

BRINGING LIFE BACK TO THE LOWER PASSAIC RIVER

THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

The Passaic River is one of eleven newly selected locations for the nation's 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 and White House Council on Environmental Quality, 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

ABOUT THE PASSAIC RIVER PARTNERSHIP

The Lower Passaic River Urban Waters Federal Partnership strives to support watershed revitalization through sediment cleanups, water quality improvements, ecosystem restoration, economic development, environmental education and an increase in recreation and navigation opportunities. The Federal partner agencies, led by EPA and USACE, will work with the City of Newark, other interested municipalities, State of New Jersey agencies, Ironbound Community Corporation (ICC) and other local non-governmental organizations.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW

In an effort to improve water quality, make public access safe, and restore the watershed's ecosystem, here are some federal and local projects the Partnership is currently engaged in:

Sediment Cleanup – Under Superfund and the Water Resources Development Act, EPA, USACE, NOAA, USFWS, NJDOT and NJDEP formed a partnership to produce a comprehensive cleanup and restoration study of the river. This study is ongoing. The first phase of cleanup was recently completed in Newark, where 40,000 cubic yards of the most concentrated inventory of dioxin-contaminated sediment were dredged, processed and disposed of. Under EPA's Superfund Job Training Initiative (SuperJTI), 15 Newark residents were trained to do hazardous waste cleanups and employed on site.

Ecosystem Restoration Planning – Ecosystem restoration planning efforts for the river and its tributaries are ongoing and have focused on identifying opportunities to restore valuable habitat including wetlands, riparian shorelines, fish and benthic communities and tributary connections, while improving water quality and public access. The goal is to develop a plan that integrates agencies' and stakeholders' visions for a restored ecosystem.

Public Participation – A Community Advisory



ABOUT THE COMMUNITY AND THE LOWER PASSAIC RIVER

The Lower Passaic River, a 17-mile, tidal portion of the river in northeast New Jersey, flows from Dundee Dam to Newark Bay through 13 municipalities. A center of the industrial revolution - the river has been subject to years of industrial, stormwater and CSO discharges contaminating the sediments with dioxin, PCBs, mercury, DDT, pesticides and heavy metals. The river also has a lack of public access points, fish and shellfish consumption advisories and a large amount of debris. The communities have suffered a loss of use and economic viability. Operating and abandoned industrial facilities, an incinerator, landfill and state and federal contaminated sites dot the landscape while a severe lack of open space persists. The area is surrounded by railroad tracks, major highways, ports, transit hubs and an airport. The Ironbound section of Newark, a highly industrialized and densely populated area, has suffered the longest history of impacts.

Group (CAG), established 3 years ago, meets monthly and is an important resource for soliciting feedback and enhancing the actions of individual CAG members and the group as a whole. The CAG enabled several improvements to the first sediment cleanup, including the use of SuperJTI. EPA and the USACE post meeting dates and study updates on www.ourpassaic.org.

Public Access/Education – ICC, in partnership with the City of Newark, is an Urban Waters grant recipient. The project partners will lead riverfront tours and workshops to introduce Newark residents and others to the area's history and ecosystem, and programming on the river's edge to celebrate, learn about and improve the river. In 2012, the County of Essex and City of Newark opened Newark's first segment of public riverfront park with over 12 acres of athletic fields, playgrounds and walking paths. Learn more at <http://www.newarkriver.wordpress.com>.

WHAT'S NEXT

More Sediment Cleanup – Design plans for dredging the top 2 feet of contaminated sediment in Lyndhurst with capping the remaining sediment are expected to be completed in Spring 2013 with work starting in the summer. Also in 2013, EPA will release cleanup plans for the lower 8-miles of the river for public comment.

More Ecosystem Restoration Planning & Implementation – As the consensus restoration plan is completed and remedial decisions are made, restoration activities could be advanced and implemented by our governmental partners, stakeholders or Potentially Responsible Parties. In parallel, USACE will continue its Feasibility Study in order to obtain construction authorization for future restoration actions within the watershed that would bring back critical ecological and economic resources to the region.

More Public Participation – The CAG will continue meeting monthly to provide feedback on design plans for the Lyndhurst sediment cleanup, the proposal for the lower 8-mile cleanup and restoration plans. The CAG will also provide the venue for listening to the local communities, so that the bottom-up approach of working with the community can be realized.

More Public Access/Education – In 2013, ICC and the City of Newark will organize a number of public programs, including 2 workshops, 3 boat tours, 2 educational workshops and a riverfront festival to bring Newarkers and others to the water's edge to learn about its past, present and potential future. ICC and the City will also produce a *Back to the River* brochure including information on access points, environmental conditions and more. The City of Newark in partnership with Essex County Parks System and the Trust for Public Land will open a second riverfront park segment, including a walking and biking trail, floating boat dock, riverfront boardwalk and other settings for relaxation, picnics, exercise and environmental education. In addition, a 3-D computer simulated flyover of the river including existing conditions and specific restoration opportunities is available on www.ourpassaic.org for stakeholders to interact with and learn about the future collective vision for the Lower Passaic River.



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. Department of Energy, 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 and U.S. Department of Transportation.

For more information on the Passaic River Urban Waters Federal Partnership, please contact the lead agency representatives:

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