



**Hancock County**  
**Soil & Water Conservation District**  
"helping people care for the land"

*News for Immediate Release*

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## **Quality Landscaping Can Benefit Communities!**

With all the cold weather recently, many of us are probably thinking more about spring. And when we think of spring we might be thinking green, and that could include thinking more about working to improve our community landscapes with new plantings. A new initiative has recently been started on this same concept.

There have been quite a few concerns expressed recently that we need to have more "green buildings" being advocated to help our communities. While standards exist for sustainable structures- "green buildings", there are no standards to guide those who want to create sustainable landscapes. Yet landscapes have great potential for both environmental good and severe environmental damage. A new national coalition has been established to expand on this concept, by starting a "Sustainable Sites Initiative". The Sustainable Sites Initiative is an interdisciplinary partnership between the American Society of Landscape Architects, the Lady Bird Johnson Wildflower Center, the United States Botanic Garden and a diverse group of stakeholder organizations to develop guidelines and standards for landscape sustainability.

The motivation behind this initiative stems from the desire to protect and enhance the ability of landscapes to provide services such as climate regulation, clean air and water, and improved quality of life. Sustainable Sites™ is a cooperative effort with the intention of supplementing existing green building and landscape guidelines as well as becoming a stand-alone tool for site sustainability. Why Sustainable Sites? Well-designed landscapes promote biodiversity with a mix of native species and ecologically appropriate non-native species. Site design can be improved to protect and regenerate the landscape's ability to regulate the climate, clean air and water, and improve our quality of life. More details and examples of potential landscape impacts on the environment are available on the Sustainable Sites web site.

The Preliminary Report on the Standards and Guidelines was released in November 2007. The purpose of this report was to provide a snapshot of the first findings of the initiative with the intention of collecting feedback from professionals and stakeholders. This report is the work of a broad-based and diverse group of experts in the fields of landscape architecture, horticulture, conservation, sustainable design, civil and environmental engineering, ecology, hydrology, forestry, soils, planning, public health, outdoor recreation, and other disciplines. It is based on a thorough and comprehensive review of the science available on sustainability as well as best practices in the industries involved, and it lists more than 200 ways for sites to fit into surrounding environments, provide cleaner air and water and help with climate concerns. An updated draft on the Standards and Guidelines will be released in November 2008 and also be open for public review. To learn more about the Sustainable Site Initiative visit the web at: [www.sustainablesites.org/](http://www.sustainablesites.org/) . A copy of the Preliminary Report is also available through this same web site.