

# REVITALIZING THE SOUTH PLATTE FROM THE SOURCE TO THE CITY

## TRANSFORMATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

### ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The South Platte River in Denver, Colorado 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 DENVER PARTNERSHIP

The South Platte River Urban Waters Federal Partnership Pilot project strives to protect one of Denver's primary sources of drinking water, while supporting ongoing on-the-ground projects, education, and research, and facilitating a growing population's connection to its urban waterways. The federal partner agencies plan to work with the City and County of Denver, The Greenway Foundation, Groundwork Denver, the Trust for Public Land, Colorado State agencies, local non-governmental organizations, and businesses. The activities in the Denver metro area are also part of EPA's Green Infrastructure Initiative.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

In an effort to improve water quality, increase public access, and restore the River's ecosystem, here are some projects the Partnership is currently engaged in:

**Reducing Risk of Wildfire Damage** – In 2010, Denver Water and the Rocky Mountain Region of the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) entered into an agreement to proactively improve the health of forests and watersheds in areas critical for providing water to the City and County of Denver and many surrounding suburbs. In the Upper South Platte Watershed, the five-year goal is to treat over 22,780 acres, with goals of reducing wildfire risk, restoring areas recovering from past wildfires, and minimizing erosion.

**Protecting Water for Drinking** – Nearly 90% of National Forest lands in Colorado are located in regions that contribute to public drinking water supplies. In 2009, the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment entered into an agreement with the USFS to collaborate on managing and protecting drinking water supplies in Colorado. The agreement outlines a strategy for sharing data, identifying municipal supply watersheds, identifying priority areas for wildfire treatment, and promoting awareness and education on the importance of safe drinking water sources.

The EPA, City and County of Denver, and U.S. Geological Survey are all conducting monitoring along the river to study contaminants. The Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry will review the data.

**Partnering to Turn Around Distressed Lands** – The City and County of Denver, the Colorado Brownfields Foundation, The Greenway Foundation, the EPA and the National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program are partnering to create a Brownfields area-wide plan for the South Platte River.

**Restoring Forests and Watersheds** – USFS, the National Forest Foundation, Vail Resorts and other partners are working on a multi-year effort to restore a number of critical sub-basins within the 2002 Hayman Fire area. This includes riparian restoration to help reduce sediment loads, reforestation, and native plant and wildlife habitat restoration.

**Restoring Urban River Corridors** – The City and County of Denver, USACE and The Greenway Foundation are working together on potential riparian habitat and wetland projects along the South Platte in Metro Denver.



### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

Over the last 36 years, Denver, in partnership with The Greenway Foundation, has created over \$40 million of improvements to the South Platte River and the surrounding area. This includes over a dozen parks, numerous natural areas, white-water boat chutes and a multi-use trail system. These enhancements have been a key factor in the economic resurgence of several areas adjacent to the River, the most notable being the Central Platte Valley. Within the larger Metro area, another \$60 million worth of green improvements to the South Platte River and its tributaries have occurred.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

**More Recreation**— The Greenway Foundation will work to enhance parks along the South Platte River. Over the next five years, under the River Vision Implementation Plan, boat docks will be installed, bike paths and running trails widened, playgrounds built, and parks improved. The Foundation will also conduct environmental education programs like the South Platte River Environmental Education (SPREE) Program and River Rangers. The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment awarded a Nonpoint Source project to Protect our Urban River Environment and The Greenway Foundation for trash sampling and a community-based social marketing approach for trash reduction. EPA will assist with sampling protocols and provides funding to the State.

**More Access**— Groundwork Denver will work with residents of the Globeville and Valverde neighborhoods to improve access to the South Platte River Trail. They will organize bike rides, nature walks, and volunteer activities, and, as part of these programs, will gather input from the community on desired improvements that will help them access the South Platte River Trail safely and easily. They will work with property owners, city planners and the community to implement these improvements.

**More Green** — With a \$1 million grant from Great Outdoors Colorado, Denver Parks and Recreation and The Trust for Public Land partnered to purchase a 2-acre property along the South Platte River. This industrial property will become part of a new city park.

**More Open Space** — To help plan for future open space, the Trust for Public Land is mapping green infrastructure in the Denver Metro area. The study area includes 13 major rivers and streams and will map parks, trails, and riparian corridors. The information will be used to plan for green spaces for communities without access to open space.

**More Education**— Collaboration on Urban Waters **Green Jobs Pilot** with Buirgy Consulting, Inc. , Skeo Solutions, and other partners, to create a student volunteer monitoring program and a Green Jobs Pilot Program. EPA Region 8 will provide training, lab analysis, and coaching services. EPA, CH2MHill, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and other partners will host an annual World Water Monitoring Day event with area schools in Sept. 2011 at the confluence of the Platte River and Cherry Creek in Denver.

## ABOUT THE SOUTH PLATTE RIVER

The South Platte River is an invaluable resource for drinking water, recreation and economic development, both upstream and within Denver. 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, education, and research.



**For more information on the Denver Urban Waters Federal Partnership, please contact:**

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## 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.