

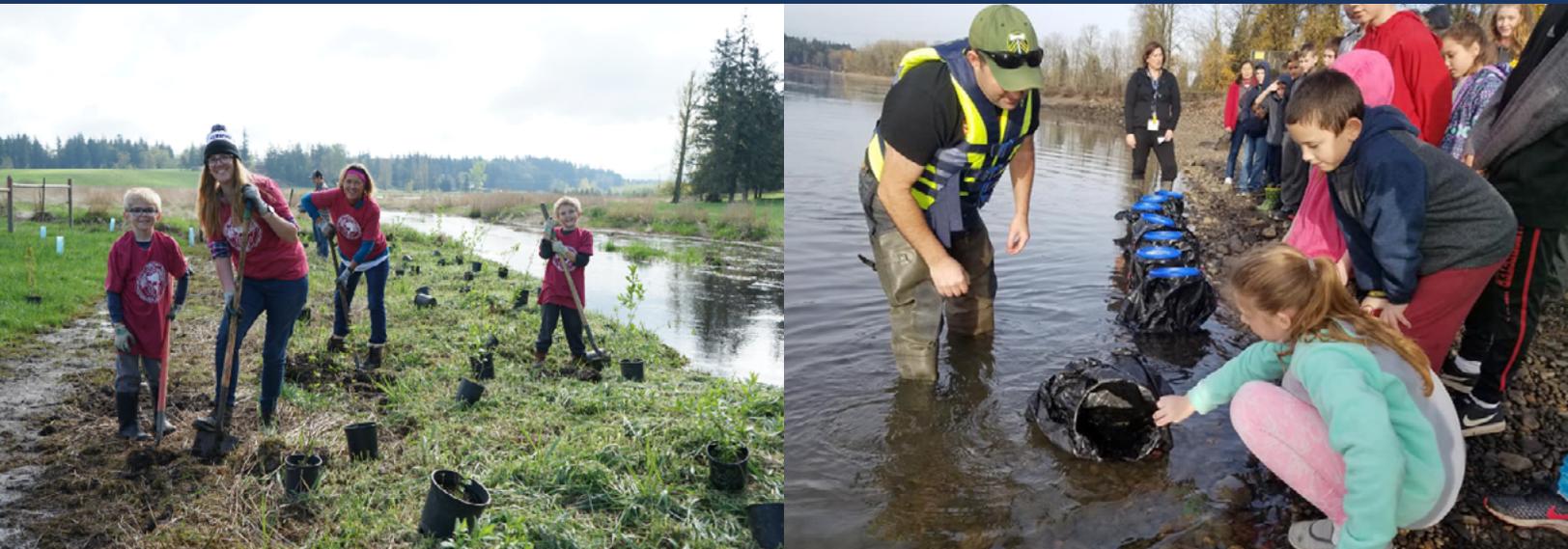
# URBANWATERS

## FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

*Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities*



## Program Progress Report



Corporation for  
**NATIONAL &  
COMMUNITY  
SERVICE**



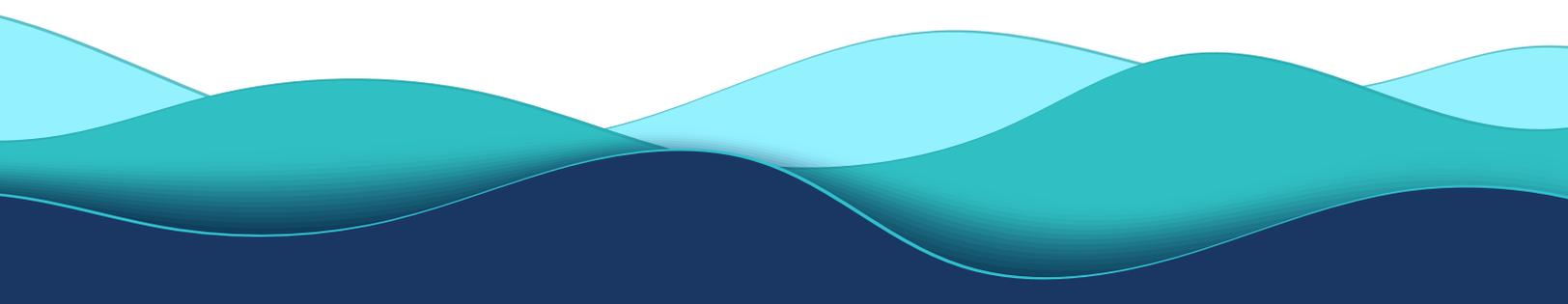
**US Army Corps  
of Engineers®**





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# Introduction

On behalf of the 15 federal agencies in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, it is an honor to share this Progress Report that highlights recent accomplishments of the national Urban Waters Program. The Urban Waters Program was established in 2011 to strengthen underserved communities' connection to their local water resources and to improve the quality of those water resources. Since then, the program has grown from a handful of pilot locations and federal partners to a robust program with 20 formal locations, 15 federal agencies and a strong network of hundreds of external partners.

The Urban Waters Program is a locally-driven, partnership-based program that connects communities to their vital waterways while supporting the goals and objectives of the Clean Water Act. This voluntary program facilitates collaboration across public and private sector organizations in boldly innovative ways to bring together the best ideas, leverage all available resources and achieve the strongest public health, environmental, economic, cultural and recreational outcomes on a local scale, where people can engage with and experience the benefits of their urban waterways.



The Urban Waters Program has the distinction of being the nation's first multi-agency partnership engaging communities at the confluence of underserved groups and diminished local waterbodies. By convening federal, state and local partners and leveraging a wide variety of resources, the program provides a highly effective and efficient way to meet Clean Water Act goals in local, urban settings. By connecting people with their vital waterways, this program facilitates an increased connection and understanding of the role and value of waterways for all communities.

I want to thank all of the federal, local, state, academic and non-profit partners and the community leaders in each partnership location who were so instrumental in achieving the successes of the past year. I look forward to even greater success in the years to come!

John Goodin

Deputy Assistant Administrator for Policy

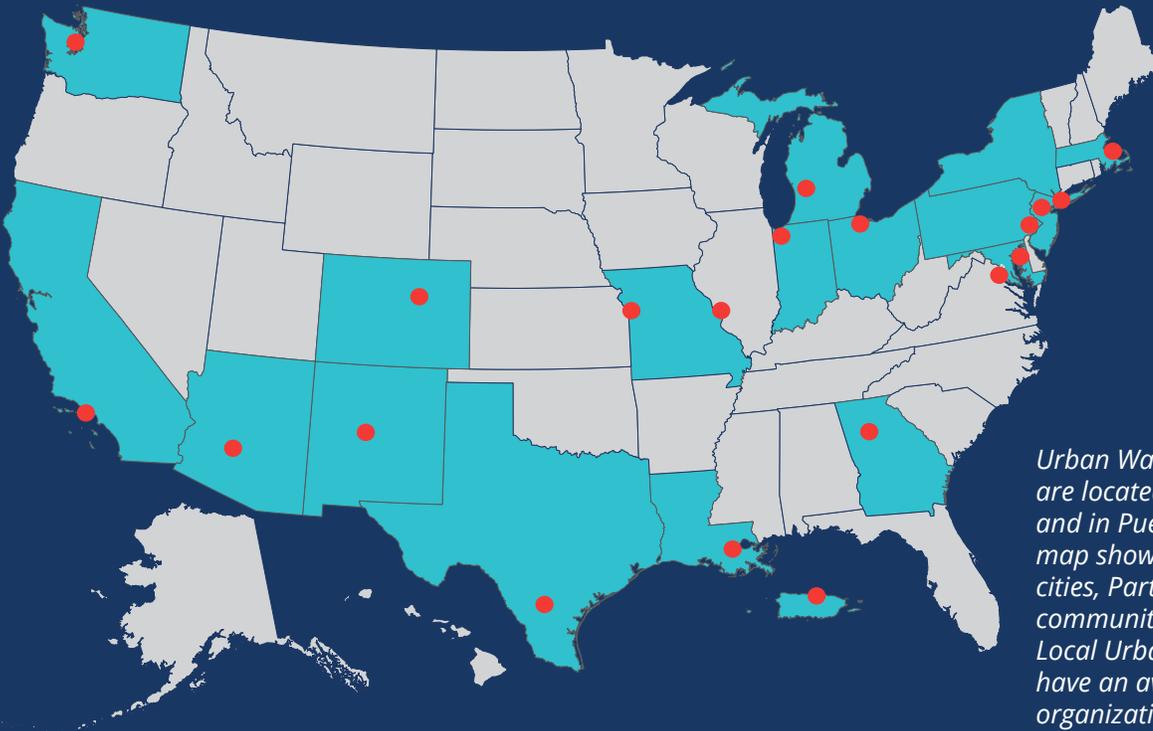
Office of Water

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



# Program Results and Impact

This Progress Report summarizes the accomplishments and significant milestones of the Urban Waters Program (UW Program) working in 20 urban locations across the country.



Urban Waters Partnerships are located across the country and in Puerto Rico. While this map shows them as individual cities, Partnerships work with all communities in their watershed. Local Urban Waters Partnerships have an average of 37 member organizations from diverse sectors.

## The UW Program:

### Funded Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grants



Funded watershed projects that engaged more than **30,000 volunteers** across over **270 organizations**, implementing dozens of projects across the country. These projects resulted in the planting of more than **10,000 trees** and **20,000 marsh plants**, seeds and native grasses, preventing over **500,000 gallons of stormwater** from entering waterbodies.

### Leveraged Funds



Urban Waters secured more than **\$33 million** in grants and federal funding for projects across the country.

### Facilitated Information Exchange through the Urban Waters Learning Network



More than **580 members** in the online network connected to share best practices through seven webinars, five newsletters and **700 website visitors** per month.

### Achieved Watershed Improvements



Partnership locations removed **258,000 cubic yards** of contaminated sediment and soil from rivers and sites, installed **50,000 square feet** of bioswale and rain gardens and restored **155 acres of marshes, wetlands and fields**.

# Environmental Results Snapshot

Information presented below represents data from completed and ongoing projects of the Urban Waters Program that are highlighted in this report. Data from projects in the initiation or planning phase are not included below.

## In the past year alone, Urban Waters locations:

### Reached

**164,349**

community members through education outreach events and campaigns

### Removed

**258,000**

cubic yards of contaminated sediment and soil from rivers and sites

### Installed

**50,000**

square feet of bioswale and rain gardens

### Collected

**23,139**

pounds of trash and 106 pounds of recycling

**150**

water quality samples

### Engaged

**3,550**

volunteers and participants at Urban Waters events

**>40**

new local partners in Urban Waters locations

### Identified

**>75**

watershed-wide management recommendations

### Hosted

**69**

community workshops

### Restored

**155**

acres of marshes, wetlands and fields



## Site Awards

**Anacostia River Watershed (DC)** – River Network’s River Hero Award was presented to watershed leader, Dennis Chestnut

**Green-Duwamish Watershed/Seattle (WA)** – River Network’s River Hero Award was presented to James Rasmussen

**Greater Philadelphia/Delaware River Watershed (PA, NJ, DE)** – Delaware River Watershed Initiative was awarded the American Water Resources Association Integrated Water Resources Management [Award](#)

**Proctor Creek Watershed/Atlanta (GA)** – West Atlanta Watershed Alliance received the Atlanta Magazine’s 2019 Groundbreaker Award

## Report Cards

Partners at several Urban Waters locations evaluated the well-being of their watersheds and the productivity of local efforts by creating report cards:

- [Middle Blue River](#)
- [Anacostia River](#)
- [San Antonio River Basin](#)
- [Mystic River](#)
- [Los Angeles County Rivers](#)
- [Delaware River State of the Basin Report](#)

These report cards mark a significant evaluation trend that may be a model for other locations in the future. Report card results will help develop a roadmap and workplan for collaborative actions to improve the Partnership watersheds and encourage partners and the community to engage in issues that affect them.

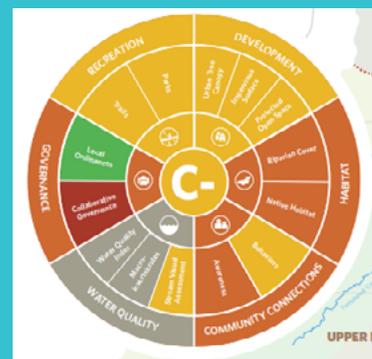


Photo credit: 2019 Blue River Report Card



## **Progress at the 20 Locations**

**Partnership locations featured in this section are organized by regional geographic location:**

### **Northeast**

**Anacostia Watershed Partnership - District of Columbia/Maryland**

**Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds - New York**

**Delaware River Watershed Partnership - Greater Philadelphia / Delaware / New Jersey**

**Lower Passaic River Partnership - Northeastern New Jersey**

**Mystic River Partnership - Greater Boston, Massachusetts**

**Patapsco Watershed Partnership - Baltimore, Maryland**

### **South**

**Caño Martín Peña Partnership - San Juan, Puerto Rico**

**Lake Pontchartrain Area Partnership - New Orleans, Louisiana**

**Proctor Creek Watershed Partnership - Atlanta, Georgia**

**San Antonio River Basin Partnership - San Antonio, Texas**

### **Midwest**

**Grand River Partnership - Grand Rapids, Michigan**

**Meramec and Big River Partnership - Near St. Louis, Missouri**

**Middle Blue River Partnership - Kansas City, Missouri/Kansas**

**Northwest Indiana Partnership**

**Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership - Near Toledo, Ohio**

### **West**

**Green-Duwamish Watershed Partnership - Seattle, Washington**

**Los Angeles River Watershed Partnership - Los Angeles, California**

**Middle Rio Grande Partnership - Albuquerque, New Mexico**

**Rio Reimagined - Salt and Middle Gila River Watershed Partnership**

**South Platte Watershed Partnership - Denver, Colorado**

# Anacostia Watershed Partnership District of Columbia/Maryland



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Erin Garnass-Holmes,  
Clean Water Fund**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
125**

## Partnership Highlight

Partners accomplished an important milestone in cleanup plans for the Anacostia River, with the release of the District Department of Energy and Environment [Proposed Plan for the Anacostia River Sediment Project](#). The Proposed Plan looks at an 815-acre study area and is part of a process that will make the 9-mile tidal portion of the river and two other bodies of water safer for human and environmental health.

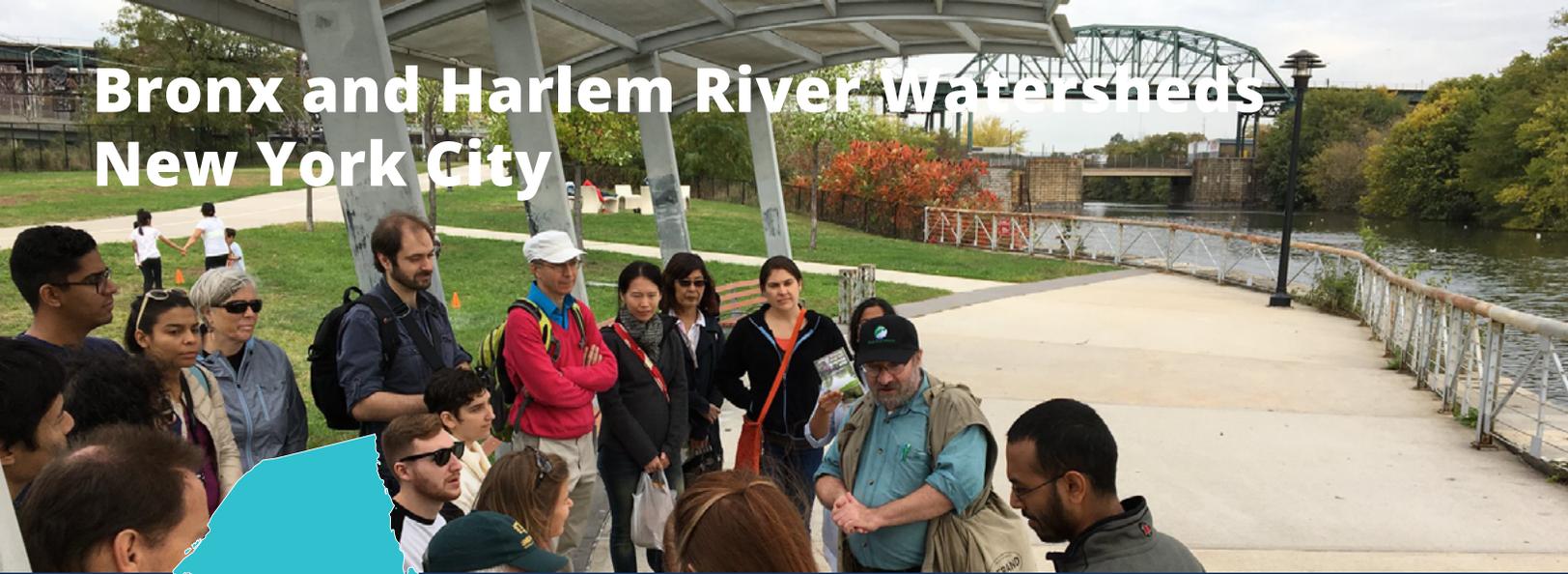
## Key Projects

-  Built new cohort of more than 20 programming partners, including the National Reentry Network for Returning Citizens. The cohort participated in six capacity-building workshops — that each attracted over 200 people — to explore how Anacostia Park programming can best support underserved residents.
-  Managing a water quality monitoring program engaging 40 volunteers in monitoring dissolved oxygen, temperature and conductivity, and reaching 500 community members through forums and sharing monitoring data results.
-  Managing a new Anacostia River Pool project including improving water quality; design, engineering or planning studies exploring where and how a swimming or wading facility would be possible; and community engagement around pertinent restoration issues.



*The Anacostia River watershed is home to 43 species of fish, some 200 species of birds and more than 800,000 people.*

# Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds New York City



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Sara Powell, Natural  
Areas Conservancy**

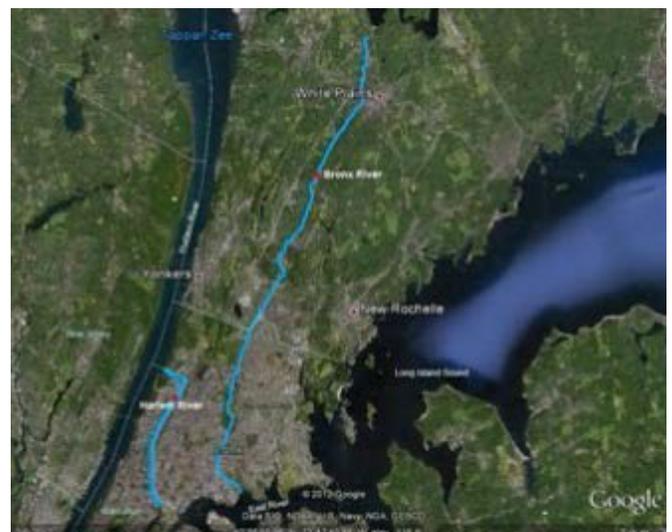
**Total partner  
organizations:  
33**

## Partnership Highlight

New York City Parks, a key partner, released a draft Harlem River Watershed and Natural Resources Management Plan. The Plan included 14 strategies, 75 watershed-wide management recommendations and 98 site-specific recommended actions for ecological restoration, water quality improvement and enhanced access to the Bronx side of the Harlem River. The Plan is intended as a road map for agencies, community partners and other stakeholders in pursuing coordinated resource protection and restoration in the watershed. The final Plan will be published in both English and Spanish in 2020.

## Key Projects

- Providing water and sediment quality monitoring in support of planning for a new 5-acre park on the Harlem River, which will be designed and constructed using more than \$5.6 million in public funds.
- Leveraging nearly \$60 million in improvements to Starlight Park on the Bronx River, including the construction of three new pedestrian bridges. Efforts increased the size of the park by 11 acres and closed a key 2/3-mile gap on the Bronx River Greenway.



*The Harlem River separates the island of Manhattan from the Bronx, and connects the Hudson River and East River/Long Island Sound. The Bronx River originates in upper Westchester County and runs through the heart of the Bronx.*

# Delaware River Watershed Partnership Greater Philadelphia / Delaware / New Jersey



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Emily Baumbach,  
Partnership for the  
Delaware Estuary**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
112**

## Partnership Highlight

The Urban Waters Partnership teamed with the City of Wilmington to begin the construction of the South Wilmington Wetlands Park (Wetlands Park). Funded by a nearly \$3 million grant from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, the Wetlands Park will reduce flooding to the area, restore 14 acres of degraded wetlands, enhance coastal resiliency and create a new park for the community. Phase 1 construction removed 90,000 cubic yards of soil from the site.

## Key Projects

-  Reconnecting residents of the Waterfront South neighborhood with the Delaware River Waterfront by transforming a 5.3-acre Brownfield site (now Phoenix Park) into a park stormwater buffer that manages over 5 million gallons of water.
-  Leveraged state grants of \$1 million to revitalize Philadelphia's 6-acre Graffiti Pier into a waterfront public park.



*The Delaware is the longest undammed river in the United States east of the Mississippi, extending 330 miles from Upstate New York to the mouth of the Delaware Bay.*

# Lower Passaic River Partnership Northeastern New Jersey



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Elizabeth Balladares,  
NY/NJ Harbor and  
Estuary Program**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
29**

## Partnership Highlight

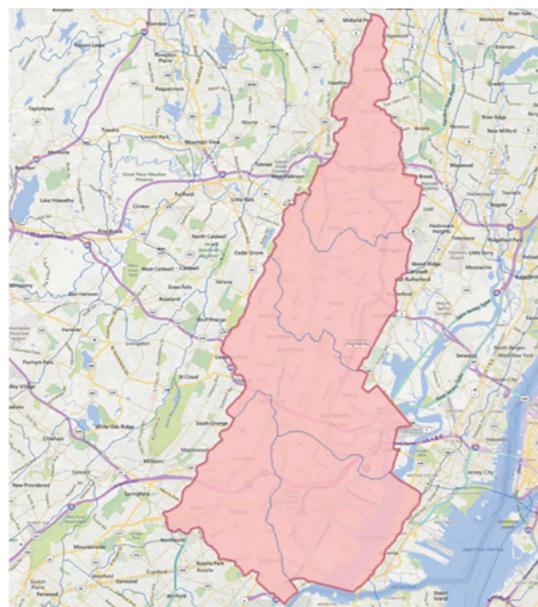
The NY-NJ Harbor & Estuary Program (HEP) provided the City of Passaic with a grant to hold a series of stewardship events focused on the Passaic River and Dundee Island Park, a riverfront park. The stewardship events included a shoreline litter clean up, kayaking excursions on the river and a fishing training program. The Partnership was also directly involved in incorporating HEP's "Stopping Trash Where It Starts" initiative of reducing single use plastics into the stewardship events by providing participants with informational materials on the harmful effects of floatables and single use plastics and encouraging them to sign a plastic free pledge.

## Key Projects

 Javier Laureano, U.S. EPA Region 2 Water Division Director, led a Partnership boat tour attended by 25 stakeholders representing federal, state and nongovernmental organizations. For the first time on the river, stakeholders convened to discuss the status of the river and review of major Urban Waters projects including:

- The Diamond Alkali Superfund Site
- The Minish and Passaic Tidal Project
- The Dundee Island Park Expansions and Recreation Project and the future of public housing on the waterfront

 Worked with U.S. Department of Agriculture - Forest Service Urban Field Station to assess stewardship attitudes and interests in the community.



*The Passaic River's lower reach is a 17-mile tidal stretch from Dundee Dam in Garfield, New Jersey, to Newark Bay.*

# Mystic River Partnership Greater Boston, Massachusetts



**Federal Lead:**



**Ambassador:**

**Darya Mattes,  
Groundwork  
Somerville**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
44**

## Partnership Highlight

Building off of the Mystic River Watershed Eutrophication Analysis, members of the Partnership led five in-person meetings with watershed communities to discuss nutrient reduction strategies, including stormwater management retrofit programs. Following the project, the town of Arlington built 11 small-scale infiltration trenches. The trenches are estimated to remove 35% of the total phosphorus loading from the contributing drainage area. The town plans to build an additional 18 systems and will work with the Mystic River Watershed Association to sustain projects in the future.

## Key Projects

- Advancing water quality-focused stormwater management programs in the watershed, based on evidence that stormwater runoff is a major source of nutrient pollution in the Mystic River and its tributaries.
- U.S. EPA provided technical assistance to examine local development ordinances in six communities, resulting in actions to advance requirements related to stormwater runoff and quality. Together, the six communities cover approximately one-fourth of the watershed. They are home to over a quarter million people, and are estimated to collectively serve over 100,000 residents in the Mystic River Watershed, one of the most densely populated watersheds in New England.



*The Mystic River Watershed is a collection of rivers, streams, lakes and ponds that drain into an area of approximately 76 square miles and 21 municipalities north of Boston.*

# Patapsco Watershed Partnership Baltimore, Maryland



**Federal Lead:**



**Ambassador:**

University of  
Maryland Extension

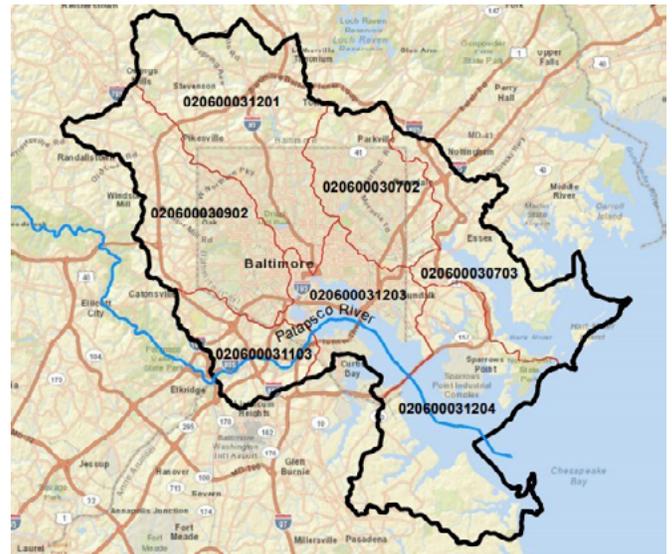
**Total partner  
organizations:**  
**30**

## Partnership Highlight

With funding from the U.S. Department Agriculture - Forest Service, the Green Resources and Outreach for Watersheds (GROW) Center events, pop-ups and workshops were visited by 695 participants, representing over 100 neighborhoods in Baltimore. The events distributed 376 trees and over 39 cubic yards of mulch, over \$2,000 worth of native plants and 121 recycling bins, and offered 16 workshops on community greening and stormwater management. The GROW Centers were a natural outgrowth of the Partnership's [Green Pattern Book](#), a resource of strategies to help green Baltimore's vacant lands, improve water quality and implement stormwater solutions.

## Key Projects

- Re-greening hundreds of vacant lots into parks, vegetable gardens and raingardens to address stormwater contamination of city rivers, community flooding and community beautification, for a total of more than 800 community managed open spaces in Baltimore.
- Facilitating the Actionable Science Flood Team, establishing a new, broad network of organizations to address the increasing frequency and severity of flooding in central Maryland. The team is working to enhance collaboration between researchers and practitioners while educating policy makers and the public about the flooding issues the area faces.



*The Patapsco River flows to the Baltimore City Harbor and ultimately into the Chesapeake Bay. The watershed includes Maryland's largest population area of approximately 650,000 people.*

# Caño Martín Peña Partnership San Juan, Puerto Rico



**Federal Lead:**



**Ambassador:**

**Ingrid Vila, San  
Juan Bay Estuary**

**Total partner  
organizations:**

**30**

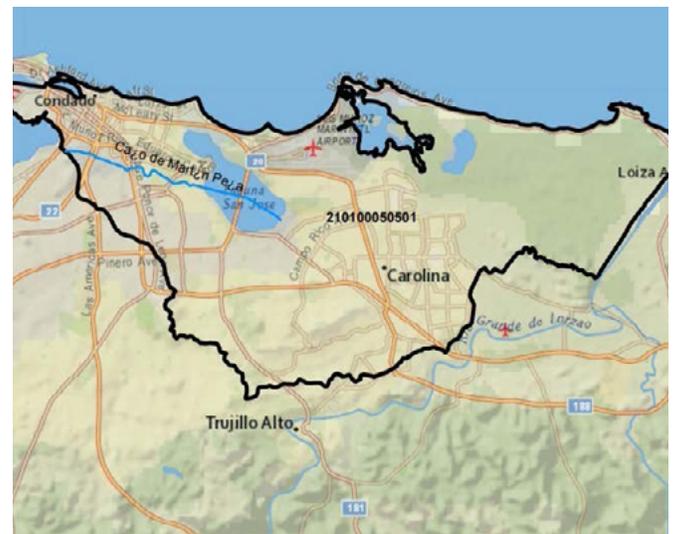
## Partnership Highlight

The Urban Waters Ambassador and the San Juan Bay Estuary Program initiated efforts to draft a Federal Emergency Management Agency-approved Watershed Comprehensive Mitigation Plan. In the aftermath of Hurricane Maria, they created Resilient Community Hubs, which provide:

- workshops for residents,
- create spaces to address community needs after emergencies and throughout the year and
- establish labs for citizen scientists to monitor environmental changes in their surroundings.

## Key Projects

- Working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dredge the channel to re-establish the hydraulic connection between the San José Lagoon and the San Juan Bay. The project will include conservation areas for mangrove wetlands as well as waterfront plazas to provide continued access to the channel.
- Designing a baseball field using green infrastructure to serve as water detention during community flooding events, funded by State Revolving Fund grants.
- Developing a stormwater management plan for the Caño Martín Peña District using green infrastructure in combination with gray infrastructure.



*The Martín Peña Channel is a 3.75-mile long tidal channel within the San Juan Bay Estuary in Puerto Rico, the only tropical estuary within the National Estuary Program. 26,000 residents live in the watershed.*



# Proctor Creek Watershed Partnership Atlanta, Georgia



**Federal Lead:**



**Ambassador:**

**Darryl Haddock, West  
Atlanta Watershed  
Alliance**

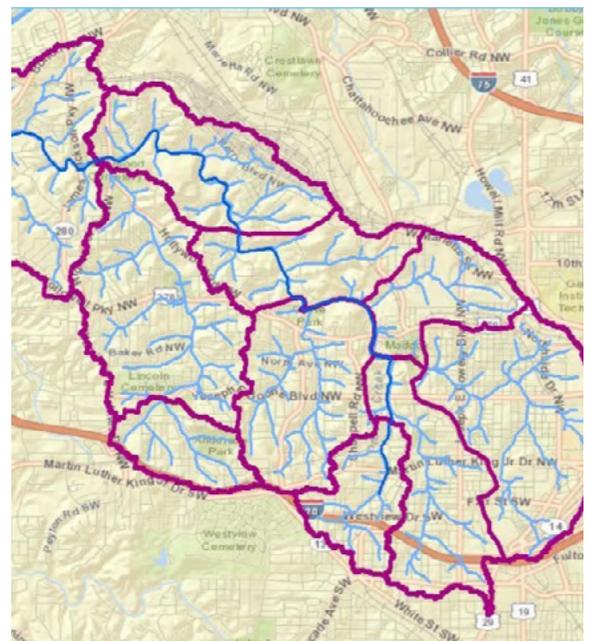
**Total partner  
organizations:  
39**

## Partnership Highlight

The Partnership worked with Coca-Cola, the City of Atlanta and the National Recreation and Park Association to secure five Litter Gitters and one Bandalong Litter Trap for the watershed, which have collected a total of 198 pounds of trash and 106 pounds of recyclables. The traps are expected to collect and reduce 80% of downstream litter in the creek. See this [video](#) on the kickoff event for the trap installation.

## Key Projects

-  Partners U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Mobile District and the City of Atlanta approved the recommended plan of a three-year, joint-funded feasibility study for aquatic ecosystem restoration in the Proctor Creek watershed. The plan proposes to restore 44 acres.
-  Atlanta welcomed its newest green space, a 4.5-acre site that offers dramatic views of the city's skyline in a part of town that was in need of public green space. The groups involved signed a memorandum of understanding pledging to transform the area into a public green space and maintain it for years to come.
-  Collected i-Tree Suite report data outlining estimated economic and environmental benefits to the watershed for community and developer sustainable development.
-  Monitoring plan completed for Proctor Creek to provide water quality data to the City of Atlanta and the state of Georgia by collecting baseline dry and wet weather data and fish tissue data which will be used to clean up the creek.



*The Proctor Creek watershed covers about 28 square miles in southwest Atlanta and flows up to the Chattahoochee River.*

# San Antonio River Basin Partnership San Antonio, Texas



Federal Lead:



Ambassador:

Julio Beltran, U.S.  
Geological Survey

Total partner  
organizations:  
**56**

## Partnership Highlight

U.S. Geological Survey and U.S. EPA led Partnership efforts to partially fund the City of San Antonio's Ozone Attainment Program, since high levels of smog have the potential to negatively impact San Antonio's water quality. The Partnership has supported outreach to local communities and solicited input on the City of [San Antonio's Ozone Attainment Master Plan](#). The plan sets forth actions to achieve EPA's ozone attainment standard of 70 parts per billion by December 2020.

## Key Projects

-  Published a "Pre-Disaster Toolkit for Small- to Medium-Sized Communities" based on seven local workshops led by EPA Region 6 across Texas that extracted and identified best practices from Hurricane Harvey response efforts.
-  Leading the Mission Reach Ecosystem Restoration and Recreation project to transform an 8-mile stretch of the San Antonio River and restore significant ecological functions and values to a section of the river that had been converted to a channel for flood control.
-  Tracking 201 different species of birds, some of which are endangered, through an aviary survey. Efforts support the Migratory Bird Treaty Act.



*The San Antonio River Basin extends through 15 counties in south Texas. The San Antonio River, with its headwaters in Bexar County, is the basin's major river flowing 240 miles to San Antonio Bay and the Gulf of Mexico.*

# Grand River Partnership Grand Rapids, Michigan



## Federal Leads:



## Ambassador:

**Matt Chapman, Grand Rapids White Water**

**Total partner organizations: 33**

## Partnership Highlight

The Grand River is undergoing a major legacy conservation effort to restore 127 acres of its urban waters. The project is estimated to have a robust economic impact of \$15-19 million annually, bringing more than 500,000 visitors to the river per year and create 80-100 new jobs. Grand Rapids Whitewater, the lead Partnership organization, secured \$4.4 million in new public and foundation funding for Grand River [restoration efforts](#).

## Key Projects

- Engaged over 2,600 residents through 40 community presentations to provide feedback on how they would like to connect with and use the river area in the future.
- NFWF Urban Waters grant allowed for 60 residential “rainscaping” site assessments and installation of bioswales and rain gardens, involving 22 partners and over 200 volunteers.
- Students installed approximately 50,000 square feet of bioswale and rain gardens in the Plaster Creek and Grand River watersheds.
- Students and residents helped propagate 50,000 native plants to be used in green infrastructure installations.
- Provided maintenance on 12 acres of green infrastructure.
- Reducing bacterial and nutrient contamination, as well as addressing flooding issues due to more frequent and larger storm events.



*The Grand River is the longest river in Michigan, flowing over 250 miles before emptying into Lake Michigan. The river runs through the City of Grand Rapids, which was named for the natural rapids located in the heart of the downtown area.*

# Meramec and Big River Partnership Near St. Louis, Missouri



**Federal Lead:**



**Ambassador:**

**Mary Grace  
Lewandowski, East-  
West Gateway Council  
of Governments**

**Total partner  
organizations:**

**28**

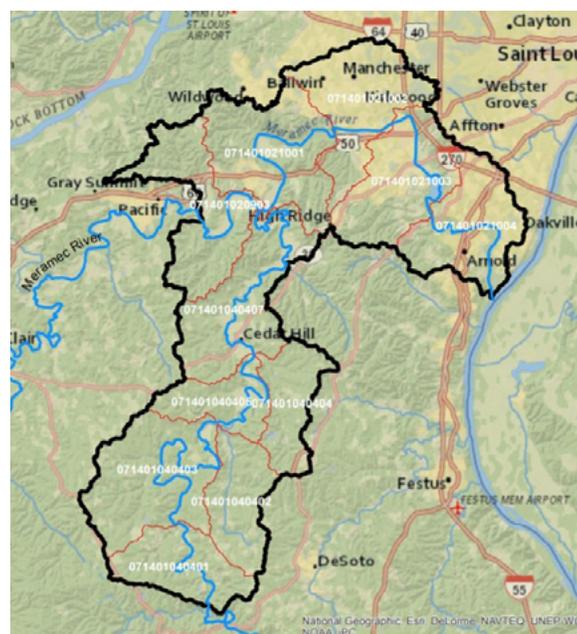


## Partnership Highlight

U.S. EPA jointly worked with the St. Louis District and plans to continue coordination with the District in the Meramec River Basin Ecosystem Restoration Project. The ecosystem restoration project is a joint partnership working with The Nature Conservancy and co-funded for \$2.38 million by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and Missouri Department of Natural Resources, providing planning through design, and ultimately construction of a cost-effective project that will protect, enhance and restore the degraded aquatic ecosystem within the Meramec River Basin. The Agency Recommended Plan will restore approximately 1,600 acres of aquatic and riparian habitat in the Meramec River Basin at a total project cost of approximately \$92.5 million.

## Key Projects

- Facilitating technical input to assist the completion of the U.S. EPA Superfund treatability study along five locations on the Big River.
- Natural Resource Damage Assessment and Restoration Trustees from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Missouri Department of Natural Resources, U.S. EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers secured \$24 million for bank stabilization and riparian corridor restoration.
- USACE hosted a Paddle Your Parks event with 225 fourth-graders at George Winter Park in Fenton, Missouri to learn about water quality issues.



*The Meramec River is one of the longest free flowing rivers in Missouri and contains nationally significant ecological resources. The Meramec flows for over 220 miles before emptying into the Mississippi River.*

# Middle Blue River Partnership Kansas City, Missouri/Kansas



**Federal Lead:**



**Ambassador:**

**Jill Erickson, Heartland  
Conservation Alliance**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
38**



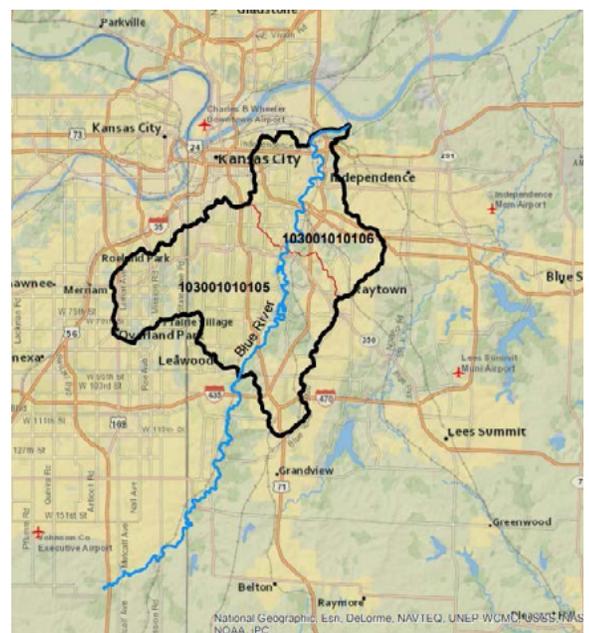
## Partnership Highlight

The Partnership leveraged a U.S. EPA Urban Waters Small Grant to catalyze restoration and action on roughly 18 acres of land in six action areas along the Blue River.

Through \$1.2 million in funding from federal, state and local entities, the Partnership restored 23 acres of wetland habitat and engaged 150 people at five community days at its Municipal Farm site and reached more than 152,000 with its Renew the Blue campaign.

## Key Projects

-  Published the first [Blue River Report Card](#) with six indicators to determine the overall health of the river: community connection, development, governance, habitat, recreation and water quality. The river received a passing grade in its first report card evaluation.
-  Graduated 50 trained stewards from four underserved communities through the [Green Guard Stewardship program](#).
-  Created a Blue River [documentary](#) including personal stories about threats to the Blue River and the benefits of protecting it.



*Approximately 200,000 people call the Middle Blue watershed home, with that population only expected to increase.*

# Northwest Indiana Partnership



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Jennifer Birchfield,  
Purdue University**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
70**

## Partnership Highlight

The Partnership made significant accomplishments related to land revitalization:

- Along Trail Creek, 24 acres of a former unregulated dump site were remediated.
- Near Deep River, 40 acres of farmland were converted to native grasslands to improve water quality.
- Along the shore of Lake Michigan, at Jeorse Park Beach, 16 acres of dune and swale habitat were restored. Beach best management practices are being implemented to improve water quality.

## Key Projects

- Local partners secured nearly \$3 million in grants to advance green infrastructure and streambank stabilization projects that will restore urban waters and revitalize communities.
- 168,000 cubic yards of contaminated sediment was dredged and removed from the Grand Calumet River.
- CommuniTree worked with more than 500 volunteers to plant over 2,000 trees in 10 low-income communities.
- More than 6,000 students and residents learned about local waterways and natural resources as part of partners' watershed education programs, which featured paddling with Canoemobile.



*The Northwest Indiana Urban Waters Partnership region contains more than 1,200 miles of waterways, 45 miles of Lake Michigan shoreline and over 15,000 acres of National Park land with globally rare dune and swale habitat and a range of threatened and endangered species.*

# Western Lake Erie Basin Partnership Near Toledo, Ohio



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**  
**American Rivers**

**Total partner organizations:**  
**48**

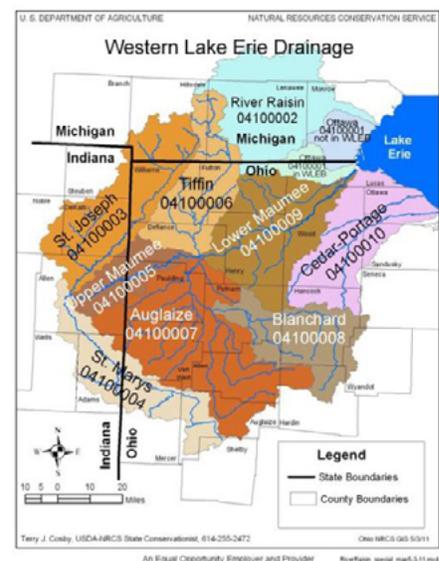
## Partnership Highlight

With education and youth engagement as a priority, 13 partners were able to offer four days of educational programming at three parks in the Toledo area. More than 300 people completed monitoring of Toledo area streams and entered 10 years of historical data into a new water quality database.

## Key Projects

Funding from Urban Waters grants and the cooperation of local partners helped to accomplish the following:

- The Junction community developed an urban greening plan and implemented green infrastructure installations.
- Successful stream cleanup events hosted 1,165 volunteers and collected 22,941 pounds of trash in the Toledo area.
- Outreach events helped educate 3,249 local residents on issues and potential solutions in the Maumee River watershed.



*The Western Lake Erie Basin is almost 6 million acres in size. The basin drains portions of 29 counties into the shallow western third of Lake Erie and is home to over two million citizens.*

# Green-Duwamish Watershed Partnership Seattle, Washington



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Weston Brinkley,  
Street Sounds  
Ecology, LLC**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
50**

## Partnership Highlight

At 45.4 acres, the largest potential site to restore shallow-water estuarine habitat on the Duwamish River is the Desimone Oxbow. Seattle University students were engaged to evaluate how green infrastructure can support salmon population recovery in the Duwamish River at the Desimone Oxbow.

The team developed three conceptual design alternatives for redevelopment, each addressing the need for shallow-water tidally inundated habitat, with two of the three designs incorporating commercial development. They also produced a summary of estuarine habitat restoration on the Duwamish containing a variety of vital factors to successful redevelopment.

## Key Projects

- Implementation of a communications strategy with local Green the Green network to organize revegetation efforts in the Lower Green River.
- Conducted a Riparian Restoration Return on Investment study with American Rivers to analyze the impact that floodplain restoration projects have on property values.
- Conducted a community-led air quality monitoring project, using trees and moss as air quality indicators. More than 60 moss samples from street trees were prepared for laboratory analysis, which are being analyzed for 29 different heavy metals as an indicator of air pollution.



*The Green-Duwamish Watershed flows for over 93 miles beginning at the crest of the Cascade Mountains and ending as it empties into Elliott Bay in downtown Seattle.*

# Los Angeles River Watershed Partnership Los Angeles, California



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Justin Yee, National  
Park Service**

**Total partner  
organizations:  
46**

## Partnership Highlight

Released in 2019 and initiated by the Partnership, the [U.S. Bureau of Reclamation \(BoR\) study](#) on improving ecosystem services demonstrates how the riverbed of urban channels can be redesigned to provide improved habitat and fish passage. Several non-governmental partners assisted with the research study. Through multiple Partnership meetings, BoR received valuable feedback and direction, including important parameters on species and design features. Following release of the study, Los Angeles River stakeholders received a grant to develop partial designs for a reach that includes the pilot site for this study.

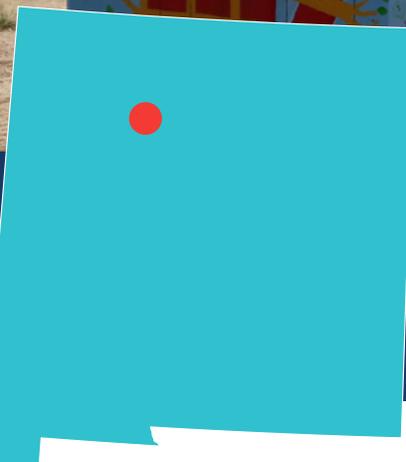
## Key Projects

-  U.S. Department of Agriculture – Forest Service and Loyola Marymount University released the [LA River StewMAP survey](#) to better connect potential volunteers, agencies, donors and stewardship groups to convene action around watershed goals.
-  Developed designs and secured brownfields remediation funding for transformation of the City's 42-acre parcel along the river, called the Taylor Yard G2 River Park Project.
-  Finalized a strategic plan titled, "Pathway to Parks & Affordable Housing Joint Development."



*The Los Angeles River flows from its headwaters in the Angeles National Forest to the Pacific Ocean in Long Beach. Fifty one miles long, the river covers 870 square miles of watershed and winds through 14 cities.*

# Middle Rio Grande Partnership Albuquerque, New Mexico



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Shelby Stimson, The Nature Conservancy**

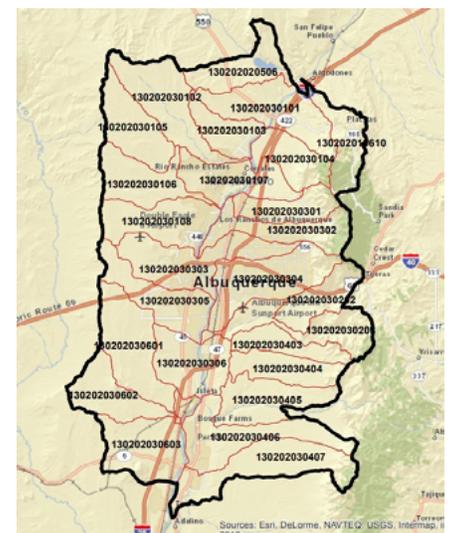
**Total partner organizations:  
30**

## Partnership Highlight

Multiple Urban Waters partners completed the construction and grand opening of Albuquerque's first "Mobile Pop-up Park." This project transformed a vacant lot into a community green space with native trees and plants, benches and shade structure, sculpture art and mural walls and rainwater catchment storage on site. The park was built to be transportable and a replicable model for other underserved communities. The location of the park was chosen to prioritize a low-income area, with the highest population density and only 3% tree canopy and green space, suffering extreme heat island impacts.

## Key Projects

-  Bernalillo County was awarded the \$220,000 grant which will be used to install green stormwater infrastructure and low impact landscaping along recreational trails at the Valle de Oro Urban Wildlife Refuge.
-  The 10-acre South Valley Health Commons site will provide a platform for five new businesses focused on health and wellness. The project also aids in stormwater management by utilizing an existing 2.5-acre storm drainage pond for an orchard with walking trails. The project promotes water conservation and building material reuse.



*The Rio Grande is over 1,900 miles long, running from its headwaters in the San Juan Mountains near Creede, Colorado and flowing into the Gulf of Mexico.*

# Rio Reimagined – Salt and Middle Gila River Watershed Partnership



**Federal Leads:**



**Ambassador:**

**Arizona State University  
(interim)**

**Total partner organizations:  
89**

## Partnership Highlight

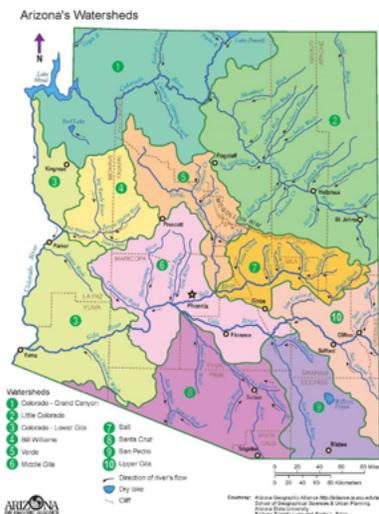
In conjunction with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community and the City of Mesa, the ecosystem restoration and recreation project for the approximate 14-mile reach of the Salt River would consist of approximately 5.1 miles of multi-use trails, parking lots, rest stops and interpretive signs. Implementing the plan would restore and improve approximately 1,485 acres of habitat, including 880 acres of cottonwood/willow community, 380 acres of mesquite bosque, 200 acres of wetlands and 25 acres of Sonoran Desert scrub. Additionally, about 2,600 acres of existing cover type would be improved through invasive species control. This plan would support endangered and special species recovery, improve water quality, and restore greater ecological balance in the project area.

## Key Projects

Tempe Town Lake, Arizona's second-most visited public attraction, has a Master Plan with 12 zones for design, recreation and entertainment improvements with a cost of construction estimated at a total of \$381 million. The success of the lake is inspiring other revitalization efforts in the river corridor.

The Tres Rios Environmental Restoration Partnership Highlight project involves the rehabilitation of nearly 700 acres in and around the Salt River, restoring a vital wetland and riparian habitat.

Maricopa County (MC) is updating its multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan, and in December 2019 U.S. EPA, Federal Emergency Management Agency, the City of Phoenix, City of Tempe and MC Flood Control District held a planning workshop to understand local jurisdictional needs. The County is using this information to update the multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan that is slated for release in 2020.



*The Salt River and Middle Gila River Watershed includes 58 miles along both the Salt and Gila Rivers, with its headwaters from three larger watersheds: the Salt which starts west of Alpine, Arizona; the Upper Gila which starts east of Baldy Mountain in New Mexico; and the San Pedro which starts in Mexico.*

# South Platte Watershed Partnership Denver, Colorado



Federal Leads:



Ambassador:

Sam Haas, Peak  
Facilitation Group

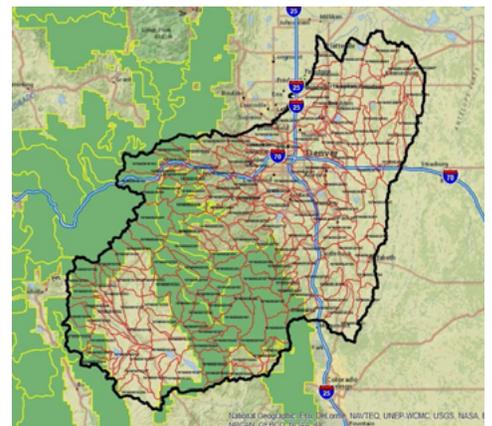
Total partner  
organizations:  
83

## Partnership Highlight

The South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership funded a critical update to its local [Water Quality Assessment Tool](#), shifting from a static platform to one that will continually update, pulling data from the Water Quality Portal. The tool provides both context and direct access to cross-jurisdictional water quality data for the Denver metro area and shows a snapshot of conditions for water quality parameters, including E. coli, contaminants of emerging concern, total dissolved solids, total suspended solids, selenium and nutrients. The tool makes water quality data easily accessible to the public, including teachers who use this data for classroom learning, and provides storylines that assist the public in taking action to improve water quality. The Partnership's Science and Data Committee is collaborating with water utilities, state, city and county entities, non-profit organizations, academic partners and three Urban Waters Federal Partnership agencies on the project.

## Key Projects

-  Leveraging Urban Waters funding with U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. EPA, city, county, district and private sector funds to complete a longitudinal study of the South Platte for orthophosphate.
-  Conducting the Sun Valley Green Infrastructure Study — a groundbreaking study of four different alternatives for managing stormwater that demonstrated the cost effectiveness of green infrastructure through looking at capital and 20-year maintenance costs.
-  Developing a professional development unit (PDU) focused on water education. PDUs are action-learning courses designed for Denver Public School teachers for topics of student need. This would package together a choice of tours and trainings that could improve teachers' practice when it comes to teaching students about water and engaging students on locally relevant water issues. Implementation of this course will empower students to take on critical water challenges and contribute to community discourse and decision-making regarding solutions to water issues.



*The South Platte River is one of the two principal tributaries of the Platte River, flowing through Colorado and Nebraska.*

# Five Star Urban Waters and Environmental Justice Grants

## Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grants

The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program is a public-private partnership that combines federal and private sector grant funding from: U.S. EPA, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's – Forest Service, the U.S. Department of Interior's Fish and Wildlife Service, Southern Company and FedEx. The grants help states leverage resources and build community capacity for restorative projects that address core Clean Water Act goals.

42 projects funded by Urban Waters Federal Partnership agencies closed in the 2019 calendar year. Non-federal project funds and grantee matching contributions leveraged total federal funding of \$1.2 million at a one-to-one ratio — providing \$2.4 million.

**22 new grants were awarded in 2019 to address stormwater runoff and improve water quality.**

### 2019 Five Star Statistics

|   |  |                           |
|---|--|---------------------------|
| <b>564,200</b> gallons of stormwater runoff prevented (across three projects) | <b>469</b> organizations contributing to project goals   |                           |
| <b>20,100</b> marsh plants, seeds, and native grasses planted                 |  |                           |
| <b>38,193</b> volunteers  | <b>34</b> projects that directly contributed to environmental justice goals in underserved and under-resourced communities | <b>483</b> acres restored |
| <b>12,898</b> trees planted   |  | <b>389</b> jobs created   |

## Environmental Justice Small Grants

The U.S. EPA Environmental Justice and Urban Waters Programs partnered in 2018 and 2019 to provide funding and expertise to underserved communities disproportionately impacted by clean water issues, while giving preference to projects located in qualified Opportunity Zones, as designated in the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act.

The Urban Waters Program funded 10 small grants — a project for each U.S. EPA Region across the country. The small grants provide direct funding to community-based organizations and tribes for projects that help residents of underserved communities understand and address local environmental and public health issues. The 10 Urban Waters-funded projects address urban watershed issues including disaster resiliency, toxic water-based algal blooms, local green infrastructure development and watershed restoration. Visit U.S. EPA's website for additional information on the grant awards.

## Five Star Project Spotlights:

### Washington State Salmon Restoration

Restored 14.4 acres of riparian habitat. Improved 2 miles of riverbank through hands-on salmon recovery work. 1,671 volunteers learned how to properly plant 5,202 trees, preventing 520,200 gallons of stormwater runoff captured by new green infrastructure practices on 16 stream sites.

### Anacostia Mussel Restoration Project

7,000 freshwater mussels to filter up to 26 million gallons of water annually in the Anacostia River in the District of Columbia, improving water quality conditions and aquatic biodiversity.

Lays groundwork for future mussel restoration efforts by determining suitable habitats and feasibility and educating and engaging more than 500 people in mussel propagation.

# The Urban Waters Learning Network

The [Urban Waters Learning Network](#) (UWLN) provides support and opportunities for members to share successful strategies, challenges and resources from across the country to improve urban waterways and revitalize the neighborhoods around them.

The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program is a partner in the UWLN, and manages all funding that goes to UWLN coordinators, Groundwork USA and River Network. Groundwork USA and River Network provide assistance and guidance to U.S. EPA Headquarters and Regional staff in identifying and reviewing tools for practitioners use and providing input on potential U.S. EPA-sponsored initiatives, conferences and training opportunities.

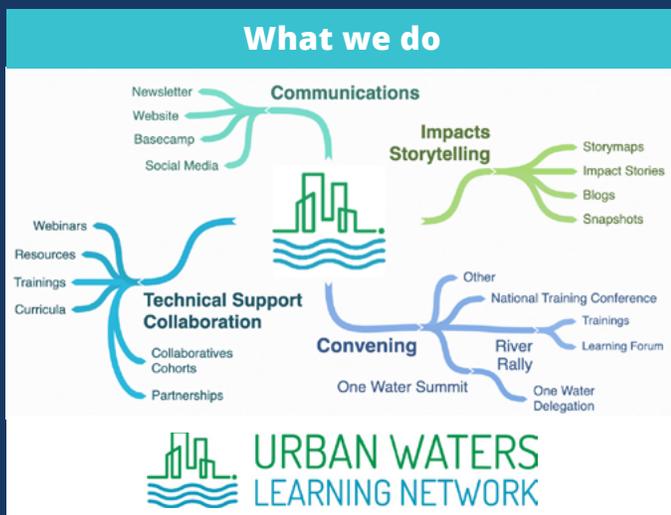
## UWLN Highlights

**585** members (up from 380 in 2016)

**7** webinars with **764** attendees

**24** person Urban Waters Delegation at the U.S. Water Alliance One Water Summit

- Established a new communication channel on Basecamp for environmental justice resources and topics for the EPA's National Estuary Program, which encompasses 28 major coastal watersheds
- New Interactive [Story Map](#) telling the story of Urban Waters locations' history and impact



### Expanded and initiated working groups on emergent themes.

The UWLN introduced two more working groups for **Anti-Displacement Strategies** and **Building Resilient Communities**. The working groups will compile existing resources and tools, identify the needs of UWLN practitioners and develop original resources addressing these themes.



# National Accomplishments by Federal Partners

In the past year, the UW Federal Workgroup, with representatives from the 15 agencies in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership, reached consensus to achieve:

**20**  
Locations in  
**2020**

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership coordinated on the approval of the 20th Urban Waters location—the Rio Reimagined - Salt/Gila River Watershed Partnership in Phoenix, Arizona—the first new location since San Antonio in 2015.

## A unified vision for the future of the program

The Federal Workgroup issued the “Sustaining the Urban Waters Program in 2020 and Beyond: New Strategies to Support the Program,” laying out a number of key programmatic adjustments and refinements that will strengthen the program moving forward.

## UW Federal Partner Spotlights:

### U.S. Environmental Protection Agency



**Program Sustainability** – The Urban Waters Program is looking to expand and diversify the funding base that supports the program through engaging new partners and strategizing how to leverage all available support in locations. The program developed a strategy, resources and tools to promote best practices for accessing non-federal resources.

### Strengthening Local Responses to Natural Disasters

U.S. EPA strengthened Urban Waters Partnerships’ response to natural disasters through funding from EPA’s Non-Point Source Management Program, which provides technical assistance to incorporate low-impact development (LID) and green infrastructure (GI) into hazard mitigation planning.

Two Urban Waters Partnerships received funding from the U.S. EPA Non-Point Source Program. The GI/LID teams will provide technical assistance to identify suitable sites for GI/LID, suggest methods to incorporate GI/LID into existing multi-jurisdictional planning activities and hold training workshops for local communities. These efforts will enable the Partnership communities to strengthen their responses to natural disasters.

### U.S. Department of the Interior



The Department of the Interior (DOI) advances the goals of the Urban Waters Program by coordinating the work of its bureaus in Urban Waters locations as well as providing national policy coordination. For example, in 2019, DOI, through U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), invested \$1.2 million in on-the-ground projects related to Urban Waters in locations across the country. Additionally, 42 staff from DOI in four bureaus (USGS, FWS, National Park Service and Bureau of Reclamation) support the day-to-day operations of the 20 Urban Waters locations. DOI also facilitated information exchange among local partners in many ways, including newsletters and facilitated meetings. DOI played an instrumental role in planning the designation event and follow-up workshop for the launch of the 20th Urban Waters location, Rio Reimagined.

# UW Federal Partner Spotlights

## U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) – Forest Service



The Forest Service (FS) leads U.S. Department of Agriculture engagement in the Partnership, advancing the UW Program as a multi-departmental initiative and leading interagency collaboration in five locations (Patapsco River Watershed, LA River, Northwest Indiana, South Platte River and Green-Duwamish). Staff from all three mission areas of the agency (State and Private Forestry, Research and Development and National Forest System) participate in and provide technical assistance to 13 Partnership locations. This year, FS was able to provide direct Ambassador and project funding to seven locations as well as funding the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grants Program alongside U.S. EPA and U.S. DOI. FS staff also provided technical assistance to UW locations through webinars, workshops and toolkits on topics such as Urban Heat Islands, Green Stormwater Infrastructure, Stewardship Mapping, Tree Planting and Maintenance and Urban Wood Academies.

USDA's National Resources Conservation Service also provides leadership in two Partnership sites and provided significant project funding through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program.

## DOI – U.S. Geological Survey (USGS)



USGS appropriation included **\$717,000** in funds through the National Water Quality Program as directed Cooperative Matching Funds (CMF) to support USGS-UWFP joint projects. USGS funded **11 UWFP projects in nine Urban Waters locations in FY19**; projects included local partner matches for a total of approximately **\$1.4 million in leveraged funds**. All funded projects have buy-in from the local Urban Waters Ambassador and local partners and include a water-quality component that involves monitoring, assessment or modeling. More information about funded projects is available at [USGS' Urban Waters webpage](#).

Through these funded projects, significant progress was made to install water-quality probes and gages, and collect, process and analyze surface water and groundwater samples.

Samples included organic contaminants such as per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), nutrients and sediment. Water quality parameters included temperature, pH and dissolved oxygen.

### Geographic areas with projects selected for funding:

[Anacostia River Watershed](#)—Washington, DC, area  
[Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds](#)—New York, NY  
[Delaware River Watershed](#)—Greater Philadelphia, PA, area  
[Grand and Little Calumet Rivers](#)—Northwest Indiana  
[Lake Pontchartrain](#)—New Orleans, LA, area  
[Los Angeles River Basin](#)—California  
[Lower Duwamish Waterway](#)—Seattle, WA, area  
[Lower Gila River](#)—Phoenix, AZ, area  
[Lower Passaic River Basin](#)—Newark, NJ, area  
[Middle Blue River](#)—Kansas City, MO, area  
[Middle Rio Grande](#)—Albuquerque, NM, area  
[Patapsco Watershed](#)—Baltimore, MD, area  
[San Antonio River Basin](#)—Texas  
[South Platte River](#)—Denver, CO, area

# A Message from the Program

Through all the projects, programs and accomplishments highlighted in this report, the Urban Waters Program has helped advance water quality improvements and community connections to local waterways across the country. This success would not have been possible without the tireless contributions of federal, state, local, academic and non-profit partners, as well as our vitally important Ambassadors. For more information about the UW Program, please visit [urbanwaters.gov](http://urbanwaters.gov).

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**URBANWATERS**  
FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP  
Restoring Urban Waters, Revitalizing Communities