

Community Engagement Forum October 24, 2012

PURPOSE

The Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) organized a community engagement forum on October 24 in conjunction with the EPA Urban Waters October 23-25, 2012 National Training Workshop in Washington, DC. The purpose of this community engagement forum was to facilitate interactions between local organizations, federal agencies representing the Federal Waters Partnership and other stakeholders that came together to attend EPA Urban Waters' National Training Workshop. The forum also highlighted the role of community based organizations involved in water quality issues, clean up and urban water restoration, conservation and stewardship while emphasizing their contributions through environmental education and training in their local communities. By facilitating this community engagement forum, WCS convened conference participants who shared lessons learned, networked and forged potential relationships that will promote the goals of the Urban Waters Program.

WILDLIFE CONSERVATION SOCIETY BACKGROUND

The Bronx Zoo based Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) was founded in 1895 as the New York Zoological Society with the mission of saving wildlife and wild places across the globe. Today WCS' fieldwork helps address threats to over 25 percent of the Earth's biodiversity in more than 60 countries around the world. In its own backyard, WCS has helped local environmental groups and community organizations to expand upon the earlier efforts of Bronx residents to clean up the Bronx river, once a beautiful 23-mile waterway that supported such a density of beavers that European traders flocked to the area to acquire their pelts. While this symbol of local wildlife became enshrined in the seal of New York City, it disappeared from what became known as the Bronx River two centuries ago as the metropolis grew. Since 2001, WCS has partnered with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to administer \$16.6 million to support 20 grassroots organizations to cleanup efforts to physically restore the South Bronx waterfront as well as educational outreach to help local residents understand the importance of preserving wild spaces. As a result of this investment, over 3,000 people canoe on the river annually, eight acres of river habitat has been restored or preserved; 7,000 students instructed, 1,500 educators have been trained and several tons of trash from the river and its shores have been removed.

WCS's education department was the first zoo-based education program in the U.S. established in 1929. Since then, WCS has offered up-close animal encounters and hands-on learning opportunities for more than 100,000 children and adults in New York City each year, making WCS the largest provider of education services of any urban zoological institution. WCS's education department has won several awards including the National Science Board's 2001 Public Service Award; 2002 National Award for Museum Service from the Institute of Museum and Library Services; National Science Teacher Association's 2002 Distinguished Informal Science Education Award and more than 20 prestigious awards from such organizations as the American Zoo and Aquarium Association, the National Science Teachers Association, the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of

Energy, and the U.S. Department of Education. In recent years, WCS has developed a network of 70 informal science institution-school partnerships across the U.S. that is dedicated to promoting the professional development of teachers in the environmental sciences; and was the first to establish a public school for wildlife conservation in Bronx, NY in 2007.

WCS brought this extensive history and experience in local river restoration, community engagement and environmental education to partner with the EPA in organizing the community engagement forum on October 24, 2012. The forum featured display boards from participating community organizations and their efforts on urban waters restoration and conservation. Key stakeholders were recognized through video presentations and educational materials were made available to all participants particularly focused on tools and resources to engage local communities in urban areas. (Program Scope Below)

URBAN WATERS NATIONAL TRAINING WORKSHOP BACKGROUND

EPA's Urban Waters program promoted both traditional and innovative strategies for revitalizing our nation's urban waters in collaboration with federal, state and local partners. On October 23-25, 2012, the EPA hosted an Urban Waters National Training Workshop, including a Community Engagement Forum. The Workshop brought together federal partners, Urban Waters Small Grant recipients, subject matter experts, local practitioners and other stakeholders.

The goals of the Workshop were to:

- **Educate** stakeholders on the appropriate management of EPA grants and funding.
- **Facilitate** education and awareness of core topic areas including: 1) urban water and watershed restoration; 2) related community and economic development opportunities; 3) effective community engagement; and 4) green infrastructure and community greening.
- **Apply** and communicate best practices and lessons learned from Urban Waters Federal Partnership pilot locations and past and present grantee projects.

The October 23-25 Workshop was not open for public registration. It was an invitation-only training event for Workshop participants.

PROGRAM SCOPE

The Community Engagement Forum built on the objectives of the Urban Waters National Training Workshop by providing a platform for a free exchange of ideas and lessons learned and stimulated an environment of mutual appreciation for contributions made to urban water restoration and conservation. The October 24 forum was designed as an educational event to facilitate participant interactions and networking opportunities and took place in conjunction with the Urban Waters Training Workshop on October 23-25, 2012 in Washington, DC. Included below were specific areas of focus for the community engagement forum:

- Promote community engagement through environmental education--specifically how local communities facilitate learning around urban waters
- Expand existing relationships and partnerships amongst conference attending and other participating stakeholders
- Raise awareness of EPAs' Urban Waters Program with multiple stakeholders at the local and national level
- Highlight the role of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership Initiative in making an investment in local communities through urban water restoration, education and conservation.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESULTS

This cooperative agreement supported the following goals of the FY2011 - 2015 EPA Strategic Plan: Goal 2: Protecting America's Waters, Objective 2.2: Protect and Restore Watershed and Aquatic Ecosystems. This forum brought together Urban Waters practitioners from across the country that work to improve the water quality within their watershed. They were given an opportunity to share lessons learned, expand their network of experts and to learn about tools available to help them be successful.

ENVIRONMENTAL OUTCOMES

The forum formed and strengthened long-term partnerships between local community-based, federal, and non-federal stakeholders, leading to the increased availability of resources to protect & restore the water quality of urban watersheds. The transfer of knowledge amongst the various stakeholders and participants present at the forum will lead to the improvement of urban watersheds.

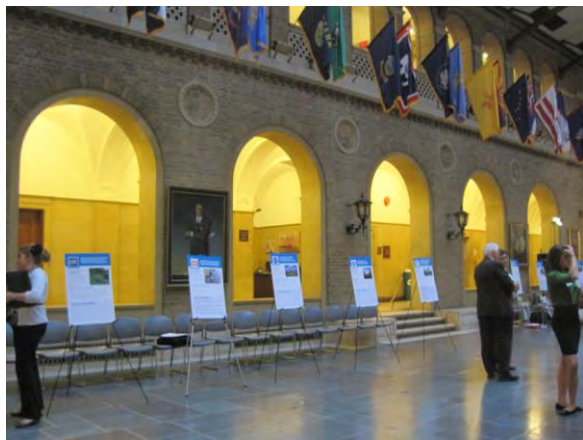
APPENDIX A: PHOTOS FROM EVENT



Welcome signage at venue, USDA Patio, Independence Ave, Washington DC. Photo credit: Wildlife Conservation Society



Welcome signage included brief description of organizer's project on the Bronx river at venue, USDA Patio, Independence Ave, Washington DC. . Photo credit: Wildlife Conservation Society



Poster display at event. Photo credit: Wildlife Conservation Society



Harris Sherman, Under Secretary, USDA; Sara Marinello, Executive Director of Government and Community Affairs, WCS; Bob Perciasepe, Deputy Administrator US EPA; and Jon Dohlin, Vice President and Director, NY Aquarium. WCS. Photo credit: Wildlife Conservation Society

APPENDIX B: DETAILED FORUM PROGRAM

Final Program Run for Urban Waters Community Engagement Forum

October 24, 2012 6:00PM-8:00PM

USDA Whitten Building Patio

6:00-6:20: Guests arrive

6:25-6:27: Nav Dayanand, Assistant Director, Federal Affairs, Wildlife Conservation Society welcomes guests to the forum and introduces Jon Dohlin

6: 27-6:35: Jon Dohlin, Vice President and Director of the NY Aquarium, Wildlife Conservation Society offers remarks. Key Themes Include:

- About Wildlife Conservation Society
- Legacy of the investments made on the Bronx River
- Next phase of local ecological restoration through the New York Seascape Initiative
- Ability to engage local communities through the new Ocean Wonders Exhibit at the New York Aquarium (sets the stage for a simulated video of Ocean Wonders, and community restoration project video to play after speakers)

- Announces Dr. Eric Sanderson's plenary talk on Thursday 10/25
- Acknowledges EPA Urban Waters Program Staff, key partners and WCS staff for their contributions
- Introduces USDA Under Secretary Harris Sherman

6:36-6:45: Harris Sherman, Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, USDA offers remarks. Key Themes Include:

- Importance of Federal Urban Waters Partnership
- Recognizes key EPA collaborations
- Highlights the role of USDA
- Thanks community groups and non-federal partners

6:46-6:47: Jon Dohlin thanks U/S Sherman and introduces Bob Perciasepe, EPA Deputy Administrator

6:48-6:53 Bob Perciasepe thanks WCS for organizing Forum and guests for attending, introduces the videos to be showcased and turns the audience attention to videos

6:54-7:00: Two local river restoration videos play featuring community engagement on watershed management

Urban Waters Voices: Stephen Paul DeVillo, Bronx River, NY

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sSXNul81eIU>

Urban Waters Voices: Edwin Revell, AL

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoSV38djin-0>

7:00-7:02: Nav Dayanand thanks guests and concludes formal segment of event. Silent screening of simulation of education and immersive experience of the Ocean Wonders Exhibit at the NY Aquarium, Coney Island plays

7:03-7:45: Guests visit poster exhibits and meet with federal agency representatives, network and exchange lessons learned from conference

7:45-8:00: Guests begin to depart