

## THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

### ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Greater Philadelphia Area / Delaware River Watershed is one of eleven newly selected locations for the nation's 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 tribes, 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 and White House Council on Environmental Quality, 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 GREATER PHILADELPHIA AREA / DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED PARTNERSHIP

The Greater Philadelphia Area/Delaware River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership encompasses several major urban areas – from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to Wilmington, Delaware and including Camden, New Jersey and Chester, Pennsylvania – as well as the surrounding suburban and even rural landscape. The area along the Delaware River throughout the region has historically experienced a significant loss of economic benefits and environmental services provided by the River. Numerous local and regional initiatives are underway to reduce the negative impacts of urbanization on the quality of the River while reclaiming and restoring impacted riverfronts and economically revitalizing depressed areas.

Challenges include stormwater management, erosion and flooding control, source water protection, restoring lost habitat, enhancing overall waterway health, protecting community investments, pursuing environmental justice, and promoting public access. Due to the geographic extent of the Delaware River Watershed and the diverse set of environmental and social issues at hand, restoration requires a larger scale focus while advancing small-scale, on-the-ground implementation.

To keep the Delaware River sustainably healthy, a wide range of federal, state, regional, local, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) will band together and develop strategies (including identifying obstacles) and leverage resources to meet planned objectives. The greatest challenge will be to ensure that current work and planned actions by interested organizations are linked together to yield cost-effective investments in time, ideas, and funding that will more fully address contemporary conservation needs. Open and coordinated communication among all parties will be the key to success.



### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND THE DELAWARE RIVER WATERSHED

The Delaware is the longest un-dammed river in the United States east of the Mississippi, extending 330 miles from Upstate New York to the mouth of the Delaware Bay. Over 15 million people (roughly 5 percent of the nation's population) rely on the waters of the Delaware River Basin for drinking, agricultural, and industrial use, though the watershed drains only four-tenths of one percent of the total continental U.S. land area.

## WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

In an effort to improve water quality, make public access safe, and restore the watershed's ecosystem, here are some federal and/or local projects that members of the Partnership are currently engaged in:

**Riverfront Master Plans** – Several waterfront revitalization plans are in place along the Delaware River across the region, including the North Delaware Riverfront, the Central Delaware Waterfront, and the Navy Yard plans in Philadelphia; the FutureCAMDEN Master Plan; and the *Strong Cities, Strong Communities* planning underway in Chester, Pennsylvania. As those plans move forward, the Partnership will help ensure that all environmental and community interests are fully integrated alongside economic concerns.

**Community Connections** – Various local groups are engaged in revitalization plans and projects that connect communities to their waterfronts and advance environmental justice initiatives – such as Old Brandywine Village in Wilmington, Save Our Waterfront in North Camden, and the Camden Center for Environmental Transformation. Another example is the “Roots to Re-entry” program managed by the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society in partnership with the City of Philadelphia, which offers prison inmates a path toward reintegration in society via job training in green infrastructure maintenance. Combining forces with other entities in the new Urban Waters Federal Partnership will help leverage additional sources of support for those various opportunities.

**Regional Initiatives, Local Action** – Many organizations in the region are engaged in watershed-scale planning, including the Delaware River Basin Commission (Water Resources Plan), the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (“Connections” Open Space Plan), the Nature Conservancy (Delaware River Basin Conservation Initiative), the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (Regional Restoration Initiative), and the Philadelphia Water Department (“Green Cities, Clean Waters”). Each of those initiatives identifies local restoration landscape opportunities that will benefit communities and the natural environment.

## 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. Department of Energy, 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 and U.S. Department of Transportation

## WHAT'S NEXT

**Launch the Partnership** – To assess the full array of community needs and federal resources that could be utilized throughout the region, the Partnership will be launched through broad-based public meetings to develop the cross-sector connections. An overall Advisory Committee of diverse stakeholders will be assembled for keeping those connections active. Social media outlets will be utilized to reach as wide an audience as possible.

**Reconnect the Community** – Hold public meetings, workshops, and other events throughout the life of the Partnership to boost “environmental literacy” and help advance the importance of the Delaware River and its associated landscapes. Several partnering organizations, such as the Academy of Natural Sciences and the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, are already engaged in such education and outreach efforts; the overall Partnership will help publicize and maximize those offerings. Various activities on the waterfront itself, including hands-on restoration projects, will serve as gateways to watershed awareness, increasing public support for landscape-level conservation and reconnecting people to their waterways.

**Track Progress to Guide Decisions** – As part of its mission to protect and improve the environment by bringing “Science to the People,” the USDA Forest Service’s newly launched Philadelphia Field Station will help measure on-the-ground results and promote sound, science-based decisions. Various other organizations also focus on regional monitoring and assessment activities, including the Delaware River Basin Commission, the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, and NOAA. With coordination from an “Ambassador” provided through the USFS Field Station, that information will enable the Partnership to advance local projects that best support the regional landscape while promoting the overall program goals.

**For more information on the Greater Philadelphia Area / Delaware River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership, please contact the lead agency representatives:**

### Michael Leff, Ambassador

U.S. Forest Service/ USDA  
The Davey Institute  
(215) 988-1635  
Michael.Leff@davey.com

### Simeon Hahn

U.S. National Oceanic & Atmospheric Administration/ U.S. DOC  
(215) 814-5419  
Simeon.Hahn@noaa.gov

### Dave Lange

U.S. National Park Service/ DOI  
(215) 597-6477  
David\_a\_lange@nps.gov