



URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP VISION, MISSION & PRINCIPLES

OUR VISION: *Through our partnership, we will revitalize urban waters and the communities that surround them, transforming overlooked assets into treasured centerpieces and drivers of urban revival.*

THE NEED IS CLEAR: *Many of our nation's urban rivers, streams, lakes, forests and wetlands are polluted, degraded or inaccessible. The surrounding communities often are not reaping the environmental, economic and social benefits that living near a water body can provide. Research demonstrates that a clean, safe, accessible, urban environment – including urban forests, gardens, parks, lakes, aquifers, and rivers – is directly linked to improved public health, stronger local economies, and lower crime rates. We believe a deeper connection to local water bodies can bring a new cycle of community hope and energy that will lead to healthier urban waters, improved public health, strengthened local businesses, and new jobs, as well as expanded educational, recreational, housing, and social opportunities.*



OUR MISSION: *The “Urban Waters Federal Partnership” will help urban and metropolitan areas, particularly those that are under-served or economically distressed, connect with their waterways and work to improve them. This federal partnership will put communities first. We will work to break down government program silos and to ensure that our collective efforts will reverse past neglect, energize existing programs, and engage new partners. We will listen to, engage and serve the communities where we work, ensuring they are full partners in restoring and protecting the water that surrounds them. We will establish strong partnerships with effective community-based organizations and local government officials to make the most effective use of economic incentives and other beneficial actions. With the right set of federal, state, and local tools and the local commitment of political will, the partnership will leverage existing neighborhood assets. These actions will be geared to promote early and visible victories to fuel long-term action. Success will advance the missions of our partnership, our agencies, and the federal government as a whole.*

FEDERAL PARTNERS:

*U.S. Department of the Interior
Corporation for National & Community Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
U.S. Economic Development Administration
U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
U.S. Department of Energy*

*Centers for Disease Control
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Department of Transportation
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
U.S. Department of Education
National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration*



LOS ANGELES RIVER WATERSHED CALIFORNIA



Urban Waters Federal Partnership for the Los Angeles River Watershed is led by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and includes the 51-mile Los Angeles River (headwaters are in the Angeles National Forest and discharge in the Pacific Ocean at Long Beach) and over 870 square miles of watershed.

In addition to supporting the mission and vision of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, the Los Angeles Partners have also identified goals specific to the LA River Watershed, which include: 1) restore ecosystem functions 2) balance revitalization with flood avoidance to ensure public safety 3) reduce reliance on imported water supply and 4) foster sustainable stewardship.

These local goals and ongoing Partnership activities were first articulated in the December 2011 Los Angeles River Watershed Work Plan; an updated 2013 version will be released shortly. Much of the initial focus of this work plan is within the City of Los Angeles, a function of the blueprint provided in the City's LA River Revitalization Master Plan. The Partnership has engaged with cities downstream of the City of Los Angeles, particularly the economically-challenged areas within the Gateway Cities and the terminus of the Los Angeles River in the City of Long Beach. Increased open space, public health, and safe access to bikeways are expressed priorities for these communities, and the Partnership intends to lend support to projects addressing these issues.

LA River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study

The LA River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study (also known as the Area with Restoration Benefits and Opportunities for Revitalization or ARBOR Study) by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) was started in 2006 with a 50 percent to 50 percent cost sharing partnership between USACE and the City of LA. The study is investigating the feasibility of restoring a more natural riparian ecosystem along a 10-mile stretch of the river from near Griffith Park to downtown LA. The range of alternatives for ecosystem restoration include plans that incorporate a suite of habitat types along and within the Los Angeles River, such as wetlands, riparian areas, pool/riffle complexes, and riparian buffers, as well as appropriate recreation features (e.g., trails, signage). Completion of the Corps' LA River study is the highest priority of the Partnership and its implementation is critical to the success of overall revitalization goals. There are numerous proposed projects along the LA River to create pocket parks, improve habitat, increase recreation trails, retain stormwater runoff, etc, but without implementation of the Corps restoration study these efforts will have difficulty linking up and fully realizing their restoration and revitalization potential. Completion of the Study was uncertain due to a sizeable shortfall in funding – a gap that was addressed in September 2012 by a generous gift by a local business through one of the organizations in the Partnership. Progress is moving quickly and the first release of the Study is anticipated in 2013.



PARTICIPATING PARTNERS

EPA – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
FWS – DOI Fish and Wildlife Service
DOI – U.S. Department of the Interior
HUD – Housing and Urban Development
NPS – DOI National Parks Service
NWS – DOC National Weather Service
USACE – DA U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
USBR – DOI U.S. Bureau of Reclamation
USFS – USDA U.S. Forest Service
USGS – DOI U.S. Geological Survey

Non-Federal Entities

Arroyo Seco Foundation
City of Glendale
City of Long Beach
City of Los Angeles
City of Signal Hill
Council for Watershed Health
Friends of the LA River
Gateway Cities Council of Governments
LA Conservation Corps
LA River Expeditions
LA River Revitalization Corp
Los Angeles County Flood Control District
Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board
Los Angeles Unified School District
Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority
San Gabriel and Lower Los Angeles Rivers and Mountains Conservancy State Coastal Conservancy
The River Project
TreePeople
Trust for Public Land
Urban Rivers Institute
Urban Semillas

Enhancing Recreational Opportunities

Los Angeles has the lowest per capita public open space and parkland of any major urban area in the nation. Many of the ongoing Partnership activities include expanding on the opportunities for recreational activities for the approximately 9 million residents of the LA River Watershed. One means for facilitating recreation in this watershed is via the Department of the Interior's America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative. In November 2011, DOI released its "America's Great Outdoors: Fifty State Report" which identified the combined Los Angeles and San Gabriel River Trail systems as one of only two priorities in the State of California. The National Park Service (NPS) is the lead federal agency for facilitating this AGO priority, and is proud to be supporting several high profile projects associated with these trails. NPS, the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority, the River Project, LA River Expeditions, Friends of the LA River and Urban Semillas, and other Partners worked with the LA Conservation Corps in the second successful year of the "Paddle the LA River" program. Over 1,000 people, including groups of urban school children, have now kayaked or canoed the 2-mile stretch of the river within the Sepulveda Basin Recreation Area and Flood Control Basin through the program that only operates for a few summer months. Tickets sold out within minutes of sale, and the public buzz has brought significant visibility to the restoration of the River. The organizers and USACE are considering the many calls to expand the program in 2013 – part of a growing grassroots awareness of the natural and recreational resources the LA River has the potential to offer. In support of the LA Conservation Corps' efforts to enhance river access and the Los Angeles Unified School District's (LAUSD) initiative to connect nearby schools to the river, the NPS is developing a "Safe Routes to the River" demonstration project targeting the LA River and the region's underserved urban communities. This project is intended to enhance public access to the river via gateways, signage, and educational/interpretive facilities. The "Safe Routes" project will develop a plan to connect LAUSD school sites to proposed river gateways via enhanced routing and targeted trail planning efforts.

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PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

Hansen Dam Campground

LA County Municipal Stormwater Permit

Tujunga Wash Greenway

North Atwater Creek Restoration and
Park Expansion and North Atwater Bridge

Pacoima Wash Greenway

Parque Dos Rios/South Gate Park
Development

River Forecast Site along the LA River

Station Fire Restoration and Research

South LA Wetlands Park

Education/Outreach/Research

- Indicators of Watershed Health Project
- LA River Corps

Feasibility Studies

- Arroyo Seco Watershed Feasibility Study
- East San Pedro Bay Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study
- Headworks Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study
- LA Basin Stormwater Conservation Study
- LA River Demonstration Project at the Bowtie Parcel
- LA River Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study
- Sepulveda Basin Concrete Removal and Biotechnical Bank Stabilization
- Sun Valley Watershed Feasibility Study

Multi-faceted Opportunities for
Revitalization

- Northeast LA Collaborative
 - Taylor Yard Area
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LEVERAGING RESOURCES AND TOOLS

Los Angeles Urban Waters Ambassador

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has committed to fund a Los Angeles Urban Waters Ambassador, a federal temporary full time position. This temporary assignment will be for one or two years. The Council for Watershed Health will host the Ambassador, who will work with over 30 Partner organizations towards watershed revitalization and serve as coordinator, facilitator, and reporter, providing support in strategic planning and project/program execution.

Indicators of Watershed Health Project

Understanding and communicating about watershed condition over the long-term is a critical aspect of watershed management. Assessment of progress in environmental management founded on investigation and reporting of watershed status is crucial because activities and programs impacting the watershed occur in numerous agencies and organizations. The goals of this project are to describe status and trends in ecological, social, and economic aspects of sustainability for the LA River Watershed and produce an annual report card. Investigators will develop indicators and metrics that respond to broad goals shared by resource managers and the public. The report card will be a tool communicated widely to agencies, corporations, elected officials, the public, and others to stimulate discussion and promote improvement in conditions. Partners involved with this project include the Council for Watershed Health and the EPA. This work would follow on the Council for Watershed Health's pilot investigation of the health of the Arroyo Seco Watershed.

South LA Wetlands Park

In February 2012, the City of LA held its grand opening for the new South LA Wetlands Park, built on a former railcar and bus maintenance yard in a densely populated neighborhood sorely in need of green space. In this neighborhood, residential streets contain warehouses, mechanic shops and scrap yards. The new park replaces one of these industrial areas. The park includes constructed wetlands to naturally treat stormwater prior to its discharge into the LA River. This is an example of the City of LA's leadership in the use of green infrastructure to manage urban runoff and protect LA River water quality. City funding for stormwater management used Supplemental Environmental Project funds originating from a Clean Water Act settlement agreement involving EPA and the LA Regional Water Quality Control Board. EPA Brownfields grant funds assisted the cleanup of the site.

La Kretz Crossing

The LA River Revitalization Corporation, with the support of a private donor, is building a new bridge across the River linking pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians from North Atwater Park and nearby residential neighborhoods to Griffith Park. The Army Corps of Engineers is reviewing construction drawings. Ground-breaking is anticipated within the next year.