

# REINVESTING IN THE BALTIMORE REGION AND ITS URBAN WATERS

## LINKING COMMUNITIES AND THEIR ENVIRONMENTS

### ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Patapsco Watershed in Baltimore, Maryland is one of seven locations selected for help from the nation's new Urban Waters Federal Partnership. This partnership will reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve our Nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits.

Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will:

- Break down federal program silos to promote more efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership, by engaging and serving community partners.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local economies to create local jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

Led by these federal agencies and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the White House's place-based efforts, including the Partnership for Sustainable Communities, to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the nation. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership also advances the work of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative (<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>)

For more information, visit: [www.urbanwaters.gov](http://www.urbanwaters.gov)

### ABOUT THE BALTIMORE PARTNERSHIP

The Baltimore Urban Waters Pilot project will create a coordination committee and develop projects devoted to protecting and restoring urban waters; promoting community revitalization and strengthening the social fabric through the removal of blight, establishment of open spaces, and creation of economic development to serve as catalyst opportunities for disadvantaged neighborhoods, and capitalize on the social and economic benefits derived from improved urban waters and adjacent lands. Federal partner agencies will work together with the City, County, and State Agencies, local NGOs and CDCs, and communities groups.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

In an effort to improve water quality, make public access safe, and restore the watershed's ecosystem, here are some examples of current federal and local projects:

**Watershed Partnerships** – The City of Baltimore and neighboring Baltimore County have entered into the Baltimore Watershed Agreement, which outlines a series of actions to encourage inter-jurisdictional cooperation in achieving water quality improvements in shared watersheds.

Blue Water Baltimore (BWB) is a non-profit group dedicated to the stewardship of Baltimore's watersheds and harbor, through projects that include restoration, monitoring, advocacy, and citizen awareness. BWB is working in partnership with the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the City of Baltimore in launching a \$1.2 million project to repave select alleys and street corners to prevent pollution in nearby waterways.

The Waterfront Partnership of Baltimore, a non-profit organization serving as the primary collaborator with the City in the care of the Inner Harbor area, has taken leadership in developing the Healthy Harbor Strategy Guide, organizing the first State of the Harbor conference, and is currently developing a Comprehensive Plan for the Healthy Harbor Initiative.

**Land Management to Restore Waters.** -- The Baltimore Commission on Sustainability adopted the Baltimore Sustainability Plan in 2009 which aims to make Baltimore's waters swimmable and fishable through a set of six strategies including expanding the urban tree canopy and reducing the percentage of impervious surfaces. The City Department of Recreation and Parks, through the Forestry Division, has organized a tree planting and care initiative, with several community partners called TreeBaltimore.

TreeBaltimore builds upon projects such as the Baltimore Urban Forestry Watershed Demonstration Cooperative, which was established in 2003 to develop a significant urban watershed restoration project that focused on urban forest watershed benefits in Baltimore City. The Cooperative is composed of the following organizations: U.S. Forest Service, Baltimore Ecosystem Study, Parks & People Foundation, and Baltimore City Department of Public Works – Surface Water Division. The Watershed 263 demonstration project in a 930-acre storm drain watershed aims to develop cost-effective urban forestry techniques to measurably improve water quality and quality of life in an ultra-urban watershed. Monitoring and research for this project has been conducted by the Baltimore Ecosystem Study. The project has prepared a water quality plan and a greening framework and installed over 30 projects to date.



### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The Patapsco Watershed is an invaluable resource for recreation and economic development in Baltimore, Maryland. This project ties together the many uses of the River and seeks to connect citizens to their water source by incorporating on-the-ground projects, promoting education and environmental literacy, and redeveloping abandoned land for public use.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Some examples of federal and local projects:

**More Assessment** – In partnership with the Mayor's Vacants-to-Value Initiative, inventory all community-managed gardens, other open spaces, and stewardship groups in the city with the goal of strategically protecting them so that they can continue to provide social, environmental, and health benefits to the city residents who have invested their time and energy into improving them.

Working with the Wildlife Habitat Council, the Partnership will conduct a five-year Wildlife Habitat Assessment of Baltimore's 2<sup>nd</sup> Harbor. This assessment will help identify productive landscapes and address water quality, environmental biodiversity, recreational opportunities, and adjoining community development issues such as job growth and education.

**More Green Infrastructure** – The Partnership will work with the City of Baltimore to develop a Green Infrastructure Plan. Green infrastructure includes natural areas such as forests and streams, as well as constructed elements such as urban parks, trails, street trees, stormwater management practices, community gardens, and urban agriculture. Green infrastructure not only improves air and water quality, but also provides wildlife habitat, thermal comfort, and reductions in energy use.

## **More Environmental Protection and Economic Development**

– Work with local NGOs, community groups and public agencies to implement volunteer-based, on-the-ground community greening projects such as tree planting, vacant lot and schoolyard restoration projects, removal of unnecessary asphalt and concrete, and creating smaller bio-infiltration facilities such as rain gardens, bio-swales and rain barrels, and outreach activities including environmental education and youth green career ladder workforce development programs. Parks & People has advocated and supported for many years the development of watershed organizations and a concept called "One Park" which is an integration of all types of green space as a social-ecological network.

## ABOUT THE PATAPSCO WATERSHED

The 375,000-acre Patapsco River Watershed spans four counties, flows to the Baltimore City Harbor, and ultimately into Chesapeake Bay. In addition to the Patapsco River, the Patapsco River Watershed includes Gwynn Falls, Jones Falls, Herring Run, and Baltimore Harbor. The watershed consists of forested areas, rural areas, productive farms, as well as suburban, urban, and industrial areas.

With an increase in urban development, the Patapsco Watershed faces new challenges, like stormwater run-off and higher sediment loads.



## THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The partnership includes: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Department of the Army (Army Corps of Engineers), U.S. Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), Corporation for National and Community Service, U.S. Department of Education, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, and U.S. Department of Energy.

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