

# NEW LIFE FOR THE LOS ANGELES RIVER WATERSHED

## COLLABORATION TO SUPPORT REVITALIZATION

### ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Los Angeles River 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 LOS ANGELES PARTNERSHIP

The Los Angeles River Watershed Urban Waters Federal Partnership Pilot project will support local watershed revitalization efforts, which include enhancing flood protection, improving water quality through green infrastructure, enabling safe public access, and restoring ecosystems. The Federal partners will work with the City, other interested municipalities, California State agencies, and local nonprofits.



### ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The LA River has potential to connect communities, and greatly expand recreation options. More than 70 percent of the city's residents do not live within a quarter mile of a park or open space. This pilot could help expand parks and open space access while driving economic development and job creation.

### WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

The following are examples of ongoing work where local communities in the LA River Watershed are engaged in partnerships with federal agencies:

**Station Fire Restoration** In response to the August, 2009 Station Fire in the Angeles National Forest, local groups and the U.S. Forest Service are planting trees across 4200 acres. The South Coast Air Quality Management District provides funding, while Tree People leads volunteer operations. By 2015, the plan is to cover 8000 acres.

**Los Angeles River Ecosystem Restoration** - The City of Los Angeles Department of Public Works and USACE are completing a study to identify restoration alternatives for a nine-mile stretch of the LA River between Glendale Narrows and downtown LA. Also, as part of a separate project, the City and USACE are proposing to construct and evaluate restoration features like stream-level wetlands and river terraces near Taylor Yard to inform and strengthen the larger study.

**South LA Wetlands Park** - The City of Los Angeles (with City and EPA funds) is transforming a former railcar maintenance yard into a nine-acre park. In addition to providing much needed recreational space in this densely populated area, constructed wetlands will treat stormwater before it's discharged to the LA River. The park will be completed in December 2011.

**Hansen Dam** - Also in 2011, the LA Recreation and Parks Department, in partnership with USACE, starts construction of a campground at this popular recreational area. Included in the plan are strategic bio-swales to direct stormwater into a wetlands area.

**Elmer Avenue Neighborhood Retrofit** - The City of Los Angeles, the Los Angeles and San Gabriel Rivers Watershed Council, many local partners, and the Bureau of Reclamation recently completed this green street retrofit in a Sun Valley neighborhood historically susceptible to flooding. This project demonstrates the use of green infrastructure techniques to reduce urban runoff and promote groundwater recharge and water conservation.

### **Disadvantaged Community Outreach Evaluation**

**Program** - The Los Angeles County Department of Public Works will conduct public outreach in Los Angeles County to identify six water resource project concepts in disadvantaged communities. USACE will then work directly with the communities in the technical design that will ideally result in parks providing river access, ecosystem restoration, water quality improvement or other outcomes that satisfy their specific needs.

### **WHAT'S NEXT**

**More Economic Development** The Partnership hopes to help economy-boosting initiatives like the CleanTech Corridor and the Los Angeles River Revitalization Corporation. The Northeast LA Collaborative, through a \$2.2M HUD grant, will redevelop 2200 acres in the Glendale Narrows portion of the River and will look at zoning, facilitating carpooling, bicycle use and light rail ridership, the feasibility of a food hub, and involving business leaders in workforce development.

**More Recreational Opportunities** The Partnership strives to make the River accessible to all. A new 7.2-mile Cornfield-Arroyo Neighborhood Trail Network will connect urban communities to the LA River, Arroyo Seco, and LA State Historic Park. Three miles of urban creek trails will bring the Watts community green streets, greenways, and connections to the regional trail system. Youth activities and educational programs supporting healthy lifestyles, environmental awareness, and local job training are also on deck.

**More Education** – The Los Angeles Unified School District is partnering with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to launch “Let’s Go Outside.”

This program offers technical and financial solutions for habitat restoration on school grounds, as well as classroom outreach. Additional support will go to the LA River Keepers/Corps, which is instrumental in water quality testing, river cleanup, and developing on-the-job skills.

### **More Conservation of Scarce Drinking Water Supplies**

– There will also be a push for green infrastructure to retain rainwater and local water conservation programs, like the Bureau of Reclamation’s WaterSMART, which uses cost-share funding to develop projects that use water more efficiently.

### **ABOUT THE LOS ANGELES RIVER**

The Los Angeles River originates in the Santa Susana, Santa Monica, and San Gabriel mountains and flows 51 miles through 14 cities from the San Fernando Valley to San Pedro Bay to the Pacific Ocean. It covers 834 square miles and touches 9 million lives.

The River has seen many floods and, in turn, the construction of a concrete flood control channel, making it safer but more cut-off from surrounding communities. When the population boomed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the health of the river suffered as a result of habitat fragmentation and increased pollution from urban run-off.



### **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.

### **For more information on the Los Angeles Urban Waters Federal Partnership, please contact:**

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