

# media release

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## Pocahontas 895 landscaping looks good, does good

Pocahontas 895 has completed the first phase of a major five-year landscaping plan that will protect the environment as it beautifies the roadway.

Native plants are being used, strategically placed to help prevent erosion and control water runoff, said Bill Dale, Pocahontas 895 operations manager.

Under Pocahontas 895's contract with a local firm, the first-year plantings included:

- Weeping willow trees were planted in and around detention basins.
- Flowers and shrubs around the basins and in the medians.
- Native grasses at strategic spots along the road, particularly on hillsides.

Additional landscaping was done around the administration and operations buildings located off the eastbound cash toll plaza.

"Weeping willow trees were selected for the detention basins because they suck up so much water," Dale said. "These basins aren't meant to stay wet."

Detention basins differ from retention ponds in that they are meant to detain, not retain water. When roads are built, the ecological balance of the area is disturbed as porous areas – the ground – are covered with non-porous surfaces – pavement. Rain that would have been evenly absorbed into the ground instead runs off paved surfaces and soaks into adjoining soil in greater quantities, which can cause sogginess or flooding. Detention basins are built along the roadside to temporarily hold water and release it slowly and thus more naturally.

The willow trees will help the detention basins dry out more quickly, Dale said, noting that a drier basin is easier to maintain. The willows also will increase the basins' ability to keep chemicals from entering the environment.

Water runoff from roads includes oil and grease from passing cars; these chemicals land in the detention basins and eventually leach into the surrounding soil. The willows will trap some of this residue in their root systems, keeping it in the basins instead of allowing it to leach into the surrounding soil.

Pocahontas 895 also will get stormwater credits for planting willows in the basins, Dale said.

Native grasses were planted on a hill between the Pocahontas 895 and Settlers Ridge, a development of 166 homes near the Laburnum Avenue ramps. Using indigenous plants will make maintenance easy after the plants are nurtured to maturity. Easy maintenance is particularly important on the hillside, which is steep and difficult to mow.

“The idea is to plant them, establish them, and then walk away and watch them grow,” Dale said.

The landscaping on the hillside also will help prevent erosion and provide some noise buffering for Settlers Ridge homes, Dale added.

