

URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP HANDBOOK

Building & Sustaining Successful Urban Waters Partnerships

DRAFT

URBANWATERS

FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP



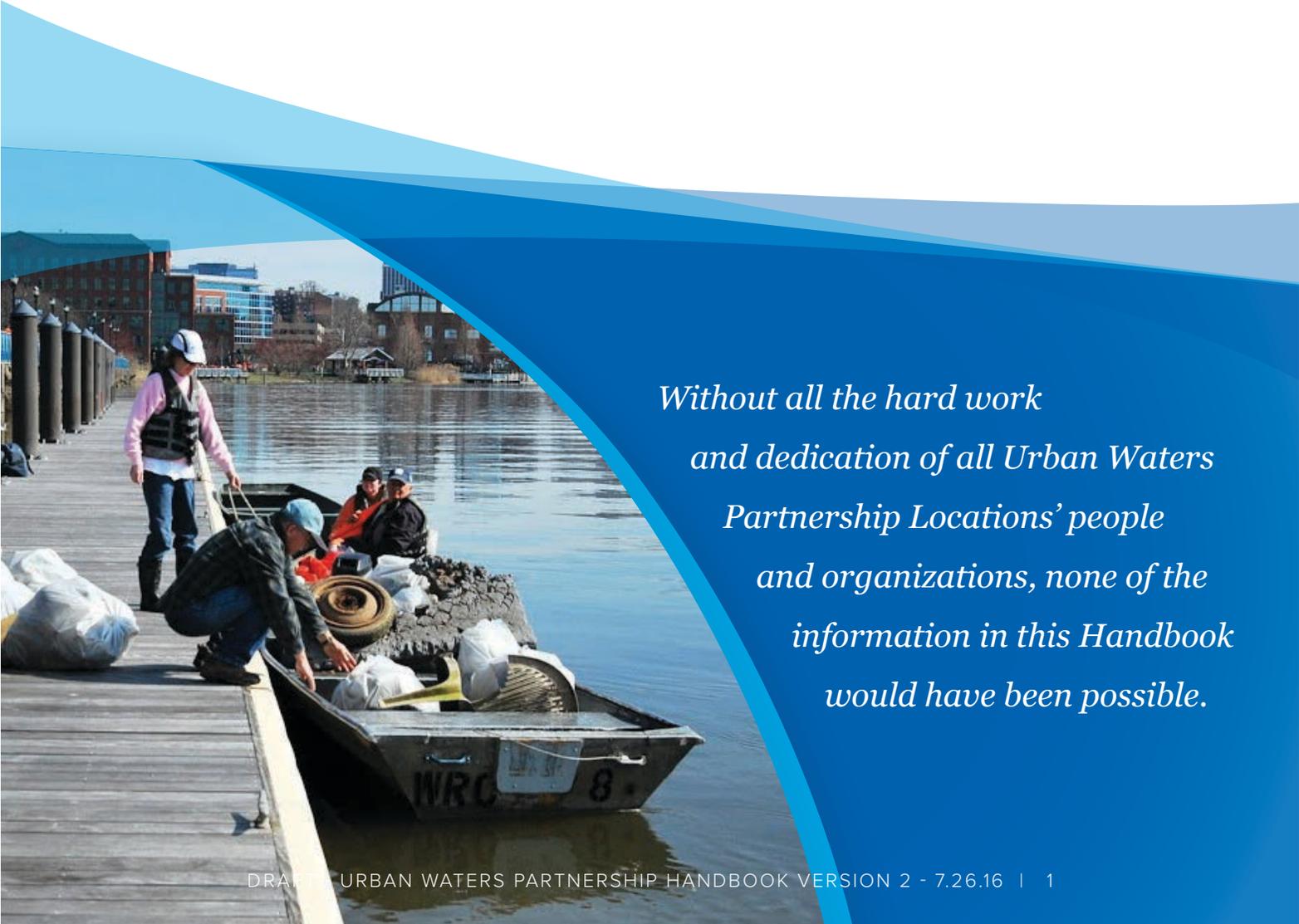
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This page is to acknowledge all the hard work of the Leaders, Ambassadors, and all Partner organizations at the 19 Urban Waters locations. A special thank you goes to those Leaders and Ambassadors who have contributed material, reviews or edits for this Handbook. Without all the hard work and dedication of all Urban Waters Partnership Locations' people and organizations, none of the information in this Handbook would have been possible.

This is also to acknowledge the work of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Workgroup at the 14 Partnership agencies. From 2010 until now, the Workgroup has labored to establish a framework for all the good work at the 19 Locations. From the Vision, Mission and Principles, to the Partnership in Action Report, and the report on the Non-governmental Organizations supporting the Partnership, this Workgroup has been steadfast in helping to drive and document the activities.



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and dedication of all Urban Waters
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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

Millions of Americans live and work near urban waters. Communities nationwide embrace these waters as a tremendous asset; however, many of our nation's urban rivers, streams, lakes, forests and wetlands are polluted, degraded or inaccessible. Many community organizations have been working for years on local revitalization projects but often hit roadblocks to successfully advancing them, such as limited coordination or consensus, or lack of resources.

To improve federal agencies' abilities to offer support to these local efforts, and to promote the economic, environmental and social benefits of urban waters revitalization projects, the EPA launched the Urban Waters Federal Partnership in 2011. Today, 14 federal agencies work together in 19 "Partnership Locations" with the support of 28 Non-governmental organizations and in collaboration with local partners on the ground. Partnership locations include the watersheds related to an urban water and the communities within them. Originally launched as pilots, these locations have tested out the Urban Waters Partnership model presented in this handbook.

Detailed information on the 19 locations, as well as the Vision, Mission and Principles for the Urban Waters Federal Partnership can be found at urbanwaters.gov.

WHY A HANDBOOK?

A growing number of localities have expressed interest in creating an Urban Waters Partnership to help realize their visions for clean, safe, accessible urban waters, revitalized communities, and thriving local economies. In response, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership has collaborated with existing partnership locations to develop a handbook that reflects a working approach and learnings based on our collective experiences, intended to inform the development of new Partnerships.

Much has been learned from the 19 UW Partnership Communities about how a partnership approach can work. Building successful UW Partnerships takes patience, planning and perseverance. Keys to success include early and meaningful engagement with diverse stakeholders, sustained commitments to project goals and outcomes, transparency, ongoing collaboration, and creative problem solving. The benefits – public health, environmental conservation and restoration, and economic development – show that the effort is worth it.

WHO IS THE HANDBOOK FOR?

This handbook is for all communities with an urban water, and distressed communities nationwide who are seeking to establish, sustain and expand successful urban waters

partnerships with regional associations, state and federal agencies, local governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector.

To learn more about the specific role some of these organizations, specifically NGOs, are playing, visit www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners.

URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES ARE GUIDED BY SEVEN PRINCIPLES

- Promote clean urban waters.
- Reconnect people to their local waters.
- Promote water conservation.
- Use urban water systems as a way to promote economic revitalization and prosperity.
- Encourage community improvements through active partnerships.
- Be open and honest, and listen to the communities, knowing this is the best way to engage and learn from them.
- Focus on measuring results and evaluation to fuel future success.



*Building successful Urban
Waters Partnerships takes
patience, planning and
perseverance.*

VALUE OF THE LOCAL URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIPS

The 19 locations are already making a difference for urban waters and the communities that surround them. Urban Waters Partnerships achieve results through successful actions (e.g. projects) by:



STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS

Encouraging existing and new partnerships alike, offering greater cooperation, consensus-building, communication, and diversity of thought. Urban Waters Partnerships have the special distinction of strengthening partnerships across all levels of government and among and between a myriad of public and private entities.



BUILDING TRUST

Encouraging transparency and bridge-building — attributes that create the foundation for trusting relationships. The creation of these trusting relationships is at the core of any successful project.



PREVENTING AND RESOLVING CONFLICTS

Anticipating and preventing conflicts and facilitating the resolution of conflicts when they arise is paramount. Pulling together the right people at the right time to discuss project risks can mitigate many preventable conflicts from arising. Furthermore, gathering partners together can create healthy conflict and tension, resulting in more creative and durable projects. Lastly, when challenging situations do arise, having a resilient group of partners to address challenges increases the likelihood of a swift resolution.



LEVERAGING RESOURCES

Pooling resources and relationships to make the most impact with the fewest dollars. In an ever-shrinking funding environment, it is essential that the right people are doing valuable work. Pulling together partners and pooling resources helps to ensure that dollars are spent wisely and efficiently. Moving projects forward more efficiently and quickly by leveraging the right resources at the right time subsequently freeing up time and resources to initiate and maintain other high-impact efforts.



INCREASING CAPACITY

Supporting local communities to learn and grow, assisting them in identifying areas of strength and weakness, and providing the support necessary to address weaknesses. Partnerships support rigorous, results-driven design and execution of projects, and seek to empower local communities to initiate and sustain their water quality improvement efforts.

BENEFITS OF URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

Key benefits of an Urban Waters Partnership that can be communicated to community members, potential partners, prospective funders, and state and regional officials include:

- Leveraging the combined authorities and resources of federal agencies to support local urban waters efforts can improve public health and environmental restoration.
- Helping underserved and economically distressed communities reconnect with their waterways strengthens community stability, fosters economic growth, and creates recreation opportunities that can lead to health benefits and community connection.
- Restoring forests, streams, wetlands and riparian areas means they can better absorb, store and filter precipitation, thereby enhancing stormwater management.
- Helping communities, businesses and people adopt water conservation measures can ensure more sustainable long-term supplies of clean water.
- Developing and deploying science-based “best management practices” with associated analytical tools to help communities understand, manage and sustain open spaces and other vital green infrastructure.
- Providing environmental education and outreach in cooperation with school systems builds knowledge, environmental literacy and community capacity.
- Creating hands-on opportunities for local youth to study and restore local urban waters builds understanding of the importance of conservation and strengthens community ownership of conservation efforts.
- Educating and training leads to new job opportunities in natural resources management, water and environmental facility operations, and other sectors.
- Opening channels of communication builds trust and goodwill among federal agencies and local partners.

URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP CHALLENGES

Building successful Urban Waters Partnerships takes patience, planning and perseverance. Common challenges to watch out for include:

- Imbalances in project and organizational responsibilities, which can lead to staff burnout.
- Breakdowns in partner communications, particularly when many groups are involved.
- Limited availability of resources and funding.
- Lack of participation from organizations concerned about overlapping efforts and competition for limited resources.
- Barriers to effectively reach and engage with communities overburdened with environmental impacts.
- Complexity and time requirements of coordinating efforts across a range of local initiatives.



Ron Sims, Former Deputy Secretary of HUD



RESULTS ON THE GROUND

NORTHWEST INDIANA

As of June 2015, over 40 organizations, including not-for-profit community groups and local, state and federal governmental agencies, actively engage in the northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership network. The northern portions of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte Counties in northwest Indiana contain more than 1,200 miles of waterways and 45 miles of shoreline. The many waterways the partnership works on include: Lake Michigan, Trail Creek, the East Branch of the Little Calumet River, Salt Creek, Deep River, and the Grand Calumet River and Grand Calumet River Area of Concern. Partners assist in the development of multiple watershed management plans to improve biotic communities and reduce E. coli, nutrients and other pollutants in critical watershed areas. In additional area watersheds, urban and agricultural best management practices are being implemented to reduce pollutant loads and restore riparian and wetland habitats.

To date, a significant increase in outreach and education efforts throughout the Northwest Indiana region has reached over 15,000 residents through efforts including student field days at Roxana Marsh in Gary, and partnering with the nonprofit Wilderness Inquiry to provide paddling opportunities for youth and families in Michigan City, Hammond, Gary and Hobart.

NEW ORLEANS

In New Orleans, the UW Partnership supported the Lafitte Greenway Bicycle and Pedestrian Path project, which transforms nearly three miles of vacant City property into a multi-use trail and linear park connecting six historic neighborhoods from the French Quarter to Bayou St. John and Mid-City including the newly redeveloped Faubourg Lafitte.

BALTIMORE

The City of Baltimore has more than 30,000 vacant lots with untapped potential to enhance neighborhoods and promote resiliency and sustainability. In an effort to jumpstart the development of these lots, the City has developed the Green Pattern Book, which provides guidance on ways for neighborhood stakeholders to identify greening strategies for these vacant lots. In 2013, to show where opportunity meets activity, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance (BNIA-JFI) piloted a publically accessible, interactive mapping tool to track sites showing characteristics of community-managed open space and stormwater management, two of the eight patterns within the Green Pattern Book. To date, approximately 964 lots have been mapped as Community Managed Open Spaces, and 242 lots have been mapped as Stormwater Management sites. Mapping the sites that exhibit characteristics of the eight patterns is an essential tool for coordinating efforts and collectively achieving the vision defined by neighborhoods. Future iterations of the map will include components of the remaining six green patterns.



A significant increase in outreach and education efforts throughout the Northwest Indiana region has reached over 15,000 residents.

URBAN WATERS & ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

Many urban waterways that are polluted flow through areas comprised historically by communities of color, lower income, underserved, economically distressed and environmentally burdened—typically the definition of environmental justice¹ (EJ) communities. A fundamental principle of developing an Urban Waters Partnership is that people who suffer environmental injustices need to be included as active partners in the specific planning forums, decisions and proposed projects that can transform their communities.



Community Partnerships in Action
(Proctor Creek Watershed Partnership/Atlanta, GA)

As communities use this handbook to create their own local Urban Waters Partnership, those in the role of convener or coordinator need to be actively aware of and insistent on including members of the environmental justice community as core partners. This is to avoid creating a partnership composed solely of well-meaning members from environmental and watershed community and government organizations, who may not be consistently aware of the concerns or interests of the EJ community.

The following recommendations, from current UW Partnership organizers, are made based on the past several years of experience in identifying and effectively working with environmental justice communities. However, many of them are just good communications and inclusionary tactics for all types of partnerships. Ultimately, the goal is to work toward sustainable benefits that communities with environmental justice concerns value and will experience first-hand, such as healthier water, improved public health, and new jobs, as well as expanded educational, recreational, housing, and social opportunities.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Start with background research:** Before approaching community organizations, look into the history of the organization, whom they represent, historical alliances that may have been broken and, where possible, ties and networks they may have with other community organizations (one way to identify more organizations that need inclusion in the process). This history may affect how their organization will view the Partnership, its members and new projects, as there may be ill effects from previous government-supported projects on their community.
- **Plan for long-term success:** To be successful, the Partnership must build and maintain good, hands-on relationships and trust among Partner members—and work through distrust. Asking what’s important to all Partners, providing enough listening and feedback time at key junctures, and making sure the environmental justice core members are heard, is critical for members to understand each other and for making the final project successful.
- **Offer an open door:** As convener/coordinator, be consistent and transparent with in-person and written communications and establish a communications model that shares communications equally with all partners. EJ groups, as well as other Partners, will have concerns that will not be able to be addressed by the Partnership projects. Work as a group to connect the Partners with others that share their concerns.

¹ The Presidential Executive Order on Environmental Justice (12898) requires that all federal agencies consider environmental justice in their policies and actions, though there is no single accepted definition of environmental justice among agencies. EPA defines environmental justice as “the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies.”

- **Make meeting easy:** The ability to show up at a specific time and place for meetings is often the single-most reason that keeps community organizations from participating fully in decisions affecting their community. Moving meetings from day time to late day or early evening, placing meetings by bus or transit lines, providing child care, offering transit subsidies—all need to be reviewed as potential barriers to full participation. If the “community” is not at the meeting, no amount of listening by the other Partnership members is going to provide input relevant to that community.
- **Use language that connects:** Avoid using short-cut terms such as “underserved” or “overburdened” in communications or conversations that inadvertently assign a label to a community’s people vs. the problem itself. Learn to properly pronounce organization names that are new to you.
- **Avoid jargon and undefined technical terms:** Not everyone will be familiar with technical terms such as stormwater management or green infrastructure. And, some people’s definitions will vary. All affect the ability to have a clear discussion of potential benefits of projects under consideration. Provide definitions of terms prior to discussions.
- **Connect to value:** Many community organizations have no or very limited paid staff and can only participate with funding for staff and/or for related community projects. Where it is important to have some of these organizations as core members, the Partnership needs to work as a group to fund support for their participation. In addition, the Partnership can facilitate networking among partner organizations and other community entities including businesses to identify other possible support.
- **Acknowledge and honor limitations:** Even if some critical EJ community organizations cannot be at the table, avenues for collecting their input and priorities must be integrated into the Partnership planning and project implementation.

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN ACTION

Across the Green-Duwamish River Watershed in Washington State, maintaining water quality for spawning salmon has long been a focus of federal natural resource agencies. Through a series of meetings with tribal leaders and environmental justice stakeholders, the agencies expanded their focus, exploring how public health and economic development concerns overlap with natural resource management. In particular, the Green-Duwamish UW Partnership connected stakeholders across the lower and upper regions of the watershed, building shared understanding of rural and urban concerns.

Through early dialogues with those who are not the traditional voices in watershed advocacy, the Green-Duwamish UW Partnership was able to gain key insights into important community issues such as health disparities, poverty and subsistence fishing that otherwise would not have been integrated into the planning priorities. Project activities have brought diverse groups together, connected environmental justice groups to grant resources, and expanded the coalition of partners working to ensure the long-term health of the watershed.

URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP APPROACH OVERVIEW

Urban waters communities have diverse needs and priorities. Accordingly, the handbook is built around a flexible five-phase process; communities can select and tailor each phase to meet their needs. That is, in some communities, steps may be implemented in a different order. Also, some steps may be repeated at different times to reflect unique circumstances.

- **Phase 1:** Evaluate current partnerships and define vision and goals – identifying relevant stakeholders, community conditions and common goals for local urban waters.
- **Phase 2:** Forge Partnerships – bringing people together and setting urban waters partnership objectives and priorities.
- **Phase 3:** Pursue Projects and Activities of Interest – supporting implementation of priority projects and activities, from developing clear work plans and leveraging resources to strengthening community engagement efforts.
- **Phase 4:** Measure and Communicate Results – ensuring that projects and activities lead to outcomes that better support people, their environment and their communities.
- **Phase 5:** Sustain Momentum – how partnerships can guide long-term planning, building on strengthened relationships and adequate resources.

For communities just starting to think about urban waters partnership opportunities, this process provides stepping stones – from initial planning steps to managing and maintaining successful urban waters partnerships. For more experienced communities, the process provides a way to strengthen partnerships and reflect on project outcomes.

Throughout, the process emphasizes transparency in all outreach and engagement efforts, laying a strong foundation for partners and community members to build trust and work together more effectively. Tips for engaging communities with environmental justice concerns accompany each step, recognizing that authentic, meaningful community engagement requires a detailed understanding of local environmental, public health and economic priorities, as well as history and culture.

The process diagram on the next page illustrates the five phases and the steps associated with each phase. This handbook also recommends integrating three overarching themes into the process to promote authentic, meaningful community engagement throughout urban waters projects and activities:

- Help urban and metropolitan areas reconnect with their local waterways and work to improve them.
- Put communities first, and work to break down government agency and program silos to make sure the collective efforts of all participating agencies are focused and responsive to local partners.
- Facilitate merging efforts to protect environmental and natural resources with community and economic development goals, in a manner that helps keep environmental justice in focus.

For communities newer to the urban waters conversation, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership website – www.UrbanWaters.gov – provides helpful background information on issues facing urban waterways, including water quality improvement.

URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

Revisit steps as needed to address new information and opportunities.

PHASES





PHASE 1

EVALUATE CURRENT PARTNERSHIPS AND DEFINE VISION & GOALS

Many local/state/federal government agencies and other organizations have been involved in work to address urban water quality problems and other environmental, social and economic problems in communities that surround urban waters. A full accounting of what current governments, community-based organizations, non-governmental organizations, businesses and individuals are doing will help answer who is doing what and where in the local urban waters location, both in the city and the watershed. With all the new geographic information systems available, this information should be captured using them so all information is available to all potential partners in an Urban Waters Partnership. Many locations begin this work with a current set of partnering organizations that already exists.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY CURRENT PARTNERING EFFORTS AND GROUPS TO BEGIN DISCUSSIONS ON ANALYZING AND DESCRIBING THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE OF ACTIONS.

Looking into current partnering efforts or current partnerships, even if only a few organizations/governments are involved, is the best place to start. At best, these current partners should implement an approach to cataloguing and mapping current partnerships and possible partners and actions using new geographic information system technology. At a minimum, develop lists of current partners and partnerships to figure out what organizations can begin discussions in order to move toward such cataloguing and mapping to create momentum toward further partnering.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Seek agreement on what “environmental justice” will mean for the purpose of your Partnership. Do your research to identify and understand the organizations representing distressed project areas; local environmental groups can be a good place to start.

ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- An initial discussion needs to occur by at least two entities (organizations, governmental agencies, businesses) to generate interest in broader urban waters work for an urban location.
- Such entities that have this interest should then develop a plan to identify and catalogue partnering efforts and potential partner entities as well as begin to identify current actions related to urban waters and the communities that surround them.
- Once the two or more entities are collaborating and want to move toward further partnering, adopting an



approach to identifying and cataloguing current partnerships and actions should consider using the new geographic information system technologies.

- Evaluate need for a facilitator or someone who can organize and run meetings. Seek assistance outside of the location and provide information to the National Partnership.

STEP 2: START BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND IDENTIFY EXISTING PRIORITIES

There are a variety of coordination models and ways to start bringing groups together. In some cases, federal agency staff can initiate by reaching out to other federal agencies to convene groups working on the area of interest. In other communities, state agencies can build on their relationships with federal agencies and local partners to bring people together. Similarly, local governments and watershed organizations can take the lead and build on existing initiatives to convene interested parties and bring state and federal agencies to the table. In current UW Partnership communities, an Ambassador helps make this coordination possible. Ambassadors serve as coordinators, facilitators and reporters, providing support for both strategic planning and project/program execution. One goal of an Ambassador is to accelerate and coordinate locally prioritized on-the-ground projects that are critical to improving water quality and fostering community stewardship in urban watersheds.

The Los Angeles River Watershed Partnership, for example, has grown from 10 initial partners to more than 30 partners today. As more groups have gotten involved and shared their watershed expertise, partnership efforts have also broadened. Projects, studies and outreach in the Los Angeles area now focus on green space initiatives, solutions for nonpoint source pollution and urban stormwater runoff, waterway channelization in communities with environmental justice concerns, and wetlands and river restoration, among others.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Identify current partnering efforts in addition to convening partners. Federal, state, or local government staff, or nonprofit organizations can take the lead.
- Begin identifying the universe of potential projects and activities.
- Identify initial resource needs, potential funding and in-kind resources.
- EPA and other federal agencies can provide technical and capacity-building assistance.
- Structure partnership agreements.
- Continually refine partnership goals and objectives.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Identify and acknowledge long-standing environmental justice concerns and challenges within your UW Partnership efforts, alongside overarching community priorities such as safety, health, education, and jobs. Relevant priorities may include contaminated site cleanup and reuse, community revitalization and sustainability, urban green space and urban gardening projects, green job training programs, access to healthy food and other healthy living amenities, and transportation improvements.

PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

NORTHWEST INDIANA PARTNERSHIP

The Lake Michigan watershed in Northwest Indiana includes several communities with environmental justice concerns; they are facing many challenges in addition to water quality concerns. The Northwest Indiana Partnership regularly revisits its activities to make sure it is working effectively with the communities and is ready to provide support as needed.

STEP 3: DEFINE A VISION AND GOALS, INCLUDING A GEOGRAPHIC AREA OF INTEREST

Once initial partnerships are in place, build on existing priorities and common geographic areas of interest to establish a shared vision and goals to guide collaboration. These discussions ensure that future efforts lift up local priorities, particularly those from distressed and underserved communities, and that potential projects and activities do not replicate existing initiatives. These discussions may also lead to new project ideas, or find ways to link and leverage new projects with existing efforts. Ultimately, the outcome of these discussions can be a shared vision and set of goals to guide the work in the watershed going forward.

Coordinating and collaborating with partners also maximizes opportunities for urban water projects to qualify for available funding, technical assistance and other resources. In Atlanta, Georgia, the Proctor Creek UW Partnership identified how to coordinate water quality, environmental justice and brownfields activities in the watershed. Community members also regularly attend community meetings, advisory committees and forums to share urban waters concerns and connect with key stakeholders. The Patapsco Watershed/Baltimore Region Partnership in Maryland used GIS mapping to document the knowledge base, understand partner efforts underway across the area, and mark locations where partners were needed.



Facilitators lead Brownfield Revitalization Community of Practice group discussion during Delaware River Watershed “All Partners” meeting.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Meet with partners to build on shared priorities.
- Assess ongoing initiatives to avoid duplication of effort.
- Continue identifying potential projects, as well as opportunities for coordination and collaboration with other initiatives.
- Start to define a common geographic area to focus efforts.
- Define a shared vision and goals to guide the work, while being prepared to amend as new partners come on board.
- Do GIS mapping of all Agency and local projects and activities.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Start with listening. Meet with EJ and non-EJ focused community-based organizations as early in the process as possible to hear their priorities. Work with leaders from these organizations to connect any proposed plans with existing efforts. Where is the overlap between their interests and what you’re proposing? A thorough analysis of these connections should be done with all relevant organizations at the table.



PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

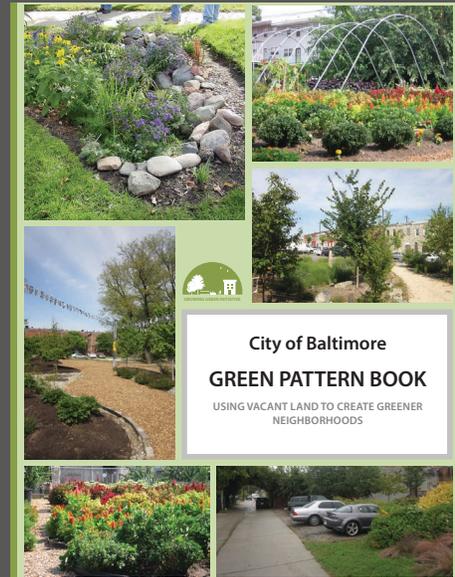
PATAPSCO WATERSHED/BALTIMORE REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP MAPPING PROJECT

The Patapsco Watershed/Baltimore Regional Partnership has developed several resources to document and map existing efforts in their geographic area of interest, including:

The Green Pattern Book: The Baltimore Office of Sustainability believes one of the biggest issues threatening social, economic and environmental vitality in Baltimore is the presence of 30,000 vacant lots. Funded by the U.S. Forest Service, the Green Pattern Book identifies eight types of vacant lot greening projects – long-term and short-term, resource-intensive and simple.

Design competition: Through a design competition run and supported by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, Baltimore City and EPA, design professionals and NGOs came together and propose designs for what can be done to address vacant lots across Baltimore. Winning designs are funded to design completion and construction (underway).

GIS-mapping: A GIS-mapping tool based on the Green Pattern Book, *The Green Pattern Registry*, shows where a proposed project might fit best. The tool currently maps all community-managed open space and existing and potential green stormwater interventions. It will ultimately map existing and potential projects for all eight green patterns. The mapping also identifies potential partners -- agencies and groups working in the area.



GREEN-DUWAMISH RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

Washington State

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Lead Agency: U.S. Forest Service
- Designation Year: 2013
- Key Initiatives: Improve quality of life and environmental justice for tribal communities, support salmon habitat recovery, and enhance citizen-based stewardship.

SITUATION

The Green-Duwamish River Watershed in Seattle, Washington, provides critical habitat for salmon, including some species listed under the Endangered Species Act. Many agencies and organizations in the area already focus on habitat restoration and salmon recovery; the UW Partnership provides a way to connect the restoration work with the health and environmental justice concerns of many communities in the watershed.

The watershed includes fishing and hunting areas for several federally recognized tribes and is among the most ecologically, socially and economically diverse watersheds in the Pacific Northwest. It also includes industrial areas, urban fringe and small rural communities, tribal treaty lands and densely forested private and national forest lands.

APPROACH

The U.S. Forest Service collaborated with EPA and the Natural Resources Conservation Service to build the Green-Duwamish UW Partnership. The UW Partnership provides an opportunity for a close working relationship with existing stakeholder groups such as the Washington Water Resource Inventory Area 9. Early stakeholder outreach by the three federal agencies identified a need to provide greater connections among existing partners rather than creating a new structure. Thus, the UW Partnership's approach focuses on a collective impact model; plugging into the work of existing stakeholder groups and attending their meetings and events. The U.S. Forest Service funds the Green-Duwamish UW Partnership's Ambassador

“After initial meetings of the federal agencies, our priority was taking the pulse of organizations in the watershed that were already working on water, tribal and environmental justice issues.”

– AMBASSADOR TRACY STANTON

and has invested in research and partnership groups in the watershed that support the UW Partnership's objectives. All three federal partners provide resources and time to support existing efforts and the growing UW Partnership.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

UW Partnership efforts have focused on:

- Prioritizing and addressing environmental justice concerns in the lower Duwamish watershed.
- Advising and supporting regional participants in funding the implementation of a watershed-based salmon recovery plan.
- Evaluating citizen-based stewardship activities for best practices, and testing techniques for expanding existing project work and recruiting partners.
- Synthesizing current restoration activity to better understand how citizen-based stewardship activities can support broader watershed and ecosystem goals for clean water.
- Supporting the update of the Duwamish Blueprint for Salmon Recovery.
- Developing and testing a new and replicable framework for quantitative and qualitative evaluation of the social and cultural benefits of ecosystem services.
- Collaborating with and supporting the groups focusing on healthy waters/healthy people initiatives in the watershed.

An effective, dynamic urban waters partnership requires a committed leadership team, broad partner support and diverse stakeholder representation.



PHASE 2

FORGE PARTNERSHIPS

An effective, dynamic urban waters partnership requires a committed leadership team, broad partner support and diverse stakeholder representation. Once partners are on board, Phase 2 focuses on making sure people can communicate easily, share information effectively and make decisions efficiently. Through their constituencies, local partners also pave the way for authentic, meaningful community engagement.

STEP 4: DEVELOP A STRONG CORE TEAM

Urban Waters projects bring together many groups and organizations. The Los Angeles River Watershed UW Partnership in California, for example, includes more than 30 partner organizations – federal, state and local governments, nonprofits and community-based groups – focusing on a range of restoration projects, studies and outreach in the Los Angeles area. In Baltimore, the UW Partnership created a strong steering committee building on pre-existing relationships to form a multi-stakeholder coalition, deepen trust and develop activities to guide the local urban waters work.

Managing and coordinating project efforts effectively is essential to partnership success. For this, an Urban Waters Ambassador is needed. Support for an Ambassador can be structured in several different ways. In some cases, the Ambassador is sponsored by a federal agency, or there may be local partners who can sponsor or serve in an Ambassador role.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Designate an Ambassador and team members to manage and coordinate the local urban waters partnership.
- Establish agreed-upon methods of communication, coordination, collaboration and decision-making for partnership activities.
- Build in flexibility so that approaches and tools can be adjusted and refined over time.
- Ensure buy-in from federal, state and local partners at both the local and national level.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Ask environmental justice organizations and other civic groups in the Partnership for their perspectives and recommendations on how best to ensure effective communication, coordination, collaboration and decision-making. Include and involve leaders from your target communities among the core project team. Recognize, though, that underfunded community based groups may not have adequate staff resources to support their own work, let alone support an Urban Waters Partnership.

The Ambassador is at the heart of every Urban Waters Partnership.

URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP AMBASSADORS

Urban Waters Ambassadors are the glue of an Urban Waters Partnership, playing key roles that establish a framework for short and long-term success. An Ambassador is typically one person, but can also be multiple people to ensure that all roles are served.

Because the Ambassador's roles are critical to a Partnership's accomplishment, the Urban Waters Ambassadors Program was created to elevate and define the position as well as support it via the Urban Waters Federal Partnership and Urban Waters Learning Network.

AMBASSADORS WEAR MANY HATS, SERVING AS:

Liaison / Point of Contact – The Ambassador is the primary liaison and point of contact between the government and local Partnership organizations and efforts. The Ambassador builds solid relationships with federal and local entities as well as with representatives of the communities the Partnership is intended to serve, glean and communicating insights about priorities and needs on both sides, with a goal of identifying and aligning available federal tools and resources and advancing projects that strengthen the local environment and economy.

Coordinator / Leader – There are many moving parts in an Urban Waters Partnership and the Ambassador is charged with knowing what is happening and ensuring coordination between federal agencies and other organizations. The Ambassador assumes a leadership role, providing support for strategic planning and project implementation and catalyzing completion of on-the-ground projects.

Facilitator / Convener – The Ambassador convenes and facilitates meetings and conversations that might otherwise not take place between existing and prospective partners, seeking fresh collaboration outside of traditional stakeholders; for example, between federal and/or city government and community groups, or community groups working on parallel issues but not yet working together. Regular meetings help ensure that issues, collaboration opportunities, and creative thinking can emerge.

Messenger / Reporter – The Ambassador is at the heart of every Urban Waters Partnership and is the most informed. As such, the Ambassador is charged with passing along information to partnership organizations about funding opportunities, conferences, meetings, and more. The Ambassador also tracks and shares project status and accomplishments, including initiating media outreach to shine light on a success.

THE URBAN WATERS LEARNING NETWORK

The Urban Waters Learning Network (Learning Network) is a peer-to-peer network of people and organizations working to restore and revitalize local waterways, many located in socioeconomically challenged and environmentally overburdened urban communities. With funding from EPA's Urban Waters Program, Groundwork USA and River Network coordinate the Learning Network and offer decades of experience helping local organizations with on-the-ground projects and capacity building. As Learning Network members, Ambassadors access Webinars, networking, mentorship, and tools, as well as technical resource and funding information to benefit their Partnership.

UrbanWatersLearningNetwork.org

PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

MIDDLE BLUE RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP IN KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI

The Heartland Conservation Alliance (HCA) chose a Collective Impact approach to advance its watershed restoration goals. This approach develops the capacities of all partner organizations to solve a social problem around a collective vision. As the “node organization,” HCA organizes efforts, convening and facilitating meetings of conservation partners and guiding their cooperative efforts through shared goals and measures. EPA’s Roberta Vogel-Leutung noted that the process slowly builds trust and a sense of shared responsibility among partner organizations. “Collective impact is the idea that you’re coming together with a shared vision for change that’s not about any one of your particular organizations and what they do, but about the larger vision of something. In our case, this was the vision of conservation for the Blue River.” Through this collaborative process, HCA was able to successfully secure a full-time VISTA member who will work on projects to build partner capacities, advance shared conservation goals and address solutions to poverty.



STEP 5: DEVELOP A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND MEDIA STRATEGY

As local urban waters partnerships evaluate potential projects and focus on next steps, ideas and possibilities need to be shared with local stakeholders. To do this, the partnership needs an effective community engagement strategy. The goal is to provide regular opportunities for people to share their thoughts, concerns and priorities with project partners. Building on the community engagement approach, local partners may want to develop a coordinated communications and media strategy to reach diverse stakeholders, share collective successes and build broad support for the UW Partnership goals.



KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Invest time in meeting with community members and listening to their concerns, priorities and project ideas.
- Develop a community engagement strategy and update it over time, as needed.
- Use a variety of outreach venues – in person, community gathering places, local radio and public access television, community and ethnic newspapers, printed materials and online – to share local partnership and project information with as many people as possible.
- Consider when communities may benefit from translation services.
- When partners are ready, develop the partnership's urban waters story and an appropriate media strategy to share the story and build support for improving watershed health.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Community outreach and engagement efforts should reflect an understanding of local history and recent environmental, economic and social challenges. Propose strategies that involve and benefit community members, and demonstrate the potential value of the Partnership itself. Use media and peer-to-peer approaches to drive participation, support and recognition.

Develop strategies that interact and communicate with existing civic, faith, school, youth and recreational groups. Reach out to local ethnic press (radio, newspapers, websites, public access TV).

PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

MIDDLE RIO GRANDE/ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

The Middle Rio Grande/Albuquerque Urban Waters Federal Partnership has engaged in a number of media outreach efforts to locally promote urban waters projects. The Partnership most frequently uses simple channels, such as newsletters, to directly communicate relevant information to interested parties and encourage productive engagement. Newsletter content often includes stories about: urban waters news, upcoming events, resources, and funding opportunities, as well as news from other Urban Waters Federal Partnership sites that might be of interest to those working in the urban waters field. Additionally, the partnership submits articles to the La Montañita Coop monthly member newsletter, which has extensive reach to people in Albuquerque, Santa Fe and Gallup. When it comes to attaining media coverage, the Partnership advises that projects with concrete events that matter to a wide audience often receive more media coverage than those with less concrete outputs.

STEP 6: SUSTAIN CORE PARTNERS AND FORGE NEW RELATIONSHIPS

Breaking down silos is a primary goal of each UW Partnership. This helps ensure the collective efforts of all participating agencies are focused and responsive to the needs of the community. It is important to establish key points of contact from each entity upfront, to keep the lines of communication open, and also to think about key roles that are best suited for each partner. For example, businesses may be best suited to provide funding for events, while NGOs may be able to provide technical assistance.

To engage businesses and foundations, it's important to begin by thinking “*What is the business case?*” when it comes to restoring urban waters. This means identifying how improved waterways, restored green spaces, and other urban waters efforts in your community directly lead to 1) economic growth and 2) improved quality of life. These two themes drive an influx of talent and opportunity for businesses – particularly those in smaller cities – and enable them to better compete with corporate competition in larger cities.

To best connect with local businesses, begin by figuring out where they gather, what they're interested in, and which local resources (individuals, foundations, consulting firms) they find credible. Schedule presentations with these businesses to discuss how urban waters involvement leads to economic opportunity specific to their interests, and how they can get involved. Include the organizations and foundations that they find credible in this process to provide an even stronger pitch.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Request that state and federal agency partners provide regular updates regarding agency programs and efforts relevant to the partnership's work.
- To ensure access to all available resources, make sure that federal agency partners include headquarters staff in Washington, D.C., as well as regional representatives.
- Identify other potential resource partners such as community and regional foundations, local businesses and corporations.
- Involve business and foundation leadership by giving them a position of power from the beginning.
- Be in the mindset of doing ‘what works for the community’ and not just ‘what works for a business.’

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

It can be challenging to sustain momentum, especially when local partners lack sufficient resources, staff and political influence. It is important therefore to continue the work of building relationships, trust and good communication. Even during periods of inactivity it is important to stay in touch and keep core partners informed.

Actively seek opportunities to support environmental justice organizations through engagement with local foundations and businesses that may be able to provide capacity funding for technical, in-kind, and political support for urban waters initiatives.



PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA/DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

The Greater Philadelphia Area/Delaware River Watershed Partnership has developed Communities of Practice to encourage cross-sector communication and collaboration on key areas of interest.

Motivated by shared concern and interest, these groups of partners are working on five priority issues – water quality and quantity, brownfields revitalization, climate resilience, trails and open space, and river restoration – and relying on regular interactions to make shared progress.



PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

GRAND RIVER/GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN

The Grand River/Grand Rapids Partnership recognizes the restoration of the historic rapids in the Grand River, running through downtown Grand Rapids, is the catalyst for an exciting opportunity to revitalize the river corridor and create significant social, environmental, and economic benefits.

The partnership consisting of members from Grand Rapids WhiteWater, River Restoration Inc., The City of Grand Rapids, Downtown Grand Rapids, Inc. and many others is currently working to develop a shared vision for the restored river, downtown area, and the river banks. There is deliberate focus on raising needed funds, receiving required permits, and putting in place a sustainable long-term organizational structure to manage the restoration and revitalization effort.

GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA/DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Lead Agencies: U.S. Forest Service, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), U.S. National Park Service
- Designation Year: 2013
- Key Initiatives: Revitalize waterfronts, connect communities to waterfronts, advance environmental justice initiatives, and foster local action.

SITUATION

The Greater Philadelphia Area/Delaware River UW Partnership covers a large region spanning four cities in three states (Philadelphia and Chester, Pennsylvania; Camden, New Jersey; and Wilmington, Delaware). From the beginning, this Partnership has sought to boost efforts already underway among many organizations across all sectors – governmental, NGOs, community, private sector and academic – to make connections and help maximize federal resources. After first convening federal partners from across the region,

“Relationship building has been really important for advancing this partnership’s work. As people have come together to work as a team, they’ve made personal connections, they’ve seen real progress. Everyone is very responsive to each other’s needs.”

– AMBASSADOR MICHAEL LEFF

a small planning team formed. The team includes an Ambassador and several federal staff who meet regularly in person and by phone to advance local partnership efforts.

APPROACH

The planning team used various communication and relationship-building approaches to enhance collaborative action on water-related issues across the region. The core team held initial listening sessions in each of the four cities to better understand community interests, issues and needs. From these sessions, the team identified five priority issues – water quality and quantity, brownfields revitalization, climate resilience, trails and open space, and river restoration. Environmental justice and environmental education are broader topics spanning each of the five priority issues.

Following an all-partners meeting in April 2014, the team has organized five Communities of Practice to encourage communication and collaboration across organizational and geographic “silos.” These Communities of Practice will focus on the five priority issues identified above.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

This UW Partnership maintains a master contact list, with 360 people representing 120 organizations and agencies. The core team has met with area communities and identified top-priority issues across the watershed. The “all-partners meeting” engaged and inspired many people, connecting them across sectors and cities. This UW Partnership is looking forward to supporting projects identified through the Communities of Practice collaborative discussions.



PHASE 3

PURSUE PROJECTS & ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST

With strong partnerships and stakeholder support in place, Phase 3 focuses on making urban waters projects happen to support the watershed and communities. Phase 3 is highly collaborative, bringing partners together with local stakeholders to implement the priorities.

STEP 7: DEVELOP A CLEAR WORK PLAN BUILDING ON LOCAL PRIORITIES, ESPECIALLY THOSE IDENTIFIED BY ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE DISTRESSED COMMUNITIES

The work begins with prioritizing projects and activities of interest. In Louisiana, for example, the Lake Pontchartrain Area Watersheds Partnership followed stakeholder outreach efforts with partner meetings to review and prioritize potential projects. The group used agreed-upon criteria to select top-priority projects. Projects that did not make the short list were kept for reconsideration in the future.

With partnership projects prioritized and stakeholder support in place, work plan development can move forward. A clear project work plan reflects a detailed understanding of local conditions, community priorities, resource availability, and key project deadlines and timeframes.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Follow up with local stakeholders to confirm the need for proposed partnership projects.
- Prioritize projects of interest and key issues of concern.
- Develop a clear work plan for each project or activity group. Include key deadlines, partner responsibilities and proposed outcomes.
- Make sure work plans also identify any uncertainties, potential challenges or other issues.
- Build some flexibility into each work plan so that projects and activities can incorporate changing community conditions and other factors over time.
- Ensure all needed technical expertise is located and secured.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Discuss relevant projects, activities and work plan priorities with environmental justice groups early on; invite input, assess level of interest, and encourage their support. Make sure the Partnership's review process includes priority projects and activities identified by local environmental justice and civic groups, even if they cannot consistently be at the table.

Environmental justice groups may be addressing many issues; it may take time to engage them in urban waters activities, especially if funding is scarce. Keep lines of communication open and be ready to work with them when they are able and interested.

STEP 8: IDENTIFY AND SECURE FUNDING

Partner organizations – regional associations, state and federal agencies, NGOs, and the private sector – can help identify and secure funding for priority partnership projects. The UW Ambassador can also play a lead role in identifying and securing funding. Additional research can identify other potential resources. For example, EPA's Environmental Finance Center is a resource for strategic planning for funding.

Resource identification is also an ongoing process. Funding can come from a variety of sources. Identifying and sharing funding priorities can help connect funders with specific funding needs. For example, the Northwest Indiana Area Partnership revisits its project work plans quarterly, seeking out new funding opportunities to support partners' efforts. It also regularly puts area organizations in touch with each other, enabling them to maximize resources and collaborate on project activities.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Ensure the Ambassador is pursuing priority funding sources.
- Frame and position priority projects so they meet specific proposal and program criteria.
- Foster partner collaboration on funding applications and proposals.
- Track the availability of new and upcoming resources, key funding deadlines, proposal requirements and other information using searchable databases or other tools.
- Help funding recipients collaborate and connect with others.
- Identifying and addressing barriers to applying for and securing funding including challenges with meeting match requirements.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Finding adequate resources is an ongoing priority and challenge for environmental justice groups working in distressed areas. Urban Waters Partnerships can help by keeping the groups updated on available partner funding, capacity building, technical assistance, and other resources. By offering networking opportunities and sharing information about opportunities and benefits of the Partnership or a specific project, you can help open the door to local foundations and businesses, and other federal funding opportunities – increasing the likelihood and level of EJ groups' involvement.



PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

LOS ANGELES RIVER URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP

The LA River Watershed UW Partnership is collaborating with the Federal Reserve Bank (FRB), which works to ensure that economic investment results in equitable community benefits. The UW Partnership's work with the FRB has led to significant connections with stakeholders in the watershed. For example, the FRB has connected the UW Partnership with the financial industry and community development organizations, as well as transportation-related initiatives. The UW Partnership shares the FRB's focus on equitable development since unstructured investment in the watershed could gentrify neighborhoods and displace long-time residents.

STEP 9:

LAUNCH PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST AND BUILD MOMENTUM

A well orchestrated project kickoff — with coordinated events, media coverage and community gatherings — is a vital opportunity to energize project partners and stakeholders and to raise a project’s profile. It also provides a way to recognize the initial work of project partners and funders. Project kickoffs also build momentum for upcoming activities and long-term goals. Regular follow-up events over the life of a project then help sustain and build on this momentum.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Make sure to coordinate with project partners and local stakeholders to maximize attendance and support for project kickoffs and follow-up events.
- Include early achievements to celebrate, sustain the project’s profile in the community and build support moving forward.
- Revisit project work plans regularly and adjust project activities and milestones as needed.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Host project kickoffs and events in the communities with environmental justice concerns and engage influential community leaders as speakers to send a clear message that they are an integral part of the Partnership.

Seek project activities that can address multiple community priorities. For example, stormwater management approaches could include green infrastructure design, stream and river restoration efforts, flood mitigation, access improvements, and enhanced community green space.



PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

SOUTH PLATTE URBAN WATERS PARTNERSHIP / DENVER, COLORADO

Covering 6,600 square miles, the South Platte Urban Water Partnership includes a range of landscapes and communities with different connections to water. Early projects include a Denver Metro Water Quality Assessment and regional messaging to change behaviors to improve water quality.

Looking forward, the South Platte Partnership is focusing on establishing a local entity to provide long-term sustainability of the partnership into the future. This locally driven entity would carry on the partnership’s emphasis on water quality, water protection and enhancement of the ecological infrastructure systems that affect water resources in the Denver metro area.

For years, a vibrant network of paddlers has worked to expand non-motorized boating opportunities in northwest Indiana. They identified a need for wheelchair-accessible boat launches and began raising awareness about the issue — and seeking funding to address it. In 2015, Michigan City installed the state’s first ADA-compliant launch and other nearby municipalities are raising funds for additional launches. Urban Waters federal partners were able to provide some assistance, such as facilitation, assistance with the permitting process and the promotion of the ribbon-cutting event all while behind the scenes. It is important to know when it is appropriate to work behind the scenes and empower partners rather than overstepping partner boundaries.

STEP 10: STRENGTHEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT

Once a project is up and running, check in frequently with local leaders and organizations. Ask a basic question – “how are we doing?” – and follow up with sustained dialogue and ongoing community engagement and outreach efforts. Incorporate their feedback into the project’s community engagement strategy at regular intervals, and adjust the project’s work plan as needed. This helps ensure that each partnership project continues to address local needs and enjoys broad community support.

Effective communication can be a significant tool in building collaborative relationships over time. Communication and outreach strategies may need to be tailored to align with cultural and professional norms of different partner organizations. For example, while email may work well for agency staff, community leaders may be more responsive to a phone call or an in-person meeting. Similarly, outreach approaches can be adapted to bring different partners to the table and keep them invested. Keeping people informed, even during periods of inactivity, and engaging them in decision-making will build investment in the process over time.

Neglected urban waterways often flow through neglected, distressed communities. Project objectives should seek to support local community leaders, grow their leadership capacities, and build effective and sustainable community leadership. This support makes community revitalization and urban waters restoration possible. Ultimately, the goal is to support local communities and help them grow their leadership and be successful in their efforts to improve and revitalize their communities and restore local urban waters.

Project goals and objectives should align with broader community empowerment goals such as:

- Raise the profile of neglected sites in communities that are adjacent to neglected local urban waterways.
- Build the leadership capacity and raise the profile of local community leaders.
- Help identify resources (human, physical improvements, grant opportunities).
- Design urban waters projects to dovetail with local community revitalization and restoration goals.
- Leverage federal resources and influence to better position local leaders and local urban waters projects for success.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Identify community leaders at established civic groups and organizations to ensure multiple goals are being considered. For example, assess opportunities for integrating local urban waters project goals as part of broader community revitalization goals.
- Continue to identify additional project partners and environmental justice groups and reach out to them.
- Continue to evaluate the use of a variety of outreach venues – in person, attendance at local events and meetings, local radio and public access television, community and ethnic newspapers, printed materials and online – to share partnership and project information with as many people as possible.
- Regularly update the project’s community engagement strategy and work plan.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Check in frequently and stay personally engaged with local community partners to see how things are going and maintain trust and credibility.

Think of the Urban Waters Partnership as a way to strengthen, elevate and empower local community leaders who can sustain the Partnership’s work plan going forward.

NORTHWEST INDIANA PARTNERSHIP

Indiana

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- **Lead Agencies:** U.S. Forest Service, EPA and National Park Service
- **Designation Year:** 2011
- **Key Initiatives:** Assist in the development of local watershed management plans and their implementation for a healthy Lake Michigan: provide tools and resources that support and empower local partners to develop innovative projects and new collaborations; engage and build trust with municipalities and local environmental organizations, especially those without a long history of successful partnering with other organizations; facilitate in the pooling of resources using a non-federal Ambassador.

SITUATION

In the 20th century, the extraordinary natural landscape of dunes, marshes and rivers in northwest Indiana's Lake Michigan watershed was modified extensively for industry and other uses. Today, while some remarkable natural features remain, area waterways are still overlooked due to the effect of long time industrial, agricultural and urban uses.

Communication and collaboration among local governments and organizations and state and federal agencies has historically been challenging. This UW

“Consistent communication has been one of the most compelling things since the start of the Partnership. We’ve been able to tackle projects and challenges with greater force together than we ever could have alone.”

– AMBASSADOR NATALIE JOHNSON

Partnership has been building momentum since the U.S. Forest Service funded a full-time Ambassador to facilitate communication. Ongoing discussions and relationship building have built trust and strengthened collaborative efforts.

APPROACH

Federal agencies in the partnership are careful to support local efforts and share successes without taking credit. Federal partners facilitate local community partners to set partnership priorities, and offer resources and support to accomplish projects identified by local partners. The Ambassador regularly attends watershed meetings and relays updates on local initiatives back to federal agency partners. The partnership looks for ways to grow capacities such as grant writing in local organizations. Quarterly partnership meetings facilitate discussion on collaboration opportunities, funding sources, and ways for federal agencies to provide technical support for local projects. The Ambassador is continually reaching out to new partners and promoting new collaborations. The position is non-federal and has helped build trust at a more rapid pace.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

An environmental assessment of the East Branch of the Little Calumet River is moving forward, the result of collaboration between the National Park Service, the U.S. Forest Service and the Ambassador. Local partners have long prioritized this project, but the National Park Service lacked staff resources to conduct it on their own. A project to improve Jeorse Park Beach in East Chicago, Indiana, brings the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to work alongside local partners to address unhealthy E. coli levels at one of the nation's top 10 dirtiest beaches. Other projects, captured in a dynamic work plan, are moving forward as collaborations continue.



PHASE 4

MEASURE & COMMUNICATE RESULTS

As urban waters projects progress, partners should regularly take a step back and review project activities. Part of the review should focus on what is working well and how to strengthen those efforts. The other part should look closely at ongoing issues and potential challenges for the future. Reviewing these findings can provide new opportunities for partnership collaboration and innovation. To ensure transparency, recommendations should be widely shared with project partners.

STEP 11: MEASURE RESULTS AND ADAPT

A comprehensive review will include qualitative short-term and long-term measures, such as partner and stakeholder interviews, as well as quantitative criteria, such as number of trees planted, reduction in sources of water pollution, improvement in water quality, or tons of trash removed. Together, measures such as these help each UW Partnership understand how people are doing and feeling about projects as well as their on-the-ground or in-the-water impacts. In addition to measuring outcomes, the partnership will find ways to recognize and celebrate the effort invested by partners and community members throughout the process. Taking time to reflect on how the process and partnership has evolved can offer insights on how to be more effective going forward.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Review project activities and efforts – project milestones are a good time to evaluate what has worked and what can be improved.
- Incorporate feedback on project review findings from partners and local stakeholders into project work plans and other materials.
- Learn from other projects and activities, including other UW Partnership efforts.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Use regular check-ins with environmental justice representatives on the core team to evaluate progress and results for improving conditions in their communities.

Look to measure quantitative improvements (such as number of trees planted, amount of garbage removed, area of waterfront access improved), as well as qualitative improvements (such as local groups getting the ear of decision-makers, funders and businesses joining efforts to revitalize communities, and positive local press).

PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

PATAPSCO WATERSHED / BALTIMORE REGION PARTNERSHIP

The Patapsco Watershed / Baltimore Region Partnership asks four questions about each of its projects and activities: where to do it, what to do, how to do it, and how well did it work?

When developing its Green Pattern Book, the City of Baltimore (part of the Patapsco Watershed / Baltimore Region Partnership) tried to answer four key questions about the development of vacant lots: where to do it, what to do, how to do it, and how to know if it worked well. To measure these results, the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance developed a mapping tool that tracks the development of these lots, and codes them by the green patterns that guided their development. These projects can be tracked at water.bnijfi.org/map.

STEP 12: SHARE SUCCESSES

Getting the word out about urban waters project successes is critically important to raising and sustaining a UW Partnership's profile locally and nationally. In turn, project publicity can lead to new partnership opportunities as well as additional resources.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Reach out to local and regional media to share project successes.
- Self-publicize – use project websites and social media to get the word out.
- Consider traditional outreach as well – fact sheets, annual reports, newsletters, flyers, videos and other materials can all be effective.
- Host regular calls so that all partners and local stakeholders are aware of project successes.
- Leverage project successes to pursue additional funding and other resources.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Call out the hard work of EJ organizations and others on the ground as part of publicizing project successes and take care not to appear to take credit for others' work because it falls under the Partnership umbrella. This can undermine the relationships you have worked hard to build. Reviewing promotional messages and visuals in advance with your EJ representatives can help ensure their preferences and priorities are reflected. Consider inviting local community organizations to be the face of projects they are directly supporting.

Use project successes to bring local partners together. For example, a strong project outcome may convince a skeptical community on the sidelines to jump in and participate.

PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

ANACOSTIA WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP / WASHINGTON, D.C. & MARYLAND

Projects that integrate multiple objectives can generate interest from many different types of organizations and can pursue diverse funding streams. The Anacostia River Farm: a Center for Agriculture, Recreation, and Education (ARF: CARE) is an effort to develop urban farms along the Anacostia River. The goal is to provide the area with high-quality, affordable, locally produced food as well as education and recreation opportunities.

Initial funding from the District of Columbia and federal agencies has made the project possible and will also enable the project to leverage additional funding. The University of the District of Columbia has municipal funding to develop demonstration farms at three different locations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is providing technical assistance to design and implement a natural play area. Thinking beyond typical funding streams, the team is now working with the DC Arts Commission to explore how functional public art such as cisterns can be incorporated on site. The goal is to help city residents grow and eat locally and youth to learn, in part, about the water cycle and stormwater pollution impacts.

PATAPSCO WATERSHED/ BALTIMORE REGION PARTNERSHIP

Maryland

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Lead Agency: U.S. Forest Service
- Designation Year: 2011
- Key Initiatives: Manage land to restore waters, and remove blight to promote community revitalization and expand open space.

SITUATION

Ecosystem restoration and community revitalization efforts – including a Baltimore Ecosystem Study funded by the National Science Foundation – had been underway in Maryland’s Patapsco River watershed for some time. People involved in the study and area NGOs had been collaborating for years when the U.S. Forest Service’s Northern Research Station led efforts to form the Baltimore Urban Waters Partnership.

There are over 30,000 vacant lots in Baltimore. This UW Partnership pursued projects to map open space and develop the Green Pattern Book, a resource that identifies innovative “green” ways to revitalize these areas and reduce the number of vacant lots.

“It can be challenging working with a large group of people with different interests. Finding the shared areas of interest and focusing in on them is important.”

– AMBASSADOR MICHAEL GALVIN

APPROACH

Through this UW Partnership, federal agencies were able to collaborate closely and build on existing relationships. Although some people had worked together before, it was new to have agency staff in the same room and for the community to work directly with them. The UW Partnership shared the outcomes of the mapping project widely so that partners and others could begin using the information to inform their own work. Additionally, it has leveraged other related initiatives, such as the mayor’s initiative to make Baltimore’s Inner Harbor swimmable and fishable by 2020, to help advance local partnership goals.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

This UW Partnership’s Green Pattern Book and GIS mapping project have been two major recent outcomes; materials and resources are posted on the project website. The UW Partnership also hosts an online resource center for partners to help track project information. The Baltimore Sun has also begun writing about the success of the Partnership. Now that the maps and the Green Pattern Book are available, the UW Partnership is looking forward to project implementation and addressing Baltimore’s vacant lots.



PHASE 5

SUSTAIN MOMENTUM

Urban Waters Partnerships can sustain momentum by celebrating interim successes, keeping several initiatives moving forward simultaneously, and lining up a future project or activity to engage the partners once the current initiative is complete.

Projects are often about the day-to-day details – managing meetings, achieving milestones and tackling resource challenges. It is also important to keep the long term in mind. Some urban waters projects may last for months. Others may run for years. In both cases, people and relationships are what make all partnership work possible. Engaging the partners in celebrating and planning future activities can help maintain momentum. Sustaining project and partnership momentum means making sure partners and local stakeholders remain excited and engaged, feel heard and listened to, and are committed to the future.

STEP 13: SUSTAIN RELATIONSHIPS

Sustaining relationships ranges from meaningful daily interactions – checking in with staff, hosting conference calls – to creating space and time for people to get together, share ideas, strengthen relationships, make new connections, and have fun. In 2013 and 2014, for example, the Greater Philadelphia Area / Delaware River Watershed Partnership hosted canoe paddling events in each of the Partnership’s four cities. More than 2,000 youth – many of them canoeing for the first time – joined project partners on the rivers. The events were so popular that they are now being held annually.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Consider finding ways to highlight and involve partners in successful programs. This gives them more incentive to stay involved and play an active role.
- Quarterly or annual meetings provide a way for partners and local stakeholders to discuss all of the issues related to the UW Partnership, including process and management issues, as well as project details.
- Consider one-on-one meetings to check in. People may not feel comfortable sharing all of their thoughts in a group setting.
- Relationship building also benefits from less structured approaches – picnics, fundraisers and volunteer days – to bring people together.
- Trainings build people’s capacities and spur their interests. Similarly, visits to see other community projects in action can inspire and yield new insights.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Host project meetings locally, at times and places recommended by community leaders. Facilitate ongoing in-person opportunities for project partners to connect with and learn from community members about current conditions, needs, resources, and priorities, recognizing they may change over time. Check in regularly with local leaders to see how project efforts are being perceived in the community.

- Find opportunities to link projects with other related initiatives in the area, welcoming in new partners and stakeholders.
- Consider the results of periodic assessments and measures. Adapt approaches as needed based on results.

STEP 14: INSTITUTIONALIZE THE APPROACH

Revisiting a UW Partnership’s organizational structure to ensure its sustainability over the long term is vitally important. Confirming decision-making procedures and updating organizational roles and responsibilities are key components of this step. The Greater Philadelphia Area / Delaware River Watershed Partnership, for example, established a core planning team led by an Ambassador to ensure sustained coordination to advance local partnership efforts.

KEY ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

- Analyze whether to incorporate as a nonprofit organization. Consider the cost and benefits of this approach.
- Make sure plans are well discussed and have widespread buy-in from everyone involved or everyone who needs to be involved. Sharing roles and responsibilities across partner organizations is one way to make this happen.
- Consider the big picture as well as specific projects. The UW Partnership’s mission and its goals and objectives will likely need adjustment over time.
- Adopt designated focus areas – brownfields revitalization, water quality, vacant lot reuse, community capacity-building – as a good way to target grant-writing and fundraising efforts and distribute workloads evenly.
- Develop protocols to standardize and streamline administrative activities. These might include position descriptions, voting procedures, meeting ground rules, and style and communication guides, among others.
- Establish a long-term approach to funding the Ambassador.

TIPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES WITH ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE CONCERNS...

Make sure community leaders remain an integral part of the organization’s decision-making and activities over the long term.

Be open with the community regarding any proposed organizational changes in the future. Because relationships and trust take time to build, avoid frequent changes in Partnership leadership. When unavoidable, take care to help build trust for the next person. Introduce them personally and brief them on the history and importance of hands-on engagement with EJ organizations.

PROJECT PERSPECTIVES

LOS ANGELES RIVER URBAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

Building on an institution like the LA Conservation Corps (LACC) is a good way to further institutionalize the Partnership. The LACC has long been a leader of workforce development among youth in urban Los Angeles. The LACC River Corps program is key to the expansion of Los Angeles River recreation supported by the UW Partnership. These men and women, ages 18 to 24, build their skills in conservation ecology education, and complete swift water rescue training before taking visitors on paddling tours of the river. Recently, Urban Waters partner agency the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service partnered with LACC to expand their River Corps program through the National Urban Wildlife Refuge initiative. LACC is currently working with the UW Partnership and local organizations focused on opportunities for youth, building a continuum of river-based education programs leading to jobs in environmental stewardship.

SOUTH PLATTE URBAN WATERSHEDS PARTNERSHIP

Denver, Colorado

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Lead Agency: U.S. Forest Service and EPA
- Designation Year: 2012
- Key Initiatives: Water Quality, Water Protection, Water Awareness

SITUATION

The South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership area encompasses over 6,600 square miles in Colorado. While the South Platte River is the main water body in the basin, it is fed by a number of tributaries and lakes originating in the mountains southwest of Denver. The Denver metropolitan area is growing rapidly, and the South Platte River is a major source of drinking water.

Urbanization, drought, wildfire and flood activity have contributed to the degradation and loss of ecological resilience in the South Platte River watershed. Recent wildfire activity (2002-2013), fueled by prolonged drought, has resulted in the need for expensive mitigation of the effects of post-fire erosion and sedimentation of drinking water reservoirs. Recent floods (2013) delivered large amounts of sediment and debris into tributaries and the South Platte River. Meanwhile, urban water quality is affected by point and non-point pollution sources, contributing contaminants such as bacteria, nitrogen, and phosphorous. Compounding these issues are the known and anticipated impacts of climate change.

APPROACH

Providing a holistic view, identifying needs, building professional relationships, providing tools for partners, building a portfolio of successful projects, and growing local roots.

PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

Focused projects: Supporting innovative partner projects such as a regional water quality messaging campaign focused on dog waste and phosphorous fertilizer, implementation of green infrastructure amenities in environmental justice neighborhoods, creation and administration of outdoor classrooms, and many other innovative projects some of which were funded by EPA Urban Waters grants.

Larger collaborations: In addition to these focused projects, a collaboration of 16 organizations including The Greenway Foundation, the City and County of Denver, Urban Drainage and Flood Control District, and others have raised \$30 million for the implementation of projects identified in Denver's River Vision Implementation Plan. Projects include a new Art Bridge (bike/ped) across the river, new riverfront parks with water quality features, in-stream habitat improvements, and reconstruction of bike/ped ramps in a destination riverfront plaza.

A core workgroup is developing a water quality assessment for the Denver Metro area, which will be an online, publicly accessible, and understandable interactive resource. The full partnership continues to build relationships and enhance communication, facilitated by a "geomapping" online portal for spatially tracking partner projects and a systems thinking exercise that identifies organizational priorities.

Local Roots: The South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership is growing local roots through the creation of a new venture that will facilitate transition from a federally-led pilot project to a locally driven organization. Working with local higher education organizations, non-profit groups, and private sector partners, this new enterprise offers opportunities to connect headwaters and urban interests, water quality and quantity dialogues, data and projects, and programs and people.

LAKE PONTCHARTRAIN AREA WATERSHEDS PARTNERSHIP

Louisiana

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHTS

- Lead Agency: EPA
- Designation Year: 2011
- Key Initiatives: Environmental education and outreach, revitalization of green space and associated community revitalization, facilities reconstruction, and enhanced access to Lake Pontchartrain.

SITUATION

The Lake Pontchartrain area in New Orleans, Louisiana, has been the focus of sustainability and resilience initiatives since Hurricane Katrina's devastating impacts in 2005. Building on these efforts, EPA Region 6 led the way to pursue a UW Partnership designation to assist with local restoration efforts, reconnect communities to Lake Pontchartrain, and support environmental education and outreach. The Partnership has five focus areas, including post-Katrina rebuilding projects and other new initiatives building on sustainability and resilience. A federal lead is initially assigned to each project.



Partners working together in the field

APPROACH

EPA funded a full-time Ambassador who normally works for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers New Orleans District. The Ambassador is based at the City of New Orleans' offices and works directly through the Deputy Mayor's office. With the Ambassador in place, this local partnership has been able to move forward on the five initial focus areas in the Pontchartrain Basin. One of the priority projects is the city-led Lafitte Greenway project. It will turn three miles of fallow land into a multi-use trail and linear park that will link several neighborhoods, including communities with environmental justice concerns, to the Mississippi River, Bayou St. John and Lake Pontchartrain.

“One key has been the energy of local communities and organizations. There is a lot of interest in moving forward and making a difference.”

– DANNY WIEGAND, AMBASSADOR

PARTNERSHIP ACTIONS

The Ambassador's close working relationship with city government and the Deputy Mayor has added leverage and visibility to local partnership activities. The Ambassador hosts frequent local partnership meetings and routinely meets independently with many different stakeholders to continue building and sustaining working relationships. The Ambassador and the UW Partnership serve as a focal point for the many community groups and organizations in the area, helping to facilitate discussion and collaboration across agencies and organizations.

FEDERAL AGENCIES IN URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Department of the Army (USACE-DA)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (CDC-HHS)
- Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)
- U.S. Department of Education (ED)
- U.S. Department of Energy: Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy (U.S. DOE)
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (U.S. HUD)
- U.S. Department of the Interior (U.S. DOI)
- U.S. Department of Transportation (U.S. DOT)
- U.S. Economic Development Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce (EDA-DOC)
- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA)
- Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Department of Homeland Security (FEMA-DHS)
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (NIEHS-HHS)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce (NOAA-DOC)



PARTNERSHIP COMMUNITIES

More information about each Urban Waters Partnership location is available at www.urbanwaters.gov.

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PARTICIPATING PARTNER ACRONYMS

ACDE – American Council for Drug Education

ATSDR – Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry

CDC – HHS Centers for Disease Control & Prevention

CNCS – Corporation for National & Community Service

DHS – U.S. Department of Homeland Security

DOC – U.S. Department of Commerce

DOD – U.S. Department of Defense

DOE – U.S. Department of Energy

DOI – U.S. Department of the Interior

DOT – U.S. Department of Transportation

ED – U.S. Department of Education

EDA – DOC Economic Development Administration

EPA – U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

FEMA – Federal Emergency Management Agency (part of DHS)

FWS – DOI Fish & Wildlife Service

HHS – U.S. Department of Health & Human Services

HUD – U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development

NASA – National Aeronautics & Space Administration

NIH – HHS National Institutes for Health

NOAA – DOC National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration

NPS – DOI National Park Service

NRCS – USDA National Resources Conservation Service

NWS – DOC National Weather Service

USACE – U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

USBR – DOI U.S. Bureau of Reclamation

USDA – U.S. Department of Agriculture

USGS – DOI U.S. Geological Survey

RESOURCES

This handbook relies on information resources from the following organizations and publications.

EPA's Urban Waters Federal Partnership. For more information, see <http://www.urbanwaters.gov>.

“Collaborative Assessment Tool,” an article by Russell M. Linden. From the 2002 book *Working Across Boundaries: Making Collaboration Work in Government and Nonprofit Organizations* (Resource C).

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program's Community Tool Box. For more information, see <http://www.nps.gov/ncrc/programs/rtca/helpfultools/Toolbox>.

The National Civic League's Community Visioning and Strategic Planning Handbook. For more information, see <http://www.cpn.org/tools/manuals/Community/pdfs/VSPHandbook.pdf>.

Cooperative Conservation America's case studies and project descriptions. For more information, see <http://cooperativeconservation.org>.

The University of Michigan School of Natural Resources and Environment's Ecosystem Management Initiative. For more information, see <http://www.snre.umich.edu/ecomgt>.

“An Introduction to Charrettes,” an article by Bill Lennertz, Aarin Lutzenhiser and Tamara Failor in the Planning Commissioners' Journal. For more information, see http://www.charretteinstitute.org/resources/files/charrettes_pcj_article.pdf.

The U.S. Forest Service's Partnership Resource Center. For more information, see <http://www.fs.usda.gov/prc>.

Workshop summaries -- *Physical Activity as a Civil Rights Issue and Legal Strategies in Childhood Obesity Prevention* – from the 2010 workshop hosted by the Institute of Medicine. For more information, see <http://www.iom.edu/Reports/2011/Legal-Strategies-Childhood-Obesity.aspx>.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Planning Community Toolbox. For more information, see <http://planning.usace.army.mil/toolbox/index.cfm>.

Policies for Shareable Cities: *A Sharing Economy Policy Primer for Urban Leaders* by Neal Gorenflo and Yassi Eskandari-Qajar. For more information, see <http://www.theselc.org/policies-for-shareable-cities>.

EPA's Resource Guide: *Resolving Environmental Conflicts in Communities*. For more information, see <http://www.epa.gov/adr/Resguide.pdf>.

URBANWATERS
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