



South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership Summary Document

Mission: The South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership collaborates across jurisdictions and disciplines to engage communities, and to protect and restore the South Platte River and Watershed

Context: The South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership (“UWP”) is a pilot project of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership (Federal Partnership), launched by the USEPA in 2011 with a commitment of support from 13 federal agencies. The focus of the Federal Partnership is to help urban and metropolitan areas, particularly those that are underserved or economically distressed, connect with their waterways and work to improve them. The Federal Partnership has 18 pilot locations across the country, and the UWP was one of the original seven selected to launch the program. The UWP is a voluntary partnership with no regulatory authority.

Focus: Regional Water Quality, Water Protection, and Water Awareness

Goals

- Collaborate, educate and engage
- Connect people with water
- Protect and restore through leveraging resources
- Communicate achievements and share technical information

Levers for Impact:

- Regional, Collaborative Policy Development
- Landscape-Scale Water Quality Initiatives
- Developing Regional Information Resources (best management practices; water quality data, public health data related to South Platte River and tributaries)
- Regional messaging for behavioral change
- Creation of Short Term, Mid Term and Long Term Priority Programs and Projects

Strategies and Actions:

1. **Connect and Engage Members** to share expertise and perspectives through increased communication, improved coordination, and the development of additional resources between the numerous organizations and entities, public and private, that are focused on the health of the South Platte River watershed.
2. **Conduct and Support High Impact Projects** by leveraging funds through federal, state, and local partners – both public and private, improving communication and strengthening professional relationships. UWP feature projects are holistic, high visibility projects demonstrating partnerships, measurable outcomes, and multiple benefits. The UWP will strive to establish the means to track and evaluate progress over time, while paying particular attention to efforts to address stormwater pollution – a major contributor to contaminants in the river within Metro Denver,
3. **Provide Needed Regional Perspective on Water Quality:** The UWP fills a need for a regional approach to mapping and analyzing water quality in the Metro Denver area. The UWP works to understand high priority issues and projects, especially in the urban corridor. This work and the subsequent projects designed to address



the resulting issues offer opportunities for collaboration among local governments, private sector organizations as well as both water supply and water treatment entities. Efforts in this area are led by the UWP Water Quality Workgroup, which includes representatives from CDPHE, EPA, ATSDR, Groundwork Denver, Denver Water, USGS, Jefferson Conservation District, Colorado Watershed Assembly, and Denver Environmental Health.

4. **Protect Source Water:** The UWP is engaged in source water planning and protection efforts. For example, CUSP (Coalition for the Upper South Platte) is serving as the facilitator for a Source Water Protection Planning project for the South Platte River watershed, which is being convened by Denver Water and funded with support from the Colorado Department of Public Health & Environment (CDPHE) along with participation by the EPA, USFS and multiple UWP partners. In addition, multiple forest health projects are underway, demonstrating strong partnerships and new collaborations.
5. **Initiate and Support Green Infrastructure Projects:** Many projects with multiple UWP partners are underway or have been completed. Urban forestry, stream bank stabilization, critical wetlands mapping and green infrastructure design are examples of UWP partners' work in this area. These efforts are important for water quality improvements and climate change adaptation.
6. **Contribute to Economic Development:** The UWP partners are engaged in projects that provide direct or indirect economic benefits to the surrounding communities, with an emphasis on reaching underserved communities. The UWP is developing a plan to create an Economic Benefits Report to use as a tool for conveying the benefits and impacts of the work of the UWP and its Partners, highlighting the economic benefits. It will be an informative tool for policymakers as well as the public.
7. **Implement Educational Campaigns:** The UWP is developing and implementing educational campaigns for behavioral change to improve water quality and to raise awareness of the importance of our local waterways. By aligning messaging among UWP partner organizations, the impact is significantly increased and funds for messaging campaigns are expanded, reaching broader audiences. Volunteer efforts are also coordinated and maximized. The Barr-Milton Watershed Association, along with the UWP Education and Outreach workgroup, which includes representatives from The Greenway Foundation, EarthForce and USFS, lead the efforts in this area of maximizing the health of urban watersheds.
8. **Link Healthy Lifestyles to the Urban Water Corridor:** The mission of the UWP seeks to incorporate connections between urban waterways and public health concepts, as well as capitalizing on the benefits from synergies between UWP partners' shared goals. Within the UWP, cross-jurisdictional partnerships among diverse organizations have been formed to pursue project funding for public health projects that also further the goals of the UWP.