

**South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership (SPRUWP)
 QUARTERLY MEETING
 June 6, 2018, 9:30 am – 12:00 pm**

***Sand Creek Regional Greenway Partnership, 7350 E 29th Avenue, Suite 200*
 Meeting Summary - FINAL**

Attendance: Bill Battaglin, Cindy Chang, Cincere Eades, Stacey Eriksen, Ashlee Grace, Elaine Hassinger, Mike McHugh, Peter Ismert, Beth Nobles, Al Polonsky, Cristina Ramirez, Donny Roush, Alison Witheridge, Keith Wood.

Facilitation: Sam Haas and Dan Myers

ACTION ITEMS

Cindy Chang	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact Elaine Hassinger about health-based groundwater data for the City of Sheridan. • Contact Beth Nobles about available volunteer training resources and citizen scientist opportunities, particularly for urban-based volunteers.
Cincere Eades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Email Peak with information on Colorado Open Lands’ tour of the project site, which will take place on June 23, from 8:30 am to 10:00 am. • Send group members information about US Army Corps of Engineers Meeting on June 18, Cherry Creek restoration project meeting, and other projects from agencies that Cincere serves as a liaison for. • Send Peak slides from the presentation on the Heron Pond Master Plan so that Peak can share them with the EPA to post on the SPRUWP website.
Sam Haas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a consolidated action plan to the group based on goal and action item tables from the previous meeting summary, including the priorities that committee decided upon and a call for participation in subgroups. • Send out a Doodle to find a date for subgroup meetings. • Send refined subgroup goals to the entire SPRUWP email list to see if other partners want to participate.
Alison Witheridge	Follow up with Elaine Hassinger about her request for public education on water quality.

PARTNERSHIP UPDATES

SPRUWP partners provided updates on their organizations’ current work priorities.

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

- The EPA headquarters has provided SPRUWP with funding for an interagency agreement with the US Forest Service (USFS) for training on new water quality assessment and natural capital tools.
- Nonpoint Source Program:
 - EPA personnel are serving on a planning committee for the annual South Platte Forum, which will take place on October 23 and 24 at the Embassy Suites in Loveland. EPA staff are exploring the possibility of adding a session on the subject of urban waters to the agenda. EPA’s Peter Monahan will send group members information about the Forum, which will feature opportunities for sponsorships and poster presentations for grants.

- EPA staff regularly work in rural areas on Clean Water Act (CW) Section 319 program grants, putting out calls for potential projects in the summer and fall of each year for the following year's nonpoint source projects. It is more difficult to do the same programs in urban areas, but the EPA does that on occasion.

Groundwork Denver

Groundwork Denver has a new executive director, Sidney Chang, and is working on projects in the northeast metro area as part of the Northeast Denver GoWild Coalition, a grant-funded program connecting youth with the outdoors. Over the past four years, Groundwork Denver has involved itself in urban water issues by working to remove invasive species and waste from Lower Bear Creek. As part of the South Platte Community, Groundwork Denver is a proud member of SPRUWP and looks forward to learning more about urban water.

Denver Water

- Denver Water is currently revamping its monitoring program with a focus on areas upstream of its terminal reservoirs, with some additional work in the Chatfield watershed. Denver Water staff are also discussing monitoring possibilities for the North Reservoir Complex and welcome any suggestions or updates on available monitoring options.
- Additionally, the organization just closed its request for proposal (RFP) period for an upcoming inventory assessment and prioritization for the Upper South Platte watershed, including Dillon Reservoir.
- Denver Water's is partnering with the Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) to treat abandoned mines as part of its Forests and Faucets program.

Denver Department of Public Health and Environment (DDPHE)-Water Quality Control Division

- DDPHE is expanding its lakewater quality monitoring program.
- DDPHE is expanding its mosquito control program.
- DDPHE staff are working on continuing an urban wetlands stakeholder group. This group was an outgrowth of a completed effort to survey the wetlands of the City and County of Denver in partnership with the Colorado Natural Heritage Program (CNHP) with funding from EPA. There is interest in seeing if there is alignment with any of the SPRUWP subcommittees.

Colorado State Forest Service- Urban and Community Forestry Program

The USFS is contributing funding to a proposal to plant trees on streetscapes for the City of Edgewater. The project is designed to address the current lack of canopy and severe stormwater runoff in Edgewater. The project will probably begin with planting next spring, and there may be an opportunity for volunteers to participate.

Denver Public Works

- The second day of the Urban Waters Cycle Tour from Bluff Lake to the Metro Wastewater Reclamation District will begin at 1:00 pm after today's meeting. The Cycle Tour is a program of the Barr Lake and Milton Watershed Association organized with financial assistance from CDPHE.
- In partnership with Denver Water, Denver Public Works will be leading a watershed tour as part of an overnight professional development session for local teachers on August 1 and 2. The tour group will depart from Joe Shoemaker Elementary School and visit the Marston Water Treatment Plant and Cheesman Dam.
- Denver Public Work's Water Quality and Green Infrastructure Program will be releasing its Green Infrastructure Implementation Strategy soon. The Implementation Strategy will identify areas of the city that have the highest need for green infrastructure so that the City can prioritize areas for funding allocation. Some of the green infrastructure projects identified in the implementation

strategy are already getting underway. The Program is creating Denver's first green infrastructure corridor along Brighton Boulevard by installing over 100 planters along the road.

Denver Parks and Recreation (DPR)

- DPR will conclude its 2018 Game Plan Update at the end of this summer. During the Community Input phase of the update, residents identified natural resource issues like growing the urban canopy and preserving and updating stream and lake health as top priorities for the community.
- DPR is partnering with the Urban Drainage and Flood Control District (UDFCD) to create a typology of Denver's landscapes and to identify a spectrum of urban ecosystems within the Parks system. The researchers are using vegetation cover data to assess the health and functionality of low maintenance streams. The project is entering Year 3 of stream data collection. The researchers hope that this study will serve as a tool for prioritizing restoration and allocating the corresponding funding. The Cities of Longmont and Parker have expressed interest in doing something similar. DPR is interested in involving other municipalities as well.

Aurora Water

- Aurora Water is working on a diligence offer to purchase water from London Mine near Ouray.
- Aurora Water has identified a site suitable for constructing a Box Creek Reservoir South of Leadville.
- Aurora Water has submitted a grant application to map area wetlands, but staff will not know if EPA has accepted the application until the end of the summer.
- Aurora Water is working on updates to its Source Water Protection Plan
- Aurora Water is waiting for monitoring approval for its Wetlands Mitigation Banking Plan. Staff have identified two other bank locations, one in Park County and one in Lake County across from Box Creek. Additionally, Aurora Water has identified another parcel on the side of Mount Elbert as a strong candidate for wetlands restoration.
- Aurora Water is conducting land swaps with Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and the USFS.
- Aurora Water is partnering with the Colorado State Land Board to restore an old gold mine.
- Aurora Water is developing comments for the upcoming Farm Bill and Water Infrastructure Bill.
- Aurora Water is asking the EPA to take a second look at categorical National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) exclusions for watershed impacts on wildlife. Aurora Water found that 80% of lands that need mitigation work are not in the right vegetation categories to do so. Aurora Water would like to see these vegetation zones expanded.
- Aurora Water is planning a reservoir called Wild Horse in Park County.

Tri-County Health Department-Water Quality

- The Department's Water Quality staff are working on a project funded by Adams County to sample the water quality of private wells within a half-mile oil and gas operations. The Department sampled 13 such wells last month. Thus far, the most significant concern has been high sodium levels, but most other potentially harmful substances were below detectable levels.
- The Department is hoping to win a grant to collect health-based groundwater data for the City of Sheridan. This data is currently lacking.

Sand Creek Greenway Partnership

- The Partnership is continuing to develop its work plan and improve the usability and environmental health of the greenway.
- The Partnership is working on building a community around the greenway. The Partnership has received funding to print and distribute a map of the greenway.

- Partnership staff are interested in surveying available volunteer training resources and citizen science opportunities, particularly for urban-based volunteers.

UPDATE ON STRATEGIC PLAN AND POTENTIAL WORKGROUP FORMATION

The Partnership discussed the status of the Strategic Plan and the small groups established to create goals, objectives, and action items.

- At the last meeting, SPRUWP members split into small groups to help form the Strategic Plan. After that meeting, the Steering Committee consolidated and prioritized several items for the next year or two. The steering committee also identified subgroup leaders for the three identified topics: education/outreach, science/data, and policy/planning. SBRUWP members also brainstormed headlines that group members would like to see around the Partnership in five years and incorporated those headlines into the subgroup themes.
- The subgroups could begin meeting this summer. There is funding in the Ambassador position for Sam Haas of Peak Facilitation to facilitate the subgroup meetings if group members would benefit from that facilitation. Partnership members who are interested in participating in the subgroups should reach out to Sam. The commitment would be attending subgroup meetings and completing identified actions. Sam will send out a Doodle to schedule the subgroup meetings.
- Sam will send the tables with goals and actions items from the previous meeting summary to the group. Group members can still revise the goals and actions items.
- The Partnership discussed the possibility of establishing another subgroup to work on wetlands issues. Group members decided that the wetlands topic is more specific than the three original group topics, but that it would be helpful for group members to get involved in wetlands issues regardless of whether that takes place within a subgroup or as an appendage to one of the original three.
- Each subgroup will identify three to five actions to address as priorities for the next couple of years. These actions can be ongoing or short-term.
- Sam will send the refined subgroup goals to the entire SPRUWP email list to see if anyone else is interested in participating within the subgroups.

HERON POND OPEN SPACE PLANNING PRESENTATION

Cincere Eades, Natural Resources Planner for DPR, provided a presentation on the City's plans to improve the Heron Pond Open Space.

- DPR received a grant from the EPA's Urban Waters Small Grants program for the planning process and partnered on community outreach with Groundwork Denver, the North Denver Cornerstone Collaborative, and Denver Public Works.
- DPR is completing the Heron Pond project in partnership with Denver Public Works' Water Quality and Green Infrastructure team.
- DPR partnered with a consultant team composed of Dig Studio, Matrix Design Group, Biohabitats, Zoeller Consulting, Pinyon Environmental, CLC Translation, and Groundwork Denver.
- Heron Pond, Heller Open Space, Carpio-Sanguinette Park, and the 52nd and Emerson property are four parcels of land, three of which are owned by DPR and one which is owned by Denver Public Works.
- The project area is on the northwest corner of the city on the border of Adams County and Denver. Heron Pond will be the third-largest regional park in Denver after City Park and Washington Park.

- The City's Wastewater Management Division purchased its property through the Colorado Enterprise Fund. Denver Public Works owns roughly 20 of the 80 acres of the site, so this area is required to serve a drainage function.
- The area is characterized by native upland vegetation but has areas of environmental contamination associated with the former ASARCO Globe Smelter and animal rendering facilities. Carpio-Sanguinette is mostly turf but is extremely underutilized.
- There are other changes taking place in the Globeville neighborhood: The National Western Center is expanding its facility and is coordinating with the City's community improvement project at Heron Pond. The City waited to begin the project until it had a clearer idea of the National Western Center's expansion plans. The City is also redoing the Washington Street corridor.
- The Globeville neighborhood plan identified a corridor that the City could activate by providing community-based resources. As a result, DPR held the southern portion of the project area out of the Heron Pond/Heller/Carpio-Sanguinette Master Plan as a site for future community-serving uses. Additionally, the project team held two acres on the northeast corner of the project site for additional space for yet-to-be-determined community-serving uses.
- DPR envisions balancing recreation, ecology, and water quality needs at the site. The community produced a vision statement for the project: "A natural refuge and destination that improves and educates about biodiversity, sustainability, community well-being, and safety."
- DPR aimed to spread all of the community priorities outlined above across all 80 acres of the project site. For example, community members have said that Heller Open Space currently feels isolated and unsafe. The project team wanted to preserve the open space's prairie while finding opportunities to encourage community members to use the area. Heller Open Space is a high point with a beautiful view of the city, so an overlook is envisioned at that location.
- A steering committee of community members, regional interest groups and businesses met eight times in ten months.
- As part of its 2017 Heron Pond/Heller/Carpio-Sanguinette Master Plan process, DPR held events in the park, conducted online surveys, took flyers door to door, incorporated bilingual outreach, partnered with the Garden Place Academy, and conducted activities for children. Community members have asked the City to rehabilitate the area for years. DPR used this feedback and the community's vision statement when working on concept design.
- Community members told DPR that it was necessary to them to:
 - Restore the natural ecology of the area and enhance trees
 - Connect people to the park and the South Platte River
 - Activate the park with cultural education and economic opportunities
 - Enhance the overall park experience for all generations
 - Promote community health and well-being (the community faces challenges polluted soil, air, and the need to promote a healthy lifestyle)
 - Celebrate the arts and culture of the community
- Community members have told DPR that it is currently difficult to access the park because there are only two entry points. There is a cul-de-sac with a dead end below the proposed entrance to City property, and the National Guard often closes its armory to parking to the northwest. The City will add additional entrances as part of the Washington Street improvements and the expansion of the National Western Center.
- The plan contained distinct layers of ecological zones, stormwater management, cultural programming, tree planting, and user circulation.
- DPR is working on providing broader uses of areas of the project site that will be used to meet water quality needs.

- The Colorado Natural Heritage Program's Wetlands Program has identified unique plants on the project site, and DPR will reduce disturbance to any special ecological features.
- Phase 1 of the project will redevelop the area from 51st to 53rd Street and will cost roughly \$12 million. DPR is currently trying to secure funding to address the remainder of the project in 2020.
- The southern end of the site will consist of a constructed wetland designed to manage stormwater.
- The project team examined the stormwater system and developed plans to treat the system by seamlessly tying natural constructed wetlands into the rest of the park. The Urban Waterway Study conducted by the US Army Corps of Engineers was critical to this portion of the plan. The study identified sites that were suitable for enhancing the water quality of the South Platte River. DPR coordinated its work with the study's findings to maintain habitat connections, among other things.
- The water quality areas will be designed so that the area can be gently graded to fit seamlessly into the rest of the landscape. The area will probably be dry a lot of the time, so DPR wants to be sure that it includes a variety of ecosystems so that it is still aesthetically pleasing when it is not full of water. There will be forebays at the end of the pipes flowing into the water quality areas to reduce sedimentation.
- A pond viewing area will be developed based on the recommendations of the local Audubon Society and community members whose members sat on the steering committee. DPR will promote birding here by constructing bird blinds and ensuring that trails connect different portions of the park, which includes examples of all of the ecological zones that Denver possesses in one location.
- The project will add two playgrounds (one for regional nature play and a smaller one for the neighboring community to use), parking, shelters with restrooms, and picnic sites to the area. Existing athletic fields will be maintained, and the old walls from the former wastewater treatment plant will be maintained to preserve the graffiti art found on them, which the community celebrates as part of its culture. DPR will create an amphitheater overlooking the new water treatment facility for programming.
- The Alameda portion of the project site will include an area for farmers' markets and food trucks. DPR will line the area with local art, and there will be a pavilion with bathrooms in the center in future construction phases.
- Safety is a concern of DPR in this area. DPR kept topography in mind when designing for human experiences on such a large site. Eventually, there will be an overlook over the South Platte River as well.

Clarifying Questions

SPRUWP members asked several clarifying questions about Cincere Eades' presentation on the Heron Pond Master Plan. Questions are indicated in italics, with the corresponding answers below in plain text.

Where is the National Western Center in relation to the project site?

The National Western Center is southeast of the project site, just across the bridge. It is helpful to DPR that the National Western Center is designing its bridge so that the City can integrate it into its development of the Heron Pond area.

Does a bike path run through the project site?

Yes. The Platte River Trail goes through the area. DPR is going to move the trail so that it is integrated within the park because bike riders told the City that they were unaware that they could get to the park from the bike path.

Is Heron Pond fed entirely by stormwater?

Groundwater flows into Heron Pond as well. Additionally, it should be noted that the pond is contaminated with levels of heavy metals in the sediment. Polluted sediment has built up in the pond and is steadily turning it from a pond to shallow wetlands. Sedimentation is an issue that will need to be addressed.

Is fishing allowed on Heron Pond?

Heron Pond is not fishable because of pollution and the fact that it lies on a conservation easement. DDPHE-EQ Water Quality Program conducted water quality monitoring in the area. Additionally, Colorado Parks and Wildlife undertook a fish survey of the pond and did not find many fish there except for carp.

Where was the old Wastewater Treatment Plant and did it flow into the South Platte River?

The plant was at Carpio-Sanguinette park. It discharged into the South Platte River.

What is Phase 1 of construction on this project?

Everything between 51st and 53rd Streets, except for the river banks. This phase will involve creating a water quality facility, doing some vegetation quality work, building a parking lot, building a playground, and establishing an overlook.

Are there plans to boost other activities like disc golf in the park other than trails?

There are not many trails in the park right now, so DPR is going to build concrete paths south of 53rd Street. Trails north of 53rd Street will be soft surface because of conservation easement requirements. Disc golf courses cannot be built in the conservation easement in the northern portion of the park, and there are potential use conflicts in the southern part of the park with constructed wetlands and trails. However, DPR is still examining ways to build a smaller nine-hole course or practice space in the project area.

Why can disc golf not be played in the conservation area?

Due to the conservation easement, this type of active use is not permitted. The disc golf community has said that disc golfers will work with DPR to create signs that discourage people from searching for discs in damaging ways. In any case, DPR is not allowed to build a disc golf course in the conservation area.

What endangered species are present in the project area?

No endangered species have been identified. Additional information on habitat and species is available online. Several years ago, Pam Sponholtz of the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) made a list of unique and endangered species found in the area. For example, sweetflag was a unique plant located in the Goldsmith Gulch area.

Will DPR remediate the pond while working on the north end of the project area?

The community has expressed a strong desire for environmental remediation on the pond. The City will balance the cost of remediation, the level of protection that it offers, and the level of human exposure. The City is working with CDPHE and EPA to determine what level of remediation will be required.

Is Heron Pond the primary location for potential remediation activity?

A large tributary area flows in the pond, so the City will take measures to intercept a lot of the sediment entering the pond. DPR is working with DDPHE to conduct additional studies to determine what other forms of contamination are entering the pond. This information is necessary for DPR to build the water quality facility correctly.

NEXT STEPS

- The next SPRUWP quarterly meeting will be in September. As of now, the subject of the meeting will be the Denver Green Roof Ordinance. However, SPRUWP members can share any other meeting ideas with Sam if there is something else that they would like to discuss.
- DPR, Denver Public Works, and the US Army Corps of Engineers will be having a public meeting on two studies that the Corps is conducting on the South Platte River (one at 6th avenue downstream of 58th Avenue and one upstream of Mississippi Avenue in the Dartmouth neighborhood). The meeting will be at the Decker Branch Library from 5:30 to 7:00 PM.
- There will be a meeting on the Cherry Creek restoration project between Iliff Avenue and Quebec Street later in June. Cincere Eades will send information about these meetings and other projects from UDFCD, and Denver Public works to the group.
- Group members should reach out to Sam if they are interested in joining any of the Strategic Planning subgroups, sending updates to the group, or proposing ideas for future meetings.