

2024 WORK PLAN

Urban Waters Federal Partnership Delaware River Location



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Location: Delaware Estuary

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IMAGE 1: THE DELAWARE ESTUARY, SPANNING 3 STATES.

I. Background

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) is an effort seeking to “revitalize urban waters and the communities that surround them, transforming overlooked assets into treasured centerpieces and drivers of urban revival.” The partnership is an environmental justice program based out of the U.S. EPA in agreement with 15 other federal agencies to align federal programs and investments in urban communities, expand partnerships, build local capacity, and improve the environmental and economic potential of safe and clean urban waters.

The Delaware River Location is one of twenty-one UWFP Locations throughout the United States and Puerto Rico. The Delaware River is the longest un-dammed river in the United States east of the Mississippi and is a drinking water source for over 15 million people (roughly 5% of the nation’s population). The Delaware River Location is unique because it includes a highly urbanized and industrialized river that spans several cities and three states in the Delaware Estuary—the tidal portion of the Delaware River Basin—spanning from Trenton, NJ to the Delaware Bay.

The four cities that comprise the focus area of this location are:

- Camden, New Jersey, population 71,773
- Chester, Pennsylvania, population 32,535
- Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, population 1.576 million
- Wilmington, Delaware, population 70,750

Historically, the Delaware River has been a key social, ecological, and economic resource for the Mid-Atlantic region. The Delaware River or “Lenape Wihittuck” is the ancestral home of the Lenape Native American tribes for at least 10,000 years and provided shad and shellfish as major food sources. Post colonization, Greater Philadelphia became a major industrial area, using the river and land to create commercial wealth. Today, the Lower Delaware River remains one of the largest port areas in the world, although much of the industry has been abandoned, leaving communities disconnected from this important waterway and with legacy pollutants and infrastructure challenges. Due to the large geographic extent and diverse set of environmental and social

issues at hand, restoration requires a large scale focus while advancing small-scale on-the-ground project and programming implementation.

The Delaware River Location also aligns with the National Estuary Program and the Delaware Estuary's Comprehensive Conservation Management Plan. Both the Delaware National Estuary Program and the Delaware River UWFP Location are led by the Partnership for the Delaware Estuary.

This work plan has been developed by partners working in tandem for the Delaware River Location as part of the UWFP. It is intended to detail key partners, define goals, summarize priority projects, and specify milestones.



IMAGE 2: THE DELAWARE RIVERFRONT IN CHESTER, PA. (CREDIT: ERICA ROSSETTI)

II. Workgroup Partners

The following list consists of agencies and organizations that are active members of the UWFP Delaware River Location's monthly workgroup. This list is subject to change, and the workgroup hopes to involve more of the federal agencies that are represented in the UWFP but not yet active in this Location.

Federal Agency Partners

- Department of Agriculture
 - Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS)
 - United States Forest Service (USFS)
- Department of Commerce
 - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- Department of Homeland Security
 - Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Department of Interior
 - Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS)
 - National Park Service (NPS)
 - United States Geological Survey (USGS)
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Inter-State Agency Partners

- Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC)

State Agency Partners

- Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control (DNREC)
- New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJ DEP)
- Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (PA DEP)

Non-governmental Organizations

- Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed (CDRW)
- Delaware Community Benefits Agreement Coalition (DCBAC)
- Partnership for the Delaware Estuary (PDE)
- River Network
- The Nature Conservancy

Academia Partners

- Delaware Sea Grant at the University of Delaware
- Pennsylvania Sea Grant at Penn State University

City Partners

- City of Camden
- City of Chester
- City of Philadelphia Office of Sustainability
- City of Wilmington Parks & Recreation
- Philadelphia Water Department



IMAGE 3: PARTNERS FROM PENNSYLVANIA SEA GRANT ENGAGE ATTENDEES AT THE 2023 CHESTER RIVER FEST IN CHESTER, PA

III. Community Partners

The following list consists of local community organizations that are at the forefront of leading environmental justice projects in their respective cities. The list is currently comprised of organizations that have received past funding or letters of support, as well as organizations that the workgroup hopes to involve as part of a community cohort. This list is subject to fluctuate and may also overlap with the workgroup partners.

| | |
|--|--|
| Camden, NJ <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Camden Community Partnership• Center for Aquatic Sciences• Center for Environmental Transformation• North Camden Community Gardens• Delaware Riverkeeper Network | Chester, PA <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chester Ridley Crum Watershed Association• City of Chester and Shade Tree Commission• Delaware County Riverfront Alliance• 9th Street Youth & Community Center• Making A Change Group |
| Philadelphia, PA <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Awbury Arboretum• Bartram's Gardens• Nicetown-Tioga Improvement Team• Philly Thrive• Riverfront North Partnership• Tookany-Tacony Frankford Watershed | Wilmington, DE <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brandywine River Restoration Trust• Delaware Community Benefits Agreement Coalition• Delaware Nature Society• Green Building United / Northeast Rising• Habitat for Humanity New Castle County• West Side Grows |



IMAGE 4: COMMUNITY PARTNERS WITH A KEYNOTE SPEAKER AT THE 2023 SCIENCE & ENVIRONMENTAL SUMMIT (CREDIT: MELODY MASON)

IV. Overall Goals and Objectives

The Delaware River Location strives to, alongside community members, revitalize and remedy aging infrastructure, redress a history of environmental pollution, and mitigate the brunt of increasing climate change impacts on already-vulnerable communities.

The collaborative priorities for the urban Delaware River Location as follows will all be addressed through environmental, socioeconomic and climate justice lenses.

1. *Clean Waters and Healthy Habitats*

- a. Reduce flooding through stormwater management and climate resiliency
- b. Conserve natural areas and restore lost habitat
- c. Improve water quality in the tributaries and main stem of the Delaware River
- d. Transform Brownfields sites into community assets

2. *Healthy, Resilient, and Accessible Communities*

- a. Build local capacity by training, paying, funding, and empowering communities to become leaders of environmental stewardship
- b. Enhance and create public green space and waterfront access
- c. Increase outdoor recreation
- d. Engage underserved communities
- e. Equip communities to be resilient to climate change impacts
- f. Ensure sustainable development
- g. Support sustainable urban agriculture



IMAGE 5: THE DELAWARE RIVER WATERFRONT IS ACTIVATED WITH HUNDREDS OF COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENTAL EXHIBITORS AT THE RIVER FEST ON MAY 6, 2023. (CREDIT: ERICA ROSSETTI)

V. Delaware River Location 2024 Initiatives

Initiative 1: Fund and Support Restoration and Revitalization Projects

There are many local organizations and community leaders throughout the Delaware River Location doing on-the-ground restoration projects. We aim to support these projects both financially and technically, specifically those that restore habitat and quality of life in socioeconomically and climate vulnerable communities.

Activities

1. Continue and refine a mini-grant program to distribute collaborative funds to local community groups doing restoration, stewardship, and engagement work that aligns with our overall goals and objectives.
 - a. Fund \$80,000 to support local low-capacity projects, supporting at least 8 local restoration projects across all 4 cities.
 - b. Work to secure additional funding to support more projects.
2. Connect community members with technical assistance and resources from UWFP workgroup partners.
 - a. Share webinars and funding opportunities of federal partners.
 - b. Connect with Region 2 and 3's Environmental Justice Thriving Communities Technical Assistance Centers (TCTACs) as well as the Environmental Finance Centers.
 - c. Plan and hold an Environmental Justice Forum.
3. Write letters of support for community groups' projects that support UWFP goals.
 - a. Write at least 4 letters of support.



IMAGE 6: STUDENTS PLANT A TREE IN CAMDEN, NJ ALONGSIDE POWERCORPS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT MEMBERS AS PART OF THE 2022 MINI-GRANT PROGRAM. (CREDIT: FRED STINE)

Expected Outcomes

1. More funding accessible to community members to do on the ground projects in their communities.
2. Improved urban habitat, water quality, and community stewardship of green spaces.
3. Community members are more knowledgeable to successfully write and manage grants.

Initiative 2: Build Relationships & Resource Access

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership at its core is about working collaboratively across federal agencies to achieve environmental justice and clean water. In the Delaware River Location, it is important to maintain and increase partnerships that will ultimately reduce barriers between federal agencies and local communities as well as connect local community leaders for a more cohesive urban corridor that works synergistically across city and state boundaries.

Activities

1. Identify and invite government (federal, state and local) partners missing from the Location's workgroup.
 - a. Engage 4 city level (1 for each of the 4 cities) and 2 additional federal partners into the workgroup.
2. Host a regional Environmental Justice Forum, in collaboration with both community members and government partners.
3. Form a cohort of local community leaders that meets regularly.
 - a. Recruit a cohort of 15-25 inter-city community leaders.
 - b. Support 8 events for community cohort members including networking opportunities, field trips, stewardship events, and workshops. (Location partners will attend select gatherings, including the Environmental Justice Forum to expand their learning of community needs.)
4. Promote UWFP activities to the general public and to community leaders.

- a. Share stories through news and social media.
 - b. Create a distribution list of at least 200 Location stakeholders to share relevant funding, events, news, and tools.
5. Identify potential new UFWP collaborative projects.
6. Create an end-of-year report of compiled information showing workgroup member accomplishments that relate to the overall goals and objectives of the UFWP Delaware River Location.

Expected Outcomes

1. Federal partners are engaged and create cross-agency synergy.
2. Community leaders are empowered and more easily able to do environmental justice work in their own communities.
3. Community members and government partners have improved relationships and connectivity.
4. Community members have increased access to resources.