

# REVITALIZING THE SOUTH PLATTE FROM THE SOURCE TO THE CITY

## TRANSFORMATION THROUGH COLLABORATION

### ABOUT THE 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. The goal of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership is to reconnect urban areas — particularly those that are under-served or economically distressed — with their waterways and to improve collaboration among the federal agencies working to improve those waters.

Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will attempt to:

- Break down government program silos to energize existing programs and create meaningful new ones.
- Ensure that local communities are full partners in restoring and protecting their waterways.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area expertise and funding. Early and visible victories will fuel long-term action.

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:



### 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 in green improvements to the South Platte River and its tributaries has occurred.

**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 source water 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, and National Park Service's Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program and the EPA 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 to initiate funding for two studies related to riparian habitat and wetland projects along the South Platte in Metro Denver.

#### 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.



#### THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The partnership includes: U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of the Army (Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)), U.S. Department of Commerce (Economic Development Administration (EDA) and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)), Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI), U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT).

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

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