



**Facilitated Workshop:  
Future Direction of the South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership  
January 8, 2014; 1 - 4pm  
Daniels Fund Building, 101 Monroe Street, Denver**

**Meeting Summary**

**Attendees:** Dana Coelho, USFS; Reagan Waskom, CSU Colorado Water Institute; Stacey Eriksen, EPA; Amy Jacobi, CUSP; Hope Dalton, Tri-County Health Department; Chris Poulet, CDC/ATSDR; Jon Novick, Denver Environmental Health; Sarah Dominick, Denver Water; Rachel Hansgen, Groundwork Denver; David Askman, Askman Law Firm; Marge Price, Capitol Representatives; William Battaglin, USGS; Melissa Toering, City of Aurora, Aurora Water; Mickey Zeppelin, Taxi / RINO; Susan Matthews, CSFS; Keith Wood, CSFS; Devon Buckels, CSFS; Jeff Shoemaker, The Greenway Foundation; Matt Mulica, Keystone Group (facilitator).

Following introductions, Devon presented on the history, accomplishments, and current status of the partnership. Dana spoke to additional successes in our watershed and at other UWP pilot sites across the country, namely garnering support from a diversity of sources, developing close ties with local organizations and units of government, securing focused funding, and identifying and acting on priorities. She shared highlights from the recent UWP national training workshop, outlining how and why federal agencies and national nonprofits remain supportive of the partnerships. By focusing on outcomes, we can continue to advocate for investment and make progress.

Opening the dialog on future directions, Dana shared the charge of the UWP Leadership Team to “facilitate the transition of the organization from a federal pilot to a locally-driven collaborative with federal support.” She shared several examples of UWP and related collaborative groups led by government employees, contractors, and Universities, non-profit organizations to facilitate information sharing, networking, and projects. Devon then introduced the concept of The Water Connection (“TWC”) in detail, explaining where the idea originated, what partners are thinking about where it could go, and what opportunities are currently being pursued.

Jeff Shoemaker, from The Greenway Foundation (“TGF”), made a generous offer to the group to use TGF as a non-profit “mothership” to house The Water Connection as the idea develops. He believes the idea has potential and would function best as an independent non-profit entity. TGF has a history of hosting other smaller non-profits (e.g., Cherry Creek Stewardship Partners) and is part of the [Colorado Enterprise Zone](#). Shared objectives include: 1) upcoming River Summit with Denver geared toward a fishable, swimmable river; 2) regional effort for attaining a sustainable stream flow in the South Platte River; 3) flood protection; 4) engage with improvements and protections upstream; 5) maximize green infrastructure. Funding could go into a dedicated account and it would have its own identity (i.e., not obvious that it is part of TGF) No sunset date on the offer. TGF is willing to make a small initial investment in TWC.

**This is a summary of the dialog that followed:**

- Shifting the balance from federal to local guidance requires repackaging and restructuring.

- Clear, specific objectives facilitate action and accountability.
- There is a desire to drive quarterly meetings toward action and change.
- Great things only happen when there is collaboration and integration.
- There is a desire for The Water Connection to be independent and autonomous. Functioning as a non-profit entity would open up funding opportunities and provide partners like Denver Water with a go-to organization for receiving private investments (e.g., Coca Cola, Pepsi).
- Suggestion: Unfunded mandates are unsustainable. Could the UWP be one of the “entities” to receive funding under the Chatfield Watershed Authority?
- Suggestion: Engage Denver Metro Chamber of Commerce. Noted that this is one of the target audiences for TWC.
- Education is a critical part of the work that needs to be done in the watershed – raising awareness and understanding among non-water professionals and the business community. There are partners we can work with to do this (e.g., CSU, MSU, SPREE, Museum of Nature & Science) that are credible, effective, and well known. Getting more involved in the NWC Water Resources Center would be good.
- There is interest in staying engaged with the National Western Center/Stock Show redevelopment project. We can work on projects and start attracting funding and demonstrating value now, before any building takes place. The proposed Water Resources Center is a “blank slate” that would benefit from our engagement; TWC is its “greatest best hope”.
- We want to add business and entrepreneur perspectives and creativity to the partnership in order to 1) create willingness and desire to invest in green infrastructure and water, 2) strengthen the partnership through a diversity of perspectives, and 3) amplify impact.
- The current SPRUWP structure is focused on educating ourselves; this is valuable, and we need more and want to be helpful to others outside of our immediate network.
- We have stable funding through at least the end of December 2015, and a solid foundation on which to request more to support the coordinator at Colorado State Forest Service and work of the UWP/TWC.
- **Connectivity** is key – We have opportunity to focus on what’s missing from the water equation and help people understand the connections: stormwater, waste water, drinking water, recreation, etc. No one else is evaluating the overall picture and impact. Build on the idea of how all these pieces relate..
- There is interest in re-engaging past and reaching out to additional federal agencies (e.g., HUD, ACOE, BOR). Sometimes finding a local, supportive contact is challenging. We need to make partnership relevant and value-added to them. We can also engage federal agencies and other partners outside of meetings; that might not always be the best way to reach people.
- We need to reach out to partners we want to engage, not wait for them to hear about us. We need a clear ask – what do we want from a new partner and what are we offering them? We need to be realistic about expectations of partners. Feds don’t have specific funding for UWP. Staff can contribute staff time if approved, expertise, and data.
- There is some interest in making quarterly UWP meetings accessible to remote attendees, and investing in technology to do so in a flexible manner (i.e., not be dependent on one location’s or agency’s system).
- If the UWP goes away in the future, so be it, but in the meantime we can’t jettison from it or we will lose the federal support.
- Can the federal agencies help bring in business partners?
- Idea: In the future, the UWP could serve as a Board of Directors to guide TWC.

- Employees of CSU can be paid out of a foundation.
- Pursuing a market analysis and developing a business plan for TWC is important and there are several technical and funding resources we might turn to (e.g., business students, EDA, chambers of commerce).
- We want to be sure we don't duplicate efforts of other organizations such as CSU and CFWE.
- CSU resources such as the Clean Water Center and Stormwater Center can bring technical expertise to TWC. They are complimentary efforts.
- Federal staff can engage with non-profits by providing technical assistance and expertise as long as there's a connection to agency's mission. Staff can also serve ex-officio on boards. CSFS, EPA, USFS, USGS, and ATSDR all ok with participating in this manner with TWC.

**There was general consensus among participants, including most of the Leadership Team to:**

- Confirm support for accepting TGF's offer of hosting TWC as fledgling non-profit entity. We need to explore the logistics and evaluate the relationship with CSU and the NWC Water Resources Center.
- Pursue a marketing analysis and business plan for TWC over the next 1-2 years. The business plan can show how the UWP can fit in with other existing and planned efforts.
- Continue operating as the Urban Waters Partnership; activate the Leadership Team to organize and facilitate quarterly meetings, working group progress, and other partnership activities in order to free up the coordinator to pursue development of TWC.
- Stay engaged, through TWC, in the National Western Center redevelopment and influence the development of a Water Resource Center at the site.
- View TWC as a way to facilitate the transition to a locally-led collaborative, rather than a "program" of the UWP. What we want in the end is an entity that stands on its own, but in the meantime, it takes time to transition.

**The following action items were captured and assigned to meeting attendees for follow up:**

- Compile notes and distribute meeting summary. (Dana, Devon, Matt)
- Explore feasibility of accepting TGF's offer and setting up a checking account for TWC. (Keith, Susan)
- Explore feasibility of conducting a market analysis and potential subsequent business plan during 2015. (Devon)
- Look into getting website for TWC. (Devon)