



Our Work in 2024 At A Glance

Stormwater & Green Infrastructure

- Green Infrastructure Bus Tour to Philly
- Rainproof NYC
- Coalitions & Partnerships
 - Stormwater Infrastructure Matters Coalition
 - NY/NJ Harbor & Estuary Program
 - Forest for All NYC
 - NYS Adaptation Practitioners Network

Urban Soils Institute

- 9th Annual Urban Soils Symposium
- Medgar Evers College Soils Laboratory Internship
- Human Impacts Institute Fellowship
- Soil Pit Workshop in Green-Wood Cemetery
- Soil Testing Events and Workshops

Environmental Education

- NYC Envirothon 2024 in Battery Park
- Common Purpose/Barclays Making Leadership Real Program
- Friends of Alley Pond Park Estuary Day
- Education for Climate Action

Stormwater and Green Infrastructure Program

GI Bus Tour to Philly

The Green Infrastructure Bus Tour took a group of New York City to Philadelphia in 2024. The District partnered with the Philadelphia Water Department (PWD) to visit sites that showcased stream daylighting, wetland creation, subsurface cistern, bioswales, permeable pavement, infiltration trenches, and rain gardens. Staff from the PWD shared their stories of how they engaged the local communities, how they maintain the system, and challenges they faced (well-meaning community member “weeding” a rain garden – a story familiar to NYC). There was a lot of interest in returning to Philadelphia in the future. The District is considering a Staten Island Blue Belt tour in 2025. Send your suggestions to info@soilandwater.nyc!



Tour participant and a PWD staff take a closer look at the daylighted Indian Creek in Morris Park.

Rainproof NYC

The District was selected to participate in the Rainproof NYC initiative, led by the Mayor’s Office of Climate & Environmental Justice and Rebuild by Design. Shino participated in the work group focused on managing increasing heavy rainfall, which developed a set of recommendations for the City. There were two other work groups that focused on housing mobility and public outreach/education. The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Coalitions and Partnerships

The District continued its participation in the [Stormwater Infrastructure Matters Coalition](#), [Forest for All NYC Coalition](#), [NY/NJ Harbor & Estuary Program](#)’s Citizens Advisory Committee, Water Quality Working Group and Public Access Working

Group. For a very small agency like the District, working in coalition or partnership is the most effective way to advance the mission of the District.

In 2024, the District was invited to participate in the [NYS Adaptation Practitioners Network](#).

Urban Soils Institute

9th Annual Urban Soils Symposium

The 2024 symposium focused on the need for developing a holistic approach to the understanding of the nuances and complexities of the support soils deliver through nature to our built and non-built environments. The format of the symposium is designed to allow for multiple entry points, whether through social structure, infrastructure, nature, science, art, philosophy, etc. The format also facilitates the exchange of perspectives and experiences across all disciplines and backgrounds.

Collective deliberations focused on integrating soils into the built environment. Participants discussed systems theory, repair of fragmented “urban” ecosystems, coastal zone surveys for mapping rehabilitation potential, barriers and opportunities in policy and regulation, the education system, community engagements, local knowledge banks and more. They brainstormed ways to create opportunities to reclaim common resources and identify and develop soil resources. They networked and started collaborations and remarked on their appreciation of the welcoming, engaging, inviting and participatory atmosphere with a good mix of science, industry, policy, art, language, and culture.

The symposium saw a steady 75 people in attendance at any given moment, with additional people joining for a session or two throughout the days. The total number of attendees over the two days was estimated to be over 200 people.



One of the interns measuring the soil PH using a digital pH meter. It was also filmed to create a short educational video.

Medgar Evers College Soils Laboratory Internship

The fall semester of 2024 marked the third semester of this internship program. Each semester, two students from Medgar Evers College join the

program to learn how to process soil samples in the laboratory. The first couple of weeks are dedicated to teaching fundamental soil concepts, since most students enter the internship program without much urban soil science knowledge.

In addition to core lab skills, the program covers other important topics like career

advice, data management, and GIS. These skills are highly valued in the job market for environmental sciences but are not always taught to students before they graduate. The program thus provides a valuable transition from college to a professional setting with useful tools for the environmental sciences field.

Medgar Evers College is a predominantly Black institution serving students whose access to opportunities in the environmental field has historically been limited.

Human Impacts Institute Fellowship

The Urban Soils Institute of the District hosted a high school fellow through the Human Impacts Institute Fellowship: Urban Environmental Health Lab, which pairs students with artists. For two weeks over the summer, the high school student and the artist had the opportunity to visit a variety of sites in New York City – parks, urban farms, disturbed parcels of land, green roof and more – to test and examine soils in urban settings and discussing the role of soils in the urban environment. The USI team provided opportunities for the student

and the artist to reflect on their own personal relationship with soils and nature.

Soil Pit Workshop in Green-Wood Cemetery

We still live in a time when soils are not commonly considered a precious resource in cities and are mostly deemed a waste or engineering material. This is why it is important to give people the opportunity to directly engage with soils below the top 1 inch.

The District worked with the Green-Wood Cemetery, USDA-NRCS Soil Scientist and the former NYS Soil Scientist to dig a soil pit and hosted an outdoor workshop.

The workshop, held in Green-Wood Cemetery was attended by 75 people from a variety of background - artists, arborists, architects, soil scientists, community gardeners, activists, students, engineers, business owners, horticulturists, and environmental industry professionals.

The workshop featured 4 stations on rotation to make sure that everyone had the opportunity to go inside the soil pit.

Rich Shaw provided soils interpretation inside the pit; Donald Parizek various terrestrial and

subaqueous soil; George Lozefski used the microscopes and pXRF to analyze soil samples; and Paul Mankiewicz and Tatiana Morin facilitated discussions.

Soil Testing Events & Workshops

The Urban Soils Institute of the District continued its free soil testing events once a month between May and October at the SWALE House on Governors Island. The USI team also offered soil testing and soil science activities at public events, including the Newburgh Urban Farm Fair, Kingsland Wildflowers Festival, SUBMERGE marine science fair and Green Thumb Grow Together conference.

In addition to public soil testing events, the USI team facilitated technical workshops in partnership with Boulevard Garden Association in Queens, Buena Onda Art Lab in Rockaway, Brooklyn-Queens Land Trust with Brooklyn Technical High School students, and Earth Matter on Governors Island.

These programs collectively served nearly 300 people.

Environmental Education

NYC Envirothon

The District held the 2024 NYC Envirothon in the Battery Park in partnership with the Battery Park Conservancy. Nineteen teams representing all five boroughs competed. Despite the downpour right after lunch, the teams completed all stations went home relatively dry. Four of the five borough winning teams were able to compete at the State Envirothon in Cortland.

Events for all ages

The District was invited to present to management level employees from Barclays Bank for Making Leadership Real program. The program participants

learn about the work of participating organizations in the environmental field and develop innovative partnerships among participating organizations (a little bit like match making).

The District also participated at the Alley Pond Park Estuary Day and shared information about water quality impairments in NYC and benefits of green infrastructure.

The Executive Director was invited

to speak on the panel at the Education for Climate Action summit attended by teachers, educators, students and researchers.



A team of students huddled over the soils station at the 2024 NYC Envirothon.