solar exposure, green roofs typically utilize a plant palette of sedum species, adequate but limited in ecological function and value," Leopold explained.

"An alternative to sedums is the planting of native plant species from natural plant communities found on highly stressed sites that mimic the extreme conditions found on green roofs. Many of these species are already well adapted to especially harsh growing conditions, plus they're a habitat for many native beneficial and pollinator insects that, in turn, are food for native bird species," he continued.

Timothy Toland, associate professor in the ESF Department of Landscape Architecture said, "The Gateway Center's 5,000 square foot garden roof is situated to take advantage of broad scenic views to the west of campus and to be easily accessible from the building. In addition it includes a deck with built-in benches that allow visitors to interact and linger with the plants."

"The goal of the research and demonstration plantings is to provide designers and ecologists with a high degree of assurance that these native species from marginal but natural plant communities are viable alternatives to sedums for green roof installations," Toland explained.