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American Water Charitable Foundation Awards \$2.5 Million to National Recreation and Park Association for Building Better Communities Grant Program

VOORHEES, N.J.--(BUSINESS WIRE)-- The American Water Charitable Foundation, a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization created by American Water, the nation's largest publicly traded water and wastewater utility company, is announcing a partnership with the [National Recreation and Park Association](#) (NRPA), for the *Building Better Communities* signature grant program.

NRPA has been awarded a grant of \$2.5 million from the [American Water Charitable Foundation](#) to administer this program over the next five years. The two organizations will work with local communities to protect and enhance open space, connect children to nature and provide education that helps communities engage in stewardship activities across American Water's nationwide service areas.

American Water's *Building Better Communities* philanthropy initiative is designed to enhance the quality of life in the communities the company serves. The program will initially focus on parks, as they are critical to preserving natural resources that have real economic benefits for communities. Specifically, the program will concentrate on building or enhancing nature-based playgrounds and natural play spaces for children, and will connect and educate people on environmental stewardship practices related to water.

"As people spend less time outdoors they have less of a connection to and appreciation of natural resources," says Barbara Tulipane, President and CEO of NRPA. "That's why we are thrilled to be working with the American Water Charitable Foundation as it will help people, especially those in urban communities, deepen their connection with nature and foster a greater appreciation and responsibility around the conservation of water, a vital natural resource we must all use wisely."

In response to more children losing touch with nature, nature-based playgrounds and natural play spaces are an emerging trend focused on bringing child's play back-to-basics. These play spaces encourage children to interact with the natural environment and include features like boulder runs, embedded hill slides, sensory gardens, and natural climbing walls, designed to foster a sense of understanding about the natural world. The *Building Better Communities* program will incorporate an added benefit to natural play spaces with environmental education elements such as hydrologic demonstration and education areas to serve both children and adults alike.

Together, these types of natural spaces will help foster a greater sense of appreciation for the environment in a fun and engaging way and can empower people with the knowledge to understand the important role water plays in our ecosystems. Community park and recreation agencies and allied partners are leading the way to bring more of these types of nature play areas to the forefront and provide more people access to these spaces.

"Research shows that children who play in and explore natural environments often adopt conservation and sustainability values as adults. We believe these are important characteristics to encourage for the continued viability of and appreciation for our nation's water resources," said Debra Vernon, Manager, Corporate Responsibility and President of the American Water Charitable Foundation. "The *Building Better Communities* program supports American Water's core values of community stewardship and environmental sustainability, and aligns with areas of importance to the company's employees, including child welfare and education."

Annually, the program aims to support several of these types of projects through grants administered to local communities. Each nature-based play space will be developed via a community partnership dedicated to ongoing stewardship. A competitive Request for Proposal (RFP) process is open now for local communities to apply for grant funding. For more information about the *Building Better Communities* program and to access the RFP, visit www.nrpa.org/BuildingBetterCommunities.

About The National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association is a national not-for-profit organization dedicated to advancing park, recreation and conservation efforts that enhance quality of life for all people. Through its network of 40,000 recreation and park professionals and citizens, NRPA encourages the promotion of healthy and active lifestyles, conservation initiatives and equitable access to parks and public space. For more information, visit www.NRPA.org. For digital access to NRPA's flagship publication, *Parks & Recreation*, visit www.parksandrecreation.org.

About the American Water Charitable Foundation

Established in 2010 with a founding contribution from American Water, the American Water Charitable Foundation is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization that provides a formal way to demonstrate the company's ongoing commitment to being a good neighbor, citizen, and contributor to the communities where American Water and its employees live, work and operate. The Foundation helps support American Water employee-identified nonprofit endeavors.

About American Water

Founded in 1886, American Water (NYSE: AWK) is the largest publicly traded U.S. water and wastewater utility company. With headquarters in Voorhees, N.J., the company employs approximately 6,600 dedicated professionals who provide drinking water, wastewater and other related services to an estimated 14 million people in more than 40 states and parts of Canada. More information can be found at www.amwater.com.

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American Water
Denise Venuti Free, 856-309-4690
denise.free@amwater.com

or

National Recreation and Park Association
Lauren Hoffmann, 703-858-2151
lhoffmann@nrpa.org

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