

NEW LIFE FOR THE GRAND RIVER WATERSHED

THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Grand River in Grand Rapids, Michigan, is one of eleven newly selected locations for the nation's Urban Waters Federal Partnership. This partnership will reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve our nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits. Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will:

- Break down federal program silos to promote more efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership, by engaging and serving community partners.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local economies to create local jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

Led by these federal agencies and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council and White House Council on Environmental Quality, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the White House's place-based efforts, including the **Partnership for Sustainable Communities**, to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the nation. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership also advances the work of the **America's Great Outdoors Initiative** (<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>).

For more information, visit www.urbanwaters.gov

ABOUT THE GRAND RIVER URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP

The Grand River Urban Waters Federal Partnership is a business and community-led effort to restore an urban river in downtown Grand Rapids, beginning with recreating the namesake rapids.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

In an effort to improve water quality, make public access safe, and restore the watershed's ecosystem, here are some federal and/or local projects the Partnership is currently engaged in:

“Green Grand Rapids” Project – A multi-year public process led last year to amendments to Grand Rapids' master plan, among other things providing for urban river restoration, expanded parks and tree canopy, and multi-modal transit options. Implementation of the plan is underway, with an initial focus on river restoration, especially restoring the city's namesake rapids, which were inundated and excavated more than 150 years ago.

Grand River Restoration Stakeholder Group – A diverse group of business, community, governmental, academic and NGO leaders has convened to assure all voices are heard in evaluating options for restoring the namesake rapids and the 2-1/2 mile urban stretch of the River running through downtown Grand Rapids. A nonprofit group has been created to lead this effort, which has received early financial support from local businesses, foundations, the Downtown Development Authority and a U.S. EPA grant.



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND THE GRAND RIVER WATERSHED

The Grand River Watershed includes the longest river in Michigan and a significant tributary to Lake Michigan. The River runs through the heart of Michigan's second-largest city, Grand Rapids, and restoring this urban reach is the focus of the Partnership. Investments in pollution control have improved water quality to the point where expanded public use and river-oriented economic development will be enhanced and encouraged.

Opportunities & Constraints Study – A preliminary study has identified key opportunities and constraints for restoration of the River and namesake rapids in downtown Grand Rapids. Opportunities include expanded public use and access, especially for historically underserved communities of color on the west side of the River; expanded recreational use by anglers, rowers, paddlers and whitewater enthusiasts; restored spawning grounds for Lake Sturgeon; improved habitat for mussel species; remediation of hydromodification impacts on water quality; and expanded economic opportunities associated with turning the “face” of downtown back toward the River. Constraints include prevention of sea lamprey migration; assuring continued flood protection; and maintenance of seasonal water levels upstream and downstream.

WHAT'S NEXT

Evaluation of Restoration Options – Initial funding for the next stage of engineering analysis and design has been received from the Grand Rapids Downtown Development Authority, the Wege Foundation, and local business supporters. This analysis will identify various restoration options, which will be evaluated according to the opportunities and constraints previously identified and with broad input from the stakeholder group. Designation as an Urban Waters Federal Partnership site will mobilize expertise and information from federal agencies in this process, encourage additional private sector involvement, and inspire local leaders.

Expansion of stakeholder effort – The existing stakeholder group is being expanded, with the creation of three standing subcommittees to focus on community benefits, economic development, and river quality & public use. Efforts that focus on

communications and fundraising are also being launched.

Commencement of Rapids Restoration

– Tentative plans are to pursue regulatory approvals and funding in 2013 with commencement of the initial phase of restoring the namesake rapids in 2014 to be completed in 2016. The plans will be refined in a detailed work plan and schedule in early 2013 in consultation with the stakeholder group and with federal, state and local government partners.



THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The partnership includes: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of the Army (Army Corps of Engineers), U.S. Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Transportation

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