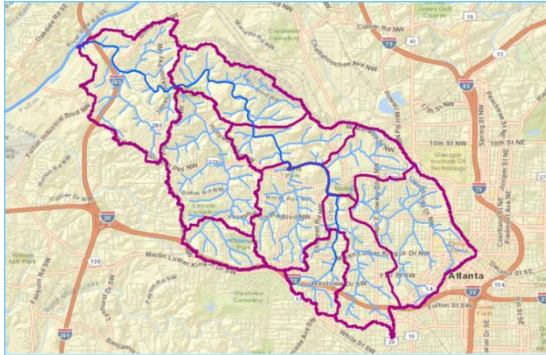


# URBANWATERS

## FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

*Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities*

### Proctor Creek Watershed/ Atlanta (Georgia)



#### **Ambassador**

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### Overall Assessment of the Partnership Since the Beginning

The Proctor Creek Federal Partnership location is the only major watershed located entirely within Atlanta's city limits, encompassing an area rich in history, culture, and environmental resources. In the spring of 2013, Proctor Creek was designated as an Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) watershed. The original federal partners included: Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Transportation (DOT), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Army Corps of Engineers (ACE). Since its founding, the group has expanded to include Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service, National Park Service (NPS), Economic Development Administration (EDA), United States Geological Survey (USGS), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and General Services Administration (GSA), with supporting partnerships from The Conservation Fund, Groundworks Atlanta, Trust for Public Lands, and American Rivers. The watershed includes 11 Neighborhood Planning Units, 38 neighborhoods, 15 Small Business Corridors, 300 urban streams, and 69,000 residents. Given that the watershed runs adjacent to some of the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in Atlanta, the partnership strives to empower local, underserved communities. By reconnecting people to their local waterways, strengthening the economy, supporting a healthier environment, and building community capacity, a broad array of benefits can be delivered to area residents.

The partnership is distinctive due to the vast number of non-government organizations working in the Proctor Creek Watershed. These NGOs, which include the numerous corporate, philanthropic, and nonprofit establishments help contribute to the vision, guidance, and resources, both financial and technical, needed to revitalize the communities in this watershed. In addition, in September 2016, Darryl Haddock, of the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance (WAWA), one of the strong Proctor Creek community organizations, was selected as the Proctor Creek UWFP Ambassador. WAWA has over 30 years of experience in the watershed and has established relationships with numerous partners, stakeholders, Faith leaders, small business owners, neighborhood and civic leaders. These relationships have allowed the Ambassador to build capacity within the communities that enable them to have a direct voice in decisions pertaining to the revitalization of their neighborhoods. WAWA has a proven history of results and has the respect and trust of the communities, federal, state and local partners, nonprofits, corporate and philanthropic organizations.

The partnership continues to build momentum moving towards a defined mission and refining a process for partners to maximize their work together. The next UWFP meeting will be held on July 19, 2017 and will conclude the last of several facilitated planning meetings where the Ambassador, with active federal and nonprofit partners in Proctor Creek, will review a draft of the partnership work plan, that includes implementation of projects designed from community priorities. These priorities were developed through a series of roundtables hosted by the Ambassador, the EPA and the ACE throughout the watershed and were designed to “hear from residents and other stakeholders about issues important to them”.



**Trash Clean up at the creek; litter and illegal tire dumping in around the creek are major concerns**

## **Nature of the Partnership**

Although the federal partnership is active in on-the-ground projects, currently they work in silos, sharing information via social media sites and web pages, report outs at the UWFP meetings and

through newsletters. There are multiple partner teams that include federal and local agencies, local community advocacy groups, foundations, NGOs, and corporations, churches, and academic institutions. The goal of their new Ambassador is to understand the federal system, bring the federal partners together, and with all the community stakeholders identify the priority challenges in the watershed, and create collaborations to implement projects that will solve the problems. The goal is also to provide the community with the tools that they need to navigate the federal system and access resources that are available to them. A facilitator collaborated with the partnership and the Proctor Creek Urban Waters Federal Partnership mission statement was created. With the partnership, the facilitator established a process to promote collaboration among Proctor Creek partners. This collaborative process has unified the partnership as never before and they are finalizing a partner workplan, a plan where all the partners have a role in the implementation with the community we serve.

## Members of the Partnership

### *Federal Partners*

- U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
- U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration
- Housing and Urban Development
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- National Park Service
- Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service
- Department of Interior, U.S. Geological Survey
- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service
- U.S. Economic Development Administration
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

### *Major local community, NGOs, foundations and corporations*

- Proctor Creek Stewardship Council
- West Atlanta Watershed Alliance
- ECO-Action

- Economic Development Team
- Georgia Stand Up
- Westside Futures Fund
- Invest Atlanta
- City of Atlanta Mayor's Office
- City of Atlanta Office of Resiliency
- City of Atlanta Department of Watershed Management
- Atlanta Beltline Inc.
- Atlanta Regional Commission
- Conservation Fund
- Groundwork Atlanta
- Trust for Public Lands
- Park Pride
- American Rivers
- Chattahoochee River Keepers
- State of Georgia Adopt a Stream
- Blank Family Foundation
- Turner Foundation
- Rockefeller Foundation
- Emerald Corridor Foundation
- Chick Fila
- Coca Cola
- Atlanta Public Schools
- Fulton County
- Clark Atlanta University

- Spellman College
- Morehouse College
- Georgia Tech
- Georgia State
- Emory University

## Building Momentum for New Projects through Community Engagement and Partner Consensus

The first work plan is being created based upon input from the community, integrating their vision for the neighborhoods in which they live, work, and play. The work plan is being developed based on a consensus from all the partners on the projects that are a priority in the watershed. A contracted facilitator assists the federal lead and the Ambassador with meetings where measures are being developed, projects identified and agreed upon, and implementation resources allocated. The projects are planned to integrate substantial community engagement criteria and community presence, all in alignment with the UWFP mission.

## Major Actions Taken Since the Beginning of the Partnership

- EPA developed with the Proctor Creek Community “The 3 Step Plan” Community Capacity Building
- USACE procured needed funds to begin the Proctor Creek Restoration Study
- HUD awards a \$30M Choice Grant to the City of Atlanta (CoA)
- Proctor Creek designated as Promise Zone
- Proctor Creek selected as a Partner for Sustainable Communities
- Proctor Creek designated an MVD Community
- EPA 5 Star/UW Grants awarded in Proctor Creek
- EPA awards UWSGs to Proctor Creek Recipients (4 recipients)
- DOI (NPS) awards the CoA \$372,000 in funds to build trails and greenspace in Proctor Creek
- EPA awards \$387,000 in NPS funding for Boone Street Green Infrastructure Demo Project
- Creation of Watershed Project List, which includes major agency and partner contacts, description of the project, benefits to the community, and community engagement plan
- TFW initiative introduced in the watershed with illegal tire dumping and job creation focus

- TFW trash trap initiative partners with the Georgia Aquarium, City of Atlanta, Groundwork Atlanta, to install and maintain trash traps/trash wheels in Proctor Creek
- Construction of the Atlanta Falcons Stadium
- Proctor Creek Stewardship Council Capacity Building
- Tiger Grant-DOT FHwy
- EPA Monitoring Plan for the creek
- Citizen Science Programs
- Two green infrastructure demonstration sites completed: Lindsay Street Park and Vine City Park
- EPA sponsored Grant Writing Workshop
- Community Showcase
- Jazz on Proctor Creek
- Videos Highlighting the Proctor Creek UWFP/MVD
- Hiring the first Community Ambassador



**Citizens Science at its best; Citizens learn how to sample the waters of Proctor Creek.**



**River Rendezvous hosted by the Chattahoochee River Keepers and West Atlanta Watershed Alliance. Focus is Citizen Science-Monitoring and sampling in Proctor Creek.**



## Major Impacts of the Partnership

For over 10 years, the EPA has been instrumental in building the capacity of the community organizations in Proctor Creek. A new era began for the Proctor Creek communities (specifically the English Avenue and Vine City neighborhoods) when the EJ CARE grant of \$100,000 was awarded, providing resources to engage the community and respond to unaddressed challenges. For decades, these underserved neighborhoods have suffered from persistent flooding; CSO and SSO overflows; blighted neighborhoods; impaired and polluted waterways; and high rates of crime, poverty, vacancy, and unemployment.

While the Proctor Creek region faces significant challenges, the region has also been presented with many unique opportunities. For instance, the construction of a new NFL stadium has resulted in a renewed focus on improving nearby underserved communities, prompting the City of Atlanta, several foundations, and corporate partners to commit resources. These local partners can help leverage federal dollars, while delivering additional benefits for the local community.



Transportation-related investments, such as improving streets, bike lines, and walking trails, have been made in the headwater neighborhoods. Further, the extension of the Atlanta BeltLine will help reconnect 45 inner city neighborhoods with the affluence of downtown Atlanta.

The new stadium has already been awarded the 2018 College Football Championship, the 2019 Superbowl, and the 2020 Final Four. Residents understand the significant investment of dollars these events will bring to the area, asking, “what does this mean for our community? What will happen to my house; and my taxes? How can I afford to stay here when it’s all over?” Recognizing these issues, the Proctor Creek Stewardship Council was created to help address these issues by building a community organization to serve as a lead voice in these neighborhoods, allowing

residents and small-business-owners a seat at the table as decision-makers. The Council was created by several grassroots organizations, including West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, Community Improvement Association, and Eco-Action, in partnership with larger nonprofits, such as Park Pride and The Conservation Fund.

The Federal Partnership is providing the Proctor Creek Community with opportunities to engage other federal, state, local partners, foundations, corporations, and NGO's. There is a maturity among the organizations that was not there prior to the partnership activities.

The Proctor Creek Ambassador is a member of the local community and part of the West Atlanta Watershed Alliance, making the Ambassador unique as compared to Ambassadors serving other locations. By selecting the Ambassador from the community, this will ensure additional capacity building opportunities for the Ambassador team, but more importantly for the communities Proctor Creek serves. This allows the partnership to work from community priorities as defined by those who are most affected.

Today, there are a wide range of varied partners engaged in the Proctor Creek Project. Many have become engaged as a result of the Federal Partnership and the community engagement activities on the ground. There are multiple projects being implemented in the English Avenue, Vine City, Castleberry Hills, and Ashview Heights neighborhoods. There are federal, states, local, county, foundation, corporate, NGO dollars, technical assistance, and in-kind services available to the community. There are increased health initiatives, revitalization at a large scale, inclusion and work with the Historic Black Colleges and Universities in the area, which include Spelman University, Morehouse College and Atlanta Clark University, as well as Georgia Institute of Technology, Georgia State University, Emory University and other academic institutions.

The UWFP has helped to put Proctor Creek on the map. The hope is that residents, who have lived, worked, and played in these neighborhoods for over 100 years, will be able to benefit from of all the work being done. As community initiatives are advanced, the partnership hopes that residents will continue to reside in their communities with affordable housing opportunities; will be able to swim and fish in a creek where their parents were baptized many years ago; and will live in a safe, thriving community with access to quality food, healthcare, infrastructure, and services. Achieving improvements in these areas are among the goals of the Proctor Creek Urban Waters Federal Partnership.



## Major Actions Planned in the Future

Revitalization and development of the Proctor Creek Watershed is moving very quickly. Several major projects and political actions are planned for the near future. A new mayor will be elected in 2017, so there are immediate plans to complete projects that are part of the City of Atlanta's existing work plans. The consent decree work pertaining to CSO issues will be completed and the work to resolve SSO issues will continue to provide reductions in bacteria levels and address water quality in the creek. Some projects (listed below) will begin phases of design/engineering, while others will begin implementation.

- Update/Addition to the PNA (Proctor Creek North Avenue Green Infrastructure Vision Plan)
- Boone to BeltLine Greenway- A series of three sites (Boone Park West, White House Block, and Valley of the Hawks)
- Establishing new greenspace at currently vacant sites and linking to the future BeltLine Westside trail.
- Boone Park West Development
  - Atlanta Urban Ecology Resource Center (AUERC) which will provide environmental education and workforce training benefits for residents.
  - This project is underway and will have a significant impact on stormwater flooding and runoff in the upper watershed.
  - In addition, the revitalization of the block at the corner of Boone and Lowery, a major intersection in the watershed, will serve as the catalyst for revitalization of surrounding business corridor and adjacent homes.
- Visioning plan for Sunset Park
- Implementation of Rodney Cook Jr. Park in Vine City





- 4 major stormwater remediation projects led by City of Atlanta
- Completion of the Atlanta Falcons Mercedes Benz Stadium in 2017
- College Football Championship in 2018; Superbowl LIII in 2019; and the Final Four Tournament in 2020
- Proctor Creek Greenway for walking and biking trails
- Establishment of a Community Development Financial Institute (CDFI) in the Proctor Creek Watershed
- Creation of a Memorandum of Understanding between the federal partners at the local level
- Urban Farming (Community Gardens) to address the Food Desert
- Affordable Housing for senior citizens, and residents in Vine City, English Avenue, Castleberry Hill, and Ashview Heights via HUD Choice Grant
- Completion of the Westside Quarry Park
- Implementation of the USACE Ecology Study for Proctor Creek
- Develop a strategic implementation framework for market-based opportunities in the Proctor Creek watershed



## Major Challenges in the Future

Creating awareness and a unified vision in a watershed where there are competing interests is a challenge, requiring passion, trust, and collaboration. To successfully advance our goals, the partnership must identify common goals and opportunities for collaboration. The diverse activities, projects, and partners make information sharing a challenge. The communication distribution channels are not well established; for this reason, incomplete or incorrect information makes it difficult to establish trust within the community. To overcome these challenges, the establishment of improved communication channels is of high importance to the Proctor Creek Partnership.

Other challenges faced by the Proctor Creek Partnership include:

- How to revitalize and connect people in an area that currently has little to no tax base, but is expected to experience increasing property values along with new development?
- Addressing gentrification
- Providing necessary resources to promote long term working relationships
- Communicating opportunities to collaborate
- Identifying efforts to improve the ecological, economic and social aspects of the Proctor Creek watershed
- Identifying needs, barriers and solutions for both public and private sector programs, services, incentives, and other measures that encourage the resiliency of the Proctor Creek community
- Optimizing the benefits of federal, state, local, and other assistance in the watershed
- Addressing priority issues and demands of the community
- Providing grant/funding opportunities for the community and stakeholders to allow them to continue to build on existing projects

The Proctor Creek UWFP will continue to learn to understand agencies' differences and operational requirements and effectively communicate those to the stakeholders. The priorities of the community will be kept at the forefront of advancing redevelopment and revitalization efforts, thereby maintaining the trust of the community as these large projects move forward.

Our ultimate goals are to:

- maximize efforts to revitalize around the creek, using this work to connect and reconnect those who live, work, and play in the watershed;

- build stewardship and pride in local communities, by emphasizing that this work is about local residents and their vision for their lives; and
- turn this vision into a reality for the Proctor Creek community.

