

For Immediate Release

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RMI Publishes “Daylighting: New Life For Buried Streams”

New Report Explains Benefits of Bringing Streams Back to the Surface

Snowmass, CO—Rocky Mountain Institute has published “Daylighting: New Life For Buried Streams” by Richard Pinkham, a water resource management expert and an adjunct research scholar at RMI.

The report shows how communities across the U.S. and abroad are discovering the benefits that result from bringing streams out from culverts and other underground channels to enhance public spaces, improve water quality, and expand stream channel capacity.

The term “daylighting” describes projects that deliberately restore to the open air some or all of the flow of a previously covered river, creek, or stormwater drainage. Daylighting projects liberate waterways that were buried in culverts or pipes, covered by decks, or otherwise removed from view.

The 62-page, spiral-bound report from RMI documents 18 projects that have daylighted over 14,000 feet of waterways in the U.S. and lists another 23 projects in various stages of consideration.

The case studies include the background, actions, results, economics and challenges and lessons from each project, which range in length from a residential backyard project in Rowley, Massachusetts to a 4,000 foot restoration in an Urbana, Illinois park, and cross the spectrum from rural Omak Creek in eastern Washington to highly urbanized Arcadia Creek in downtown Kalamazoo, Michigan.

The report has two purposes. One, to show that daylighting projects are exciting and doable, and two, to show that they require an appropriate site, excellent design, and extensive community involvement.

“There is a conjunction of factors making daylighting popular,” said Richard Pinkham. “There is a lot of deteriorating stormwater infrastructure in the U.S. and many old pipes are failing. It is often cheaper to open a channel than to put new pipe back in. In addition, there is a tremendous desire in many communities to make the most of their environmental assets.”

In addition to avoiding new infrastructure costs, daylighting often improves the downstream water quality and improves the carrying capacity of streams. Daylighted streams also can dramatically improve

parks and other public places, and also can increase the value of neighboring properties. The intangible benefits include the satisfaction of setting something right, and the positive emotional and psychological benefits of running water.

"People are attracted to a place where they can hear moving water," said Pinkham. "It has a restorative affect on people, which they really appreciate, especially in an urban environment."

There is a huge potential for the daylighting of long-buried and long-forgotten streams in the U.S.

"Over the last two hundred years, waterways were often viewed as a nuisance or an afterthought," Pinkham noted. "And often, it was not considered a loss to put a stream into a buried culvert as land was developed."

Now, communities are working to bring back these buried resources. But daylighting is not a simple task. The report emphasizes the importance of working with a team of planners, engineers, landscape architects, biologists, and citizens to plan and implement a project.

"Daylighting: New Life for Buried Streams" is available on-line in PDF format at no charge on RMI's website, www.rmi.org. The illustrated, spiral-bound report may be ordered for \$12.00, plus shipping and handling, from RMI's online bookstore, or by contacting RMI's publications department at 1-800-333-5903.

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About Rocky Mountain Institute

RMI develops and implements practical and profitable environmental and resource solutions for organizations and companies, changes the minds of those who make the rules, and informs and inspires citizens. Its mission is to foster the efficient and restorative use of natural and human capital to create a more secure, prosperous and life-sustaining world.