



South Platte Urban Waters Partnership: Building a Regional Collaboration

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Managing by Network – Alpha Group

I want to tell you a story about a partnership I was handed in January and told to “make it work”... these are my discoveries over the last few months, some wins and some... “ok, so that’s what we’re dealing with” kind of moments

Presentation Outline

- Introduction to the Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWP)
- Introduction to the South Platte River UWP
- Discussion of challenges and opportunities the South Platte UWP is facing as we evolve
 - Tactical
 - Technical
 - Interpersonal



To start with, I will share a little about what the Urban Waters Federal Partnership is, how it got started, and what the agencies involved hope to accomplish.

Then I'll share the same sort of background info on our local collaborative.

I will spend most of our time discussing some of the issues we've been facing, grouped into three themes: tactical, technical, and interpersonal.

You've all already heard me talk some about this partnership, the agreements we're working through, and thank you for all of the helpful input so far. I'm looking forward to some more good ideas today.

Please feel free to interrupt me with questions or comments at any time. I'll even try to peek at the chat box.

Urban Waters Federal Partnership

Launched June 24, 2011



The federal partnership was launched in 2011 as an “innovative union of 13 federal agencies” with a triple-bottom line approach to improving water quality in and around urban areas.



The mission of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership is to: 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.

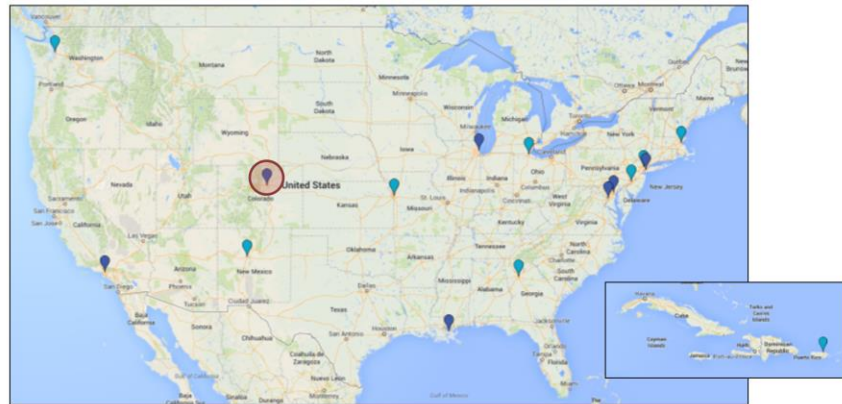
Specifically, the Urban Waters Federal Partnership will:

- Break down barriers between federal agencies and target federal funding toward a common goal.
- Recognize and build on local efforts and leadership.
- Learn by doing and celebrate success to fuel long-term action.

What's great about this mission? It is big and bold and inclusive. It offers a much needed link between conservation in urban areas and their more suburban, rural, and wild surroundings.

What is not so great? Locally it can feel like we are trying to be all things to all people, making it very difficult to focus and clarify a shared group identity.

UWP Pilot Locations



- 2013 Pilot Location
- 2011 Pilot Location



So, what does this look like on the ground? When the national federal partnership was created, 11 pilot sites were identified across the country, including ours in Denver along the South Platte River, a project along the Anacostia River in DC (a river some of you may know and love... or hate), one along the Los Angeles River in California, and several others. There is more information on each site at the www.urbanwaters.gov link in the last slide.

In 2013, 10 additional sites were added to the partnership network all the way from Seattle WA to San Juan Puerto Rico. The issues being addressed at each of these 17 locations are different, as are organizational structures, and partners involved.

The Forest Service has taken on a leadership role in several of these sites, including Baltimore, LA, the Delaware River Basin, and Denver... which brings us to the main attraction.

2011

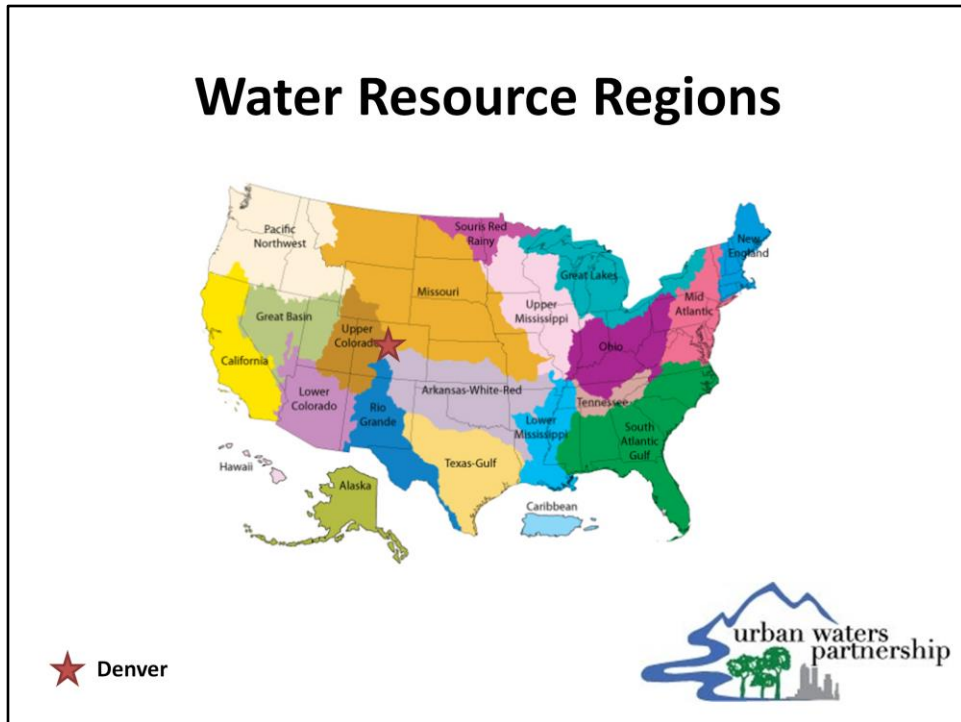
- Bronx/Harlem, New York City
- Anacostia, Washington DC
- Baltimore, MD
- Los Angeles, CA
- South Platte River, Denver CO
- New Orleans

- Northwest Indiana

2013

- St. Louis, MO
- Delaware River Basin (PA, NJ, DE)
- Grand Rapids, MI
- Seattle, WA
- Boston, MA
- San Juan, PR
- Albuquerque, NM
- Newark, NJ
- Atlanta, GA
- Toledo, OH

Water Resource Regions

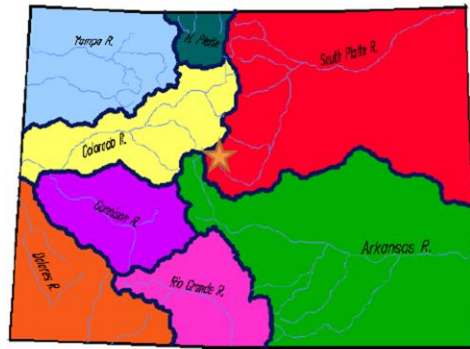


First, where in the world are we? Since this is all about water, and I always find it grounding, I thought we'd do a little zoom into our project area.

You will find the South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership in the Missouri Water Resource Region, USGS's largest watershed delineation ...

That's Denver there marked with a star, right on the border of FOUR water resource regions. One of the many reasons water is such a hot button issue here!

Colorado Water Basins

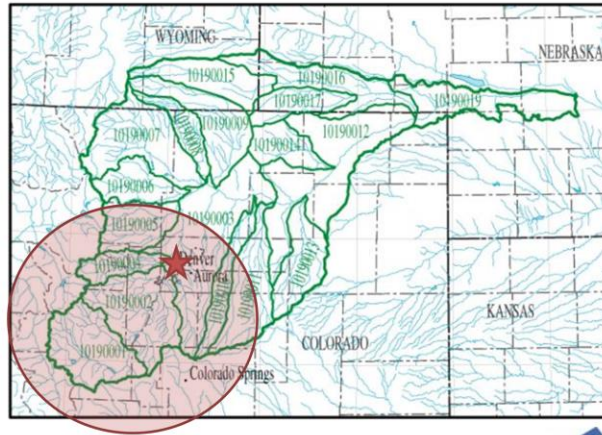


★ Denver



You will find us in the South Platte River Basin (upper right, red)

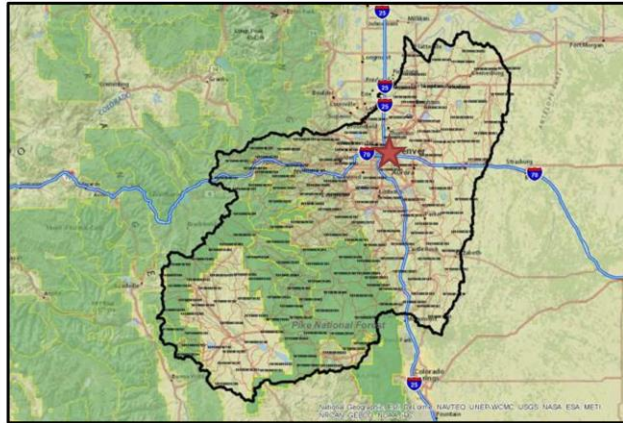
South Platte River Watersheds



And comprising several HUC-8 (hydrologic unit code) watersheds:

- South Platte Headwaters
- Upper South Platte
- Clear Creek
- Middle South Platte / Cherry Creek (the metro Denver portions)

Project Area



★ Denver



Finally, this is us. Hopefully some of the lines from the last few slides are still in our brains.

The UWP project area goes from the headwaters on the Pike-San Isabel National Forest, southeast of Denver, through downtown, and north/south/east of the city to encompass the entire metro area.

The project includes the service areas for both Denver Water and Aurora Water, the water suppliers for the region.

Just for scale, Denver Water provides water for 1.3 million people, 25% of Colorado's population. Half of Denver Water's supply comes from within the South Platte River basin, the remainder from the western slope, a whole 'nother basin, a whole 'nother story.

Mission and Vision

- Mission: Collaborate across jurisdictions and disciplines to engage communities and to protect and restore the South Platte River and watershed
- Vision: Provide a place to network, find and leverage resources, connect projects, and build capacity
- Focus: Water quality, protection, and awareness



So now that you've seen where we are working, what are we doing? To put it plainly, we are trying to build a collaborative network that adds value to rather than duplicates the efforts of existing watershed groups.

Our mission is to collaborate...

The Partnership seeks to realize this mission by supporting the individual and collective efforts of its member organizations and providing a place to network; discover and leverage funding opportunities; consider project ideas in a larger context; and add capacity to complete larger scale assessments and projects.

Our shared focus is on water quality, source protection and restoration, and water awareness

South Platte UWP Partners

Nonprofit Organizations	Federal Government	State and Local Gov't
Audubon Society	EPA	Adams County
Bluff Lake Nature Center	US Forest Service	City and County of Denver
Cherry Creek Basin Water Quality Authority	Agency for Toxic Substances & Disease Registry (ASTDR)	City of Aurora
Coalition for the Upper South Platte	NPS: Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance	Denver Water
Colorado Watershed Assembly	Housing and Urban Development	Jefferson Conservation District
Groundwork Denver	ACOE	Colorado State University
National Forest Foundation	USGS	Metro State University

And lots more! We have 50+ partner organizations.



Our membership is over 50 organizations strong and includes nonprofits working at multiple scales and on a diversity of water-related issues, federal agencies, state forestry and health agencies, city and county governments, and three universities.

This large and diverse geography and partnership base is what leads to the challenges and opportunities we'll spend the rest of our time discussing.

Any questions so far?

Challenges and Opportunities

Tactical
Technical
Interpersonal



I've broken down my observations of our challenges and opportunities into three themes: tactical (kind of process, group history, and group dynamics related), technical (agreements, authorities, and the like), and interpersonal (who is it we are dealing with and how do they relate).

Tactical

What is it we are trying to accomplish?

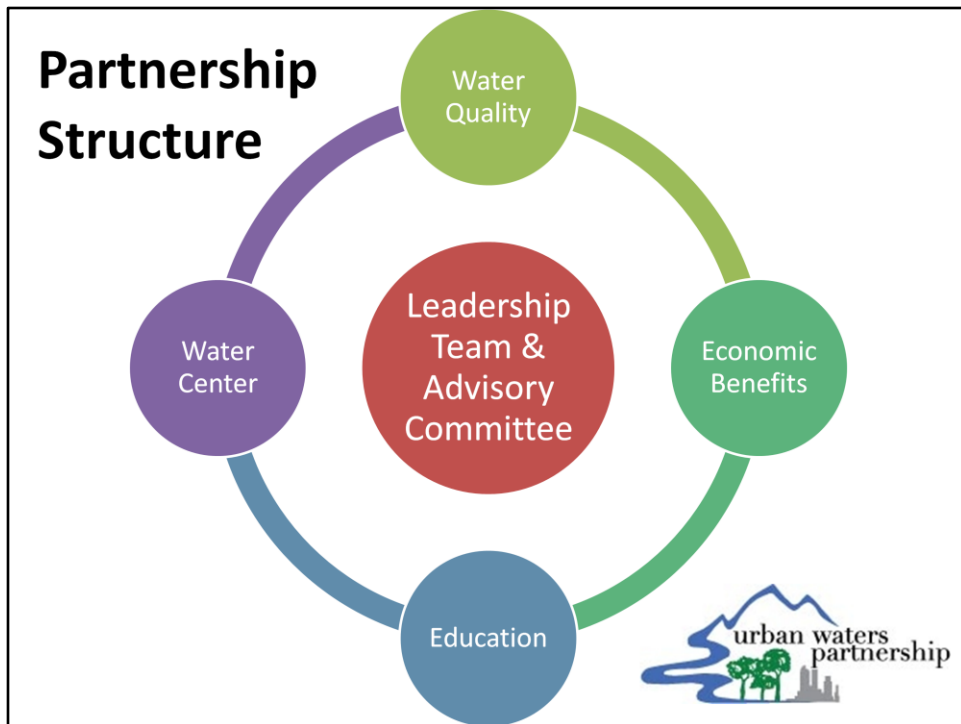


And just in case you're falling asleep, I'll switch up my graphics. Remember these guys?

So, just what is it we are trying to accomplish?

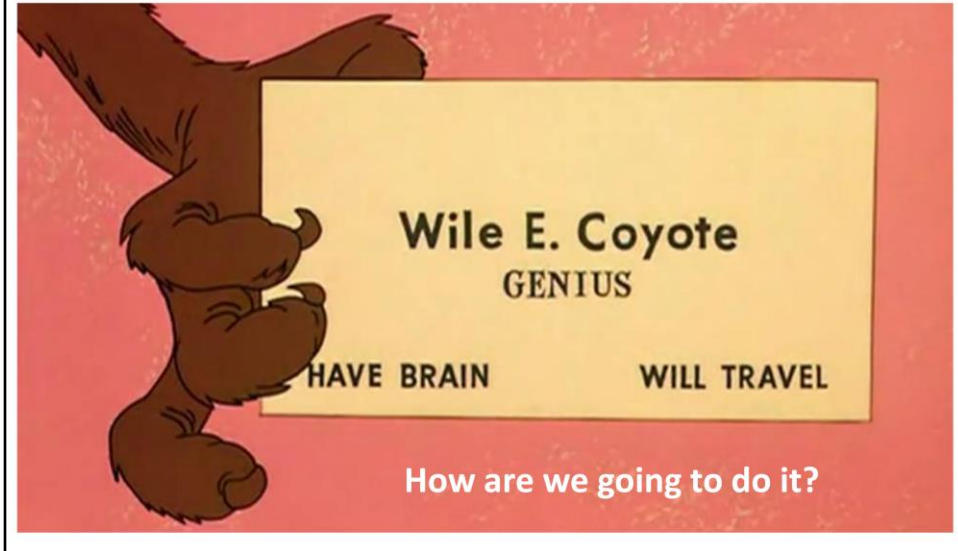
If you recall from our earlier discussion of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership mission it's a BIG bucket and the pilots were created in a TOP DOWN manner. A major question we've been grappling with is how to take this top-down, fed-heavy structure and make it meaningful to local partners. It didn't take long to figure out that the kind of networking, information sharing, and connecting of many accomplishments into one report wasn't making everyone equally excited.

What has resulted, what is evolving is a network of working groups, a do-ocracy of sorts. Those with the energy and the willingness to do the work take on the leadership and responsibility necessary to get it done.



It looks something like this... with the flexibility to morph and change as funding and other opportunities arise, and the interests and focus of members change.

Technical



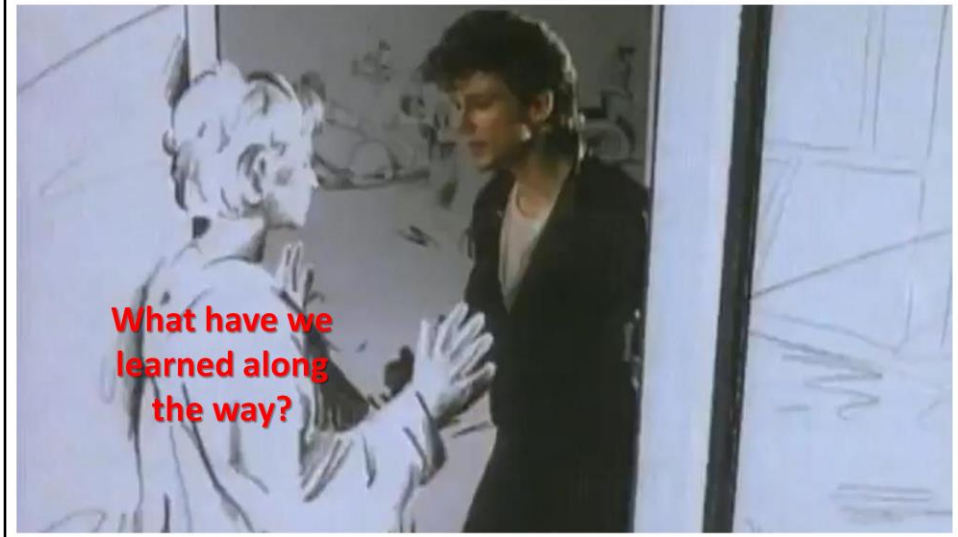
- Developing sustainable funding strategies
- Crafting useful interagency agreements
- Integrating facilitation, dialog, and project management tools
- Conducting network/systems analysis

Interpersonal



- Personalities and personal/professional histories
- Leadership and communication styles
- Politics
- Learning from peers in other locations

A-ha!



Taking a human approach

Working my butt off right along with our coordinator and partners

Being comfortable with uncertainty and helping others to do the same

Learning as we go



Thank you!

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Thanks!