

Urban Waters Flagship Update

FY2011 – 2nd Quarter



Description of Flagship Effort

- The Urban Waters effort falls under the “Expanding the Environmental Conversation with Communities” Flagship Theme
- The goal is to help communities, especially underserved communities, access, restore and benefit from their surrounding waters
- EPA is leading an Urban Waters Federal Partnership including eleven agencies and support from the White House Domestic Policy Council to integrate federal support from communities
- EPA is working to develop new Web 2.0 tools for community-to-community information sharing, reach out to non-digital audiences, and provide technical assistance to communities
- Why this effort?
 - Urban waters throughout the country are substantially impaired, impact large populations, and are typically entangled in complex issues
 - When urban rivers, lakes, streams or wetlands are inaccessible or degraded, the surrounding communities miss the benefits of community stability and growth that clean urban waters bring
- There is a special emphasis on environmental justice

Stakeholders

- Public
- Non-Government Organizations (NGOs)
- State, Tribal and Local governments
- Centers of learning
- Other Federal Agencies
- Community-based organizations

Milestones/Status

- Continued Federal Partnership coordination with support from the White House Domestic Policy Council (Jan-March)
- EPA Awards Targeted Watershed Grant to River Network (2/11/11)
- UW Microsite and social media tools deployed to public (3/14/11)

Highlights of Progress this Quarter

- EPA awards grants to River Network to engage communities and increase citizen connection, understanding, and stewardship of urban waterways (2/11/11)
- Urban Waters Microsite (website) released to public as a method of community engagement and knowledge sharing (3/14/11)
<http://www.epa.gov/urbanwaters/>
- Deployed social media tools (i.e., Facebook & Twitter) as a way to expand the environmental conversation with the public (3/14/11)
- Continued Urban Waters Federal Partners Coordination to agree on partnership principles and community pilots (Jan-March)
- Coordination with the Americas Great Outdoors initiative, Groundwork USA, City Parks Alliance, and Earth Conservation Corps (Jan-March)

Planned Activity for Next Quarter

- Bi-weekly UW Federal Partnership Coordination (March-June)
- UW Strategic Action Plan Press Release (April-May)
- Announce Federal Partnership Pilots (April-May)
- Sponsorship of the Federal Partners Urban Waters Session at River Rally National Conference (June 3-6)

Metrics

- Number of events: 2
- Target audiences reached: All Stakeholder groups named above
- Number of partnerships: 4

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List Benefits or Lessons Learned from this effort:

- OneEPA: Bringing together the complementary statutes, authorities, and resources of the entire agency allow us to better execute our mission. We can do this by leveraging existing programs and measures.
- Work with other Federal Agencies: Engage and leverage ideas from other programs and Federal stakeholders early in the strategic planning process. For UW, early engagement with Federal Partners and existing EPA community grant programs that share a similar goal for environmental justice was extremely beneficial in documenting requirements for the 2011 UW Showcase in My Communities.
- Expand the conversation: Reach out to include historically underrepresented local stakeholders or stakeholders that may not have a history of working with EPA given capacity or other challenges.
- Strategically link local and national stakeholders: Making sure partnership agreements are made with local organizations as well as national organizations is important. The local organizations need to hear directly from EPA. This collaboration should start early for local organizations to provide their perspective in shaping collaborative efforts.

How will you continue to engage stakeholders?

- Expand our Web 2.0 presence as a means to engage and expand the UW conversation with the public and key stakeholder communities of interest.
- Amplify our non-digital public engagement efforts: Bring attention to the issues of urban waters through themed activities or events. Examples: Listening sessions, speeches, volunteer events.
- Develop and pilot a micro-site on Urban Waters to make information more engaging and accessible for specific audiences, and to encourage interaction and involvement of stakeholders.

What steps would you recommend to sustain this effort and build in improvements?

- Continue to strengthen Federal Partnerships and ensure a mechanism for long-term program coordination.
- Engage local or community government stakeholders early and often when planning outreach events in their respective jurisdictions. Make certain that they are engaged in the planning process from start to finish and ensure positive outcomes that help advance their local environmental programs and not just advance Federal initiatives.
- Leverage and highlight existing programs that similarly address urban waters and environmental justice concerns.

What other measures would be useful or would you recommend for a similar effort?

- Documenting your stakeholder needs and communication strategies is an extremely beneficial strategic planning tool when considering using Web 2.0 tools and technologies. Think through stakeholders and their relationships with program objectives prior to selecting technology platforms.