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Federal Agencies Partner to Revitalize Urban Waterways In Communities Across The U.S.

BALTIMORE— A new federal partnership aims to stimulate regional and local economies, create local jobs, improve quality of life, and protect Americans' health by revitalizing urban waterways in under-served communities across the country. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP), an innovative federal union comprised of 11 agencies, will focus its initial efforts on seven pilot locations: the Patapsco Watershed (Maryland), the Anacostia Watershed (Washington DC/Maryland), the Bronx & Harlem River Watersheds (New York), the South Platte River in Denver (Colorado), the Los Angeles River Watershed (California), the Lake Pontchartrain Area (New Orleans, LA), and the Northwest Indiana Area. Each of the pilot locations already has a strong restoration effort underway, spearheaded by local governments and community organizations. Lessons learned from these pilot locations will be transferred to other cities in the country.

Led by the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the other White House place-based efforts such as the Partnership for Sustainable Communities by revitalizing communities, creating jobs and improving the qualities of life in cities and towns across the nation. The partnership also supports President Obama's America's Great Outdoors Initiative aimed at making the Federal Government a better partner with communities that are working to provide safe, healthy and accessible outdoor spaces. Like these other efforts, the UWFP represents another example of how the Obama Administration is promoting more efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.

U.S. EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson, U.S. Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, White House Domestic Policy Council Director Melody Barnes, Council for Environmental Quality Chair Nancy Sutley and representatives from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Department of Housing and Urban Development announced the partnership along the Patapsco River in Baltimore today where they participated in environmental education activities with Baltimore students. Americans use urban waterways like the Patapsco River as sources of drinking water and for a variety of activities including boating, fishing and swimming. Cleaning up and restoring these water resources is essential to protecting Americans' health and improving their overall quality of life. Revitalizing these urban waterways will also

reconnect citizens to open spaces, and will have a positive economic impact on local businesses, tourism and property values, as well as spur private investment and job creation in these communities.

“There is a range of health and environmental challenges facing our urban waters today -- but each challenge is matched by an incredible opportunity to transform distressed urban waterfronts into centerpieces for community revitalization,” said EPA Administrator Lisa P. Jackson. “Urban waters have the potential to support healthy environments, growing business and educational and recreational activities. By bringing together the experience and expertise of multiple federal partners, we have a chance to reconnect local residents, young people and community groups with the environmental resources all around them.”

“Water is the lifeblood of our communities and we must care for our watersheds and urban waterways around the nation,” said Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar. “Through this partnership and President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors initiative, Interior is committed to increasing public access to river resources, helping restore and protect habitat and wildlife, educating and employing our youth, and assessing and helping safeguard water quality.”

“Conserving our natural heritage is an objective shared by all Americans,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “The Urban Waters partnership will not only give thousands of urban Americans access to the great outdoors in a way they haven’t had before, it also creates partnerships between the federal government and American communities on conservation issues. At USDA, the Forest Service and Natural Resources Conservation Service are working in thousands of communities across the country to conserve and revitalize forests and watersheds, many impacting urban areas. At the same time, we’re connecting people with our land and resources by promoting outdoor activities and healthier lifestyles.”

“This important partnership is yet another example of the way that the Obama Administration is changing the way that government does business,” said DPC Director Melody Barnes. “At a time when every dollar the federal government invests in jumpstarting the economy is critical, we are finding ways to create unprecedented collaboration among the federal agencies, invest American’s tax dollars more wisely and efficiently, and act as better partners with local communities.”

“Too often, pollution, lack of access, and other barriers don’t allow urban residents to reap the health and economic benefits of rivers and other nearby waterways,” said Nancy Sutley, Chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. “As called for by President Obama’s America’s Great Outdoors Initiative, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership increases Federal coordination with local communities to support their work towards cleaner, healthier rivers and waters.”

“The Urban Waters Federal Partnership marks a significant step towards revitalizing an often overlooked resource in our urban communities,” said HUD Deputy Secretary Ron Sims. “Urban waterways have the potential to significantly improve urban communities, so I am pleased that HUD has a role in providing these pilot cities with the necessary tools to spur the creation of local jobs, economic development and protect Americans’ health.”

“The partnership offers an opportunity to realize urban waterway and watershed revitalization goals that are larger than, and beyond the resources of any individual community, agency, or mission. We can deliver solutions to help urban communities enjoy and prosper from healthy waters through collaboration with other agencies and the communities we collectively serve, said Ms. Jo-Ellen Darcy, Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works, one of the initiative’s 11 federal partners, “The Department of the Army for Civil Works is committed to the vision, mission, and principles of this partnership. We are ready to assist in securing more vibrant and sustainable urban waters.”

For more information, visit www.urbanwaters.gov

11 Agencies of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership

Environmental Protection Agency

- Use statutory authority to protect and preserve water quality and provide assistance in assessing and addressing legacy contamination.

Department of Interior

- Assist in building trails; increase public access to river resources; help restore and protect habitat and wildlife; educate and employ urban youth; and assess and help safeguard water quality.

United States Department of Agriculture

- Help communities to plan, manage, and sustain farm and forest landscapes on public and private ownership along a complex rural to urban gradient to promote watershed health and protect water resources, from the source to the faucet.

Corporation for National and Community Service

- Recruiting, organizing and maximizing the impact of community volunteers.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

- CDC/ATSDR will serve to offer guidance and technical assistance to local health officials and community members in conducting community-based environmental health assessments and creating an accurate and verifiable profile of communities' environmental health status.

Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration

- Foster the creation of high-skill jobs and the generation of private capital investment in distressed communities.

Department of Commerce/National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

- Provide unique scientific products and services designed to boost economic vitality, restore habitat, and mitigate hazards and contamination in coastal, Great Lakes, and other locations.

Army Corps of Engineers

- Offer engineering services, research and technical support to stakeholders during the planning, design, construction and operation of water resources and associated environmental infrastructure.

Department of Transportation

- Help the community in designing improved transportation corridors, bikeways, walkways

Housing and Urban Development

- Help the community improve access to affordable housing.

National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

- Assist with health studies related to community environmental conditions.