

The Fight Against Drought
By
Being a Groundwater Guardian with Designated Groundwater Green Sites

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Recently, I attended The Groundwater Foundation conference in Lakewood Colorado. While there we talked about many issues everyone faces, not only in Nebraska but also all over the nation. The biggest issue that seems to keep coming up was the silent natural disaster we call drought. Drought is one of those disasters that can come on very quickly or can take years to occur. Drought is hard to measure and even harder to put a price tag on because destruction can be wide spread or it can hit a small area here and there. One-way that Nebraskans can fight drought is through education and conservation efforts. These efforts can be large scale to include farm ground and golf courses or on a smaller scale, such as a city park or ball field. There were many drought and conservation efforts discussed but the one I found the most useful in Nebraska at the community level was designating groundwater guardian green sites in your community.

The “who and how” of designating a groundwater green site: First, you have to have a site that you are managing to be eligible. Examples of these sites are golf courses, ball fields, and residential or recreational parks. Second, you have to document that you are having an environmental impact. This could be done by showing the pounds of fertilizer saved by soil sampling and/or by using lower input plants. Or if you have a ball field that you water and use moisture sensors to show when watering is needed and compare this water use to previous years to show the amount of water saved by using these sensors. Along with the better management aspect of designated green sites there is also an education component that should be included. By having a designated green site in your community, site managers have a tool that can be used to show other people how these projects work. This also gives managers a chance to get the kinks worked out before they try to implement these practices elsewhere or on a bigger scale in their respective communities. You don't have to be a groundwater guardian to have a groundwater green site, but if you are already a groundwater guardian this gives you another tool to help promote protection of groundwater and further your teams impact by expanding your educational campaign by setting an example of how these practices can help the conservation effort through designated green site practices.

If you are interested in participating in the green site program you can download the pilot program application by logging on to the groundwater web site at www.groundwater.org. These cold winter months are a great time to get the planning out of the way for green site locations. Then as soon as spring comes you will be ready to implement and get your designated green sites up and running. If communities want further information feel free to contact me and I will see what I can do to get you started on your green site location. This is one more tool that can help in the fight for protection and conservation of our source water.