

Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) Delaware River Location Partner Planning Call
Wednesday, September 2, 2020 at 2:00pm

Call Participants: Emily Baumbach, PDE; Krista Heinlen, USDA Forest Service/Davey Institute; Kathy Klein, Partnership for the Delaware Estuary, Kathleen Martin, Audubon PA; Elizabeth Brown, Audubon PA; Frank McLaughlin, NJDEP; Simeon Hahn, NOAA, Flavia Rutkosky, USFWS

Summary of Feedback from Urban Waters Partners Survey

- Emily Baumbach welcomed call participants and thanked everyone for joining another Urban Waters planning call
- E. Baumbach provided the results of the Urban Waters (UW) survey that went out to the UW listserv in August (Presentation slides available [HERE](#))
 - Several themes from these results include gaps in programs/projects that connect across all four of the cities at this UW location, interest to continue holding annual partner meetings, and the lack of projects and programs in Wilmington and Chester (with an emphasis on resources missing from Chester)
 - Perhaps more effort could focus on partnerships and programming in Wilmington, DE and Chester, PA moving forward
- Kathy Klein: We need to be better at connecting the dots between the four cities at this location
- Krista Heinlen: There's great feedback in the survey, especially in the middle of the summer after folks have been out of touch
 - There's lots of feedback in here directed towards the watershed initiatives (Delaware River Basin Restoration Program) since we know there's been a lot of activity further north on this
- Simeon Hahn: There have been significant projects in each of the cities at this location, but not as many in Chester
 - We're trying to help get some more work going in Chester
 - We could do better outreach and documentation of projects that have been accomplished or are underway and then link them to UW funding
 - The UWFP is a unique effort by EPA since it doesn't come with any specific dedicated funding and there are some related grants tied to the Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program
 - UWFP has contributed to many projects, but we just need to do a better job at identifying specific projects
 - In the past, the partnership developed a work plan to guide activities
 - It would be beneficial to spend some time and effort documenting our successes
- Frank McLaughlin: The survey feedback was really good and covers areas that we've been struggling with for many years
 - New Jersey is about to pass landmark legislation with Environmental Justice
 - We could be more equity-focused and do better outreach and engagement with some of these groups
 - Could also work on being more inclusive to the less fortunate in our communities and have a focus on future stewards and focus on environmental justice and social justice
 - Camden has had some great success because lots of resources have gone into that city even though it's still the poorest city in New Jersey
 - Camden is actually very similar in size as well as demographics as Wilmington, DE
 - Chester has had the least amount of resources

- We can try to get some others in EPA more involved in this partnership
- K. Heinlen: The Camden Collaborative Initiative helped to lay the groundwork for projects and connecting with communities in Camden
 - In cities like Chester, we need people in the city to step up and take some ownership to represent their community
- S. Hahn: We will want to reconnect with Andy Kricun who was previously with CCMUA and was a big champion to support community groups in Camden
- S. Hahn: We work with groups in Wilmington, and then it's up to the community groups to make key decisions and get the projects completed since federal agencies have limited authority over directing those projects
 - There's an effort in Wilmington relevant to UW that's bringing a coalition together for the DuPont Edge Moore Plant and relates to pollution, access, and Environmental Justice
 - The leaders of this group are from University of Delaware (Jeffrey Richardson is leading effort) and were involved in similar effort in LA
- K. Klein: Something we haven't really discussed are ways to engage some of our congressional leaders and senators
 - In DE, Lisa Blunt Rochester and Senator Coons are really interested in this type of work, and Senator Coons has offered to bring some partners together to help leverage existing funding, and there might be some ways to engage some of these representatives and get some funding
- S. Hahn: We've had one of the Senator Coons staff, Andrew Dinsmore, work with us
 - The main issue in Chester was that we didn't have municipal or political representatives in Chester
 - PDE can have those interactions since it's a nonprofit organization
- Elizabeth Brown: We can take a look at the survey and get some feedback from Audubon in the results
 - We are interested to learn more about the Brownfields Community of Practice and if its tied to superfund programs and resiliency
- S. Hahn: Kristeen Gaffney from EPA Region 3 is strong partner in the brownfields group
 - We have a chart that we should get updated as part of some outreach
 - Over \$8 million of brownfields grants across the four cities
 - Project leads will give updates on their projects
 - We have projects in all the cities except for Chester right now
 - We also promote living shorelines and freshwater mussel work and other restoration projects right now, including Lardner's Point in Philadelphia
- F. McLaughlin: The sites include abandoned and underutilized contaminated lands for future parks, trails, open space, connection to land and water, and/or improve water quality
 - We don't work as close with the CERCLA programs as we could, and there's an opportunity to do more as well as more resources we could leverage
 - We could do more with the Brownfields Community of Practice and think about equity and community resiliency (housing, education, open space needs etc.)
- S. Hahn: With EPA Region 2 there is at least one UWFP location that has a Superfund site
 - In our area, we have Superfund sites like the Coopers site located in a freshwater tidal marsh
 - We work closely with them and are involved in the Superfund program
 - Could pursue NRDA money and projects dedicated to this effort like the Harrison Landfill through these funds

- Lower Darby Creek landfill superfund site, and John Heinz is part of that superfund site as well
- S. Hahn: We shouldn't lose sight of a program like Superfund
 - We all have different relationship with EPA and want to stay out of regulatory and controversial issues
 - At the Fox Point Landfill site, there's a proposal to do no action with the shoreline is eroding into the river right now
 - There's more opportunities where we can speak out about how these processes provide opportunities for public input
- K. Heinlen: There are definitely areas where there can be interest or activity around issues that affect these communities and there can be a level of mistrust in the communities
- S. Hahn: The Climate Working Group was another strong group with lots of interaction between brownfields and urban waterfront communities as well as climate change
- K. Klein: How engaged have communities been in brownfields work, in terms of what the environmentalists want versus what the community wants?
- S. Hahn: The South Wilmington wetland green infrastructure project evolved over the course of a decade with highly successful community input
 - Project touched on resiliency and environmental justice
 - There's another site in northeast Wilmington along the Brandywine River in an environmental justice community that had lots of community input
 - Communities always want access to the river in addition to the jobs
 - Rivers are a major attraction to the communities with a history and appreciation for them
 - By enhancing and opening up these resources to the public, it can increase housing prices in addition to environmental benefits
- F. McLaughlin: Tension with the communities happens in so many projects
 - The best way to handle this is transparency, holding many meetings, and having some hard conversations
 - Since it's the local residents neighborhood, we've been successful in Camden by demonstrating the benefits for the people living there as well as the benefits to the plants, animals, and the environment
 - You can't just force this upon people and need to educate and work with them throughout the process
 - Communities have usually been thinking about the problems much longer than the experts coming in
- K. Heinlen: Sometimes the community engagement comes from luck, and/or months (sometimes years) of effort
 - Someone knows someone who is connected to someone the community trusts
 - Sometimes it has meant literally going to council/school board meetings to advocate for a constituent or program
- K. Klein: We want to be more inclusive in the work we do
 - It's easy to say that you support social justice and support racial equity, but we have to do the actual work too
- K. Heinlen: The Forest Service is all about trees, and in "urban forests" we've learned the hard way why some people just don't want trees on their street, or they can end up feeling like the Parks folks come in and plant a few cute seedlings, then they don't come back/deal with maintenance or pruning and so on.

- It's important - in the interest of inclusion as Kathy suggested - to think bigger, and recognize how we assess goals with actual needs
- S. Hahn: Relating back to youth engagement, we were able to bring out some youth and adults from Wilmington on the Brandywine for work on the return of migratory American shad as well as the Atlantic sturgeon and other iconic species and helped with shad sampling
 - Ed Hale with Delaware Sea Grant is helping to lead the Shad 2020 group and funding for supporting dam removal and fish passage work
- K. Klein: The Delaware River Basin Conservation Act funding is available for urban projects
 - There are lots of communities that want to do projects in their area but they need the funding
- S. Hahn: Looking at equity, having to find match for \$200,000 can be really challenging for groups
- K. Heinlen: It's not an easy task, but having a place for people to connect for potential projects can be really helpful
 - It's rare, but it has happened where federal agencies call to say there's extra money in the budget and need a shovel-ready project to provide the funding to
 - When these things happen, it would be helpful to have a list of projects ready for implementation
 - This partnership can help identify potential projects

Update on Planning of Fall Webinar on Connecting Youth to Urban Waterways

- E. Baumbach: This group was initially talking about holding a daylong or half-day virtual meeting on connecting youth to urban waterways
 - After thinking about this a bit more and having a few conversations with Kathy and some other staff at PDE, we thought that breaking talks up into shorter sessions over a few weeks through a webinar series might be a better idea
 - It's clear that Zoom burnout is happening to a lot of people right now with so many virtual meetings and conferences taking place since the pandemic started
 - PDE had a very successful first webinar series in July and August called '*What Lies Beneath? Signature Species of the Delaware Estuary*'
 - We had nearly 500 attendees tune in for all the webinars total with topics focusing on freshwater mussels, oysters, and horseshoe crabs
 - I've already heard from a few organizations interested in presenting on this virtual meeting to present on their programming that connects youth/students to their urban waterways
 - We're still thinking this will take place sometime in October to November
 - So far, organizations that are interested in participating on this series are the Discovery Center in Philadelphia, Alliance for Watershed Education of the Delaware River, UrbanPromise in Camden, and John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge.
- E. Baumbach: We wanted to get some feedback from the group on this idea of a webinar series that could be hosted by PDE on behalf of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership for this location
 - Our last webinar series was three webinars over lunch hour from 12-1, so we would probably do something similar like this again
- S. Hahn: This is a good way to start out this work and have some conversations
 - It might also be a good way to start by having a youth day for organizations to share with each other and have other youth participate in the series
- K. Heinlen: We could have one or two sessions with youth education institutions that could be sharing with each other

- Many groups are probably getting ready to fire up online programming right now with the new school year
 - Presenters could share best practices for virtual youth engagement
- B. Brown: Reconvening of youth aligns with a grant we have right now, and we have lots of experience working with students
 - This project isn't starting until 2021, but since there's some alignment, we could talk about connecting work with this
- Flavia Rutkosky: Several years ago, PDE had created a project registry for projects across the Delaware Estuary
 - We could think about project areas as a landscape and how projects relate to each other
 - Could take a look at the registry or similar databases and see which projects would be the most beneficial to be funded first
- S. Hahn: When this Urban Waters location was initially established, we focused on these cities since it was the urban portion of the Delaware Estuary
- F. Rutkosky: It's great to have virtual opportunities, but there's also a cognitive disconnect since we're talking about our waterways and plants and animals while spending most of our time in front of our computers
 - We want people to connect with nature more
 - Is there a way we can hold an event like a drive-in movie outdoors and a way for people to interact outside in some way?
- K. Heinlen: Environmental educators are always planning new events and activities
 - If fieldtrips still will not be happening this fall, what will this next school year look like?
 - We could have an event with short virtual presentations as well as instructional videos and activities to do at home
- F. Rutkosky: Maybe we can have some activities originate in a schoolyard or gardens, or even have students take a survey of something out in their own backyard or nearby park
- E. Baumbach: All really great ideas for some other future activities related to connecting students to nature
 - One of the questions we are asking webinar presenters to talk about is if they have any fun and innovative ways to connect with their students using virtual platforms
- K. Heinlen: It would be great if we could make some connections with a few schools