

NEW LIFE FOR THE BRONX & HARLEM RIVER WATERSHEDS

A COMEBACK THROUGH COLLABORATION

ABOUT THE URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

These New York Watersheds are one of seven locations selected for help from the nation's new Urban Waters Federal Partnership. This partnership will reconnect urban communities, particularly those that are overburdened or economically distressed, with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies and collaborating with community-led revitalization efforts to improve our Nation's water systems and promote their economic, environmental and social benefits. Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will:

- Break down federal program silos to promote more efficient and effective use of federal resources through better coordination and targeting of federal investments.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership, by engaging and serving community partners.
- Work with local officials and effective community-based organizations to leverage area resources and stimulate local economies to create local jobs.
- Learn from early and visible victories to fuel long-term action.

Led by these federal agencies and coordinated by the White House Domestic Policy Council, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership closely aligns with and advances the work of the White House's place-based efforts, including the [Partnership for Sustainable Communities](#), to revitalize communities, create jobs and improve the quality of life in cities and towns across the nation. The Urban Waters Federal Partnership also advances the work of the America's Great Outdoors Initiative (<http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>).

For more information, visit www.urbanwaters.gov

ABOUT THE NEW YORK PARTNERSHIP

The Bronx & Harlem River Watersheds Urban Waters Federal Partnership strives to support local watershed revitalization efforts through implementation of economic development, ecological restoration, green infrastructure, improved water quality, better community health, increased recreation and transportation and environmental education. The federal partner agencies will work with the New York Departments of Transportation and Environmental Conservation as well as with the NY City Departments of Parks and Recreation and Transportation and Planning. Other local groups involved are the Bronx River Alliance, Rocking the Boat, Lehman College, The Point Community Development Corporation, Bronx Borough President's Office, Bronx Council on Environmental Quality, Highbridge Community Life Center, Urban Divers Estuary Conservation, Harlem River Working Group, NY-NJ Harbor Estuary Program and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

In an effort to improve water quality, make public access safe, and restore the watersheds and ecosystems, here are some ongoing federal and local projects:

Empowerment and Education – In 2008, Trees New York, in partnership with the USDA Forest Service, created the Bronx Youth Urban Forestry Empowerment Program. The program offered low-income, minority youth an opportunity to take part in a two-month, in-depth urban forestry work experience. Evaluation of this program showed success in raising environmental awareness, changing attitudes toward nature, and increasing stewardship behaviors among the 20 teenage participants.

Community Service – With the motto, "Working for the community to better our lives," the Bronx Helpers Youth Community-Service and Leadership Development Program gave 60 teens the chance to learn about environmental issues and participate in related projects. The intensive summer program, organized by New Settlement Apartments and the USDA Forest Service, gave youth a chance to develop leadership skills and participate in civic engagement and community service.

Ecological Restoration – Oysters were once plentiful in New York City waters. But over the years, the oyster industry has seen a huge decline due to pollution. Improvement has been seen in the last 10 years in terms of the number of oysters in the Bronx River, but these oysters are not safe for people to eat. They are, however, important to the health of the river because they filter large amounts of water creating a better habitat for fish, crabs, worms and barnacles. In 2010, USACE, NOAA, EPA, NYC Parks Natural Resource Group, NY/NY Baykeeper, Hudson River Foundation, the Urban Assembly New York Harbor School, Rocking the Boat, and other local agencies constructed an oyster reef to provide a better place for oysters to live in the Bronx River.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY

The Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds include many community boards in the Bronx as well as municipalities in Westchester County, New York. This program could transform the watersheds into more of a public asset, expanding access to parks and open space while driving environmental literacy and education. The benefits of this project are numerous—assisting the local economy in job creation, connecting people to their urban waters, improving recreation, and protecting public health.



Bronx River

WHAT'S NEXT?

More Access – The National Park Service Rivers & Trails Program is working with the Harlem River Working Group, as well as city & state agencies, to develop a waterfront greenway along the Bronx side of the Harlem River. Public access points for human-powered boaters are also being identified and will be incorporated into the NYC Water Trail. These efforts will provide much needed open space and recreational opportunities along the Harlem River.

More Education – The United States Forest Service will fund Rock the Boat's Bronx River On-Water Education Program in 2011. This Program provides 20 students the opportunity to learn and practice Maritime Skills and to assist with environmental restoration projects three hours a day, three nights a week.

More Green – NOAA is working with the Wildlife Conservation Society, The Bronx River Alliance and the NYC Economic Development Corp. to develop new green space at Hunts Point Landing. Work includes converting an abandoned dead-end street into a public park, including seating areas, picnic tables, a kayak launch, a fishing pier, and a small tidal marsh restoration.

More Conservation –First, NOAA, EPA and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service along with the Wildlife Conservation Society-Bronx Zoo, the NY Botanical Garden, NYC Parks and the Bronx River Alliance have partnered to restore migratory fish passage at the three dams on the Bronx River in NYC. The project is expected to provide river herring and other diadromous fishes access to upstream spawning and rearing habitats. The passages will allow restored recruitment of fish populations so that sustainable fish runs can be restored in the Bronx River.

Second, the New York-New Jersey Harbor National Estuary Program is funding an effort by NYC Parks and Recreation to develop final design plans for passage of migratory fish at two Bronx River dams. Third, the Bronx River Watershed Initiative (funds managed by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation) has contributed over \$6 million to stormwater management projects designed to improve water quality in the river.

ABOUT THE BRONX and HARLEM RIVER WATERSHEDS

The Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds were once varied ecosystems covered by forests, meadows, marshes, and swamps. Today, housing, shopping centers, offices, industry, and golf courses have replaced much of the natural habitat in the area.

This urban development has contributed to pollution and contaminated the watersheds. It has obstructed access to the waterways and, in turn, disconnected communities from benefiting recreationally and economically from them.

The Bronx and Harlem River Watersheds hold enormous potential to provide natural beauty, wildlife habitat, and recreational amenities, helping to improve the quality of life of local residents.



Harlem 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. Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences), U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Department of Transportation, and U.S. Department of Energy.

For more information on the New York Urban Waters Federal Partnership, please contact:

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