



*Revitalizing the South Platte River from the source to the city:
transformation through collaboration.*

The South Platte River Urban Waters Federal Partnership (SPRUWP) 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 South Platte River is an invaluable resource for drinking water, recreation and economic development, both upstream and within Denver. This partnership 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.

Approach: Our interdisciplinary partnership focuses on our common desired outcomes while advancing our individual missions. The result? A holistic approach that not only benefits local water resources, but also improves and strengthens the community as a whole.

Focus: Regional Water Quality, Water Protection, and Water Awareness

Mission: The South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership collaborates across jurisdictions and disciplines to engage communities, and to protect and restore the South Platte River from the headwaters to the Denver metropolitan area (Colorado) and watershed.

Goals

- Collaborate, educate and engage
- Connect people with water
- Protect and restore through leveraging resources
- Communicate achievements and share technical information

Strategies:

- Developing Regional Information Resources (best management practices; water quality data, public health data related to South Platte River and tributaries)
- Regional messaging for behavioral change
- Advance an interconnected network of ecological and green infrastructure for healthier waterways and for social and economic gains to adjacent communities
- Protect forests that provide drinking water supply
- Creation of Short Term, Mid Term and Long Term Priority Programs and Projects

The first phase of SPRUWP (1.0) went from June 2011 to December 2012, and was co-led by EPA and the US Forest Service (USFS). The second phase of SPRUWP (2.0) went from January 2013 through June 2016 with the assistance of a coordinator, an Advisory Committee (USFS, EPA, CSFS), and a multi-stakeholder Leadership Team. SPRUWP is currently in its third phase (3.0), co-led by EPA and USFS in close collaboration with Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) and with contract facilitation. ATSDR, USGS, and NPS have been regular contributors. The full partnership meets quarterly. There are additional

meetings of the Advisory Committee, various workgroups, and an occasional Federal only meeting. Partners include over 50 government, non-government organizations, and businesses.

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Signature Projects

I. South Platte Watershed Natural Capital – From Mountains to Plains Resource Assessment

The South Platte Natural Capital Project is a collaborative watershed-wide green infrastructure assessment led by the CSFS with funding from the USDA Forest Service as part of the SPRUWP. The project was funded with a State and Private Forestry competitive grant. The project directors are CSFS, USFS, and EPA. The purpose of the South Platte Natural Capital Project is to build on existing studies in the South Platte River corridor and watershed to:

1. Create an assessment that maps and evaluates the regional network of green infrastructure (interconnected network of critical watershed forests, riparian corridors, wetlands, streams, lakes and the river).
2. Prioritize key areas for conservation and restoration based on the economic value of the benefits people obtain from those natural systems ("ecosystem services").
3. Sustain and enhance the sharing of ideas, data, and resources across organizations and landownerships toward accomplishment of common goals.

<https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners/south-platte-natural-capital-project>

II. Water Quality Assessment Tool

A water quality assessment is underway that will present a cross-jurisdictional view of water quality in the Denver metro area. This is being done by the SPRUWP Water Quality workgroup, which has participation from EPA, USGS, ATSDR, USFS, Denver Water, City and County of Denver, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Metro Wastewater Reclamation District, Littleton/Englewood Wastewater Treatment Plant, Colorado Watershed Assembly, Groundwork Denver, and Jefferson Conservation District. Groundwork Denver is leading the project. The Water Connection/The Greenway Foundation is hosting the tool.

The interactive tool went live in January 2016 and has 5 years of E. coli data available for the Denver metro area. Phase II is underway and involves creating a mobile platform and expanding the

contaminants from E. coli to also include Total Dissolved Solids; Nutrients; and select pesticides, pharmaceuticals, and personal care products. http://thewaterconnection.org/wq_tool/app/#/storyline

Priority Projects

- Metro Denver Nature Alliance
- Denver Urban Field Station
- Green Infrastructure Virtual Tour
- Green Infrastructure Case Studies
- Systems Thinking (Mapping) <https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners/south-platte-urban-waters-partnership-systems-thinking>
- Geomapping <http://geoplatform1.epa.gov/urbanwaters/index.html>
- Full Time Coordinator
- Urban Forestry-CSFS awarded a total of \$100,000 of USFS funds to four projects to restore and protect Denver area waterways, while reconnecting local populations with their water resources in 2012.

Urban Waters Small Grants

- 2016. Groundwork Denver. Lower Bear Creek: Youth Leadership to Solve the Pollution Problem.
- 2016. City and County of Denver. Heron Pond Regional Open Space Master Plan.
- 2014. Denver Department of Public Works, Wastewater Management in conjunction with Earth Force. Keep It Clean-Neighborhood Environmental Trios (KIC-NET) outdoor classroom. KIC-NET won a National Association of Counties Achievement Award in 2016.
- 2014 Groundwork Denver Community Stewardship Network for Lower Bear Creek
- 2012 Barr Lake and Milton Reservoir Watershed Association. Stormwater messaging campaign. <http://www.barr-milton.org/>
- 2012 Earth Force. Keep It Clean: Neighborhood Trios (KIC-NET), included teacher training workshops and development of an educational toolkit for outdoor classrooms. This work was selected to receive the Colorado Alliance for Environmental Education's 2014 Environmental Education Award for Excellence in the Best New Program category. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bgnx3BWWnJ0>
<http://urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org/resources/watershed-plan-born/>

Forestry and Source Water Protection

- Hayman Burn Restoration Partnership. The USFS and National Forest Foundation (NFF) worked with many partners from 2010-2012 to reduce erosion and sediment flows in critical headwater areas burned by the Hayman Fire in 2002. <https://www.nationalforests.org/who-we-are/our-impact/pike>
- Rocky Mountain Watershed Protection Partnerships. The USFS Rocky Mountain Region has been working with municipal water providers and corporate partners along the Front Range of Colorado to restore and foster the resiliency of forests within key watersheds.
- Source Water Planning. The Coalition for the Upper South Platte (CUSP) is serving as the facilitator for a SWAP planning project for the South Platte River watershed, which is being convened by Denver Water and funded with support from the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE). <http://www.uppertsouthplatte.org/sourcewater.html>
- Wildfire Readiness and Response Workshop – Is Your Utility Prepared? (2013)

Green Infrastructure

- Sun Valley Green Infrastructure Study https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2016-08/documents/sunvalley_stormwateroptions_final.pdf
- Green Infrastructure Technical Assistance to assist in development of Ultra-Urban GI guide <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/wastewater-management/stormwater-quality/ultra-urban-green-infrastructure.html>
- US Army Corps of Engineers Studies: Denver Ecosystem Restoration Feasibility Study <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/denver-waterways.html>
- Green Infrastructure Design Assistance for 38th and Blake https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2015-10/documents/denver_blakestreet_concept_design.pdf
- River North Green Infrastructure Design
- Westerly Creek Green Infrastructure Stream Restoration Design <https://www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners/westerly-creek-environmental-justice-south-platte-watershed>

Brownfields Grants and Support

- Targeted Brownfields Assessment for Sun Valley Eco District, Steam on the Platte, Westerly Creek at Stapleton
- Colorado Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund for Freight in River North, Ruby Hill and Union Station.
- Denver South Platte Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant-River Corridor Planning www.denvergov.org/southplatte
- Denver South Platte RiverPlace Initiative, \$400K Brownfields Assessment grant <https://www.denvergov.org/content/denvergov/en/brownfield-redevelopment/south-platte-riverplace-initiative.html>
- Aurora Brownfields Area-Wide Planning Grant for Westerly Creek Village <https://www.auroragov.org/cs/groups/public/documents/document/014383.pdf>
- Dry Gulch Green Infrastructure Channel Restoration Design

Other Funding and Support

- HUD Choice Neighborhoods Implementation Grant for Sun Valley Eco District
- USFS and EPA funding for coordinator.
- 6 National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grants to partners from 2013-2016.
- South Platte River Environmental Education. EPA Environmental Education Grant in 2016 to The Greenway Foundation.
- 2015 EPA Environmental Justice Small Grants. Groundwork Denver- Solutions for Climate Resiliency in North Denver EJ Communities.
- 2015 EPA Environmental Justice Small Grants. Environmental Learning for Kids (ELK)- ELK Youth Naturally-Community Water Connections (ELKYN-CWC).
- US Army Corps of Engineers Studies for Chatfield Reservoir and Bear Creek Reservoir.
- HUD Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant for Denver Housing Authority at Sun Valley.
- Get Outdoors Colorado. In celebration of Earth Day 2013, the USFS and Get Outdoors Colorado launched a new website called www.GetOutdoorsColorado.org to give people thousands of opportunities to explore and experience Colorado.

- Natural Resource Damage Settlement Funding from Lowry Landfill. The SPRUWP was used in 2013 to facilitate a funding announcement and assistance for Lowry Landfill Natural Resource Damages Settlement funding from the State of Colorado. Three projects were funded: Bear Creek water quality, Westerly Creek Greenway, and Bluff Lake Nature Center.
- Survey and Assessment of Critical Urban Wetlands in Denver and Mountain Parks. EPA wetlands grant funding to the Colorado Natural Heritage Program Wetland Program of Colorado State University beginning in 2012.
<http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2015/Denver%20County%20Report%20FINAL%206252015%20with%20Appendices.pdf>
http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2015/Denver_Brochure_Final_Draft.pdf
http://www.cnhp.colostate.edu/download/documents/2015/Colorado_Wetland_App_Users_Guide.pdf
- EPA's emergency response program responded to a seep of petroleum products into Sand Creek near its confluence with the South Platte River beginning in November 2011. EPA continues to provide technical support to CDPHE and the responsible party.
- NPS RTCA helped the City and County of Denver and the Greenway Foundation to identify and overcome barriers that prevent residents of neighborhoods adjacent to the South Platte River in Denver from accessing the South Platte River Greenway and its many amenities and benefits.
- Rocky Mountain Greenway Trails. The US Department of Transportation awarded \$1.735 million for seven miles of trails along the Rocky Mountain Greenway. The Greenway will connect the Rocky Mountain Arsenal and Rocky Flats National Wildlife Refuges with the Two Ponds Refuge and Rocky Mountain National Park. The Rocky Mountain Greenway is part of Department of Interior's America's Great Outdoors Initiative and also the Urban Waters Federal Partnership.