URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

ALIGNING OUR EFFORTS – NEW NGO AND ASSOCIATION PARTNERS

We, the undersigned organizations, support the vision, mission, and principles of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. We commend the work that is making a visible difference in communities across the country by engaging urban populations in restoring their rivers and surrounding neighborhoods, improving access for water recreation, and helping create a network of parks and greenspaces connecting downtown cores with suburban and rural areas. We believe the Partnership provides a powerful means for federal agencies to better connect with our metropolitan areas and engage all residents—especially youth—in conservation and stewardship of nature where they live, work, and play.

Supporting actions we plan to undertake include aligning resources, funding, and expertise to restore urban waters, parks, and greenspaces; increase outdoor recreation; engage youth and residents at pilot sites; and create new initiatives or projects nationally or at the state or local levels that achieve complementary results. We look forward to assisting federal agency partners with outreach and communications encouraging urban waters restoration, parks and greenspace conservation, and outdoor recreation.

SIGNATURES

Carrie Gallagher
Executive Director, Alliance for Community Trees

Lisa Bardwell
President, Earth Force

Scott Steen
President, American Forests

Stephen H. Burrington
Executive Director, Groundwork USA

James M. Drinan, J.D.
Executive Director, American Planning Association

Scott Kovarovics
Executive Director, Izaak Walton League

Wm. Robert Irvin
President & CEO, American Rivers

Ken Kirk
Executive Director, National Association of Clean Water Agencies

Nancy C. Somerville
CEO & Executive Vice President,
American Society of Landscape Architects

Barbara Tulipane
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Claire Robinson
Executive Director, Amigos de los Rios

Collin O'Mara
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Dan Lambe
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Jeffrey Benoit
President & CEO, Restore America's Estuaries

Catherine Nagel
Executive Director, City Parks Alliance

Nicole Silk
President, River Network

SIGNATURES

Daniel van Starrenburg
President & CEO, SavATree

Michael Brune
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Jerri J. LaHaie
Executive Director, Society of Municipal Arborists

Will Rogers
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Joel Dunn
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Mark Garvin
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Lawrence A. Selzer
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Ben Grumbles
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Mark Tercek
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John F. Calvelli
Executive Vice President of Public Affairs,
Wildlife Conservation Society

As required by the Antideficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. 1341 and 1342, all commitments made by all agencies party to this Partnership agreement are subject to the availability of appropriated funds and budget priorities. Nothing in this agreement, in and of itself, obligates any agency to expend appropriations or to enter into any contract, assistance agreement, interagency agreement, or incur other financial obligations. Any transaction involving transfers of funds between the agencies will be handled in accordance with applicable laws, regulations, and procedures under separate written agreements. Furthermore, this agreement does not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable by law or equity, by persons who are not party to this agreement, against any party to this agreement, its officers or employees, or any other person. Finally, this agreement does not impose legally binding requirements on any Federal agency, States or the regulated community, nor does it change or substitute for any existing legally binding requirements.

URBAN WATERS FEDERAL PARTNERSHIP

VISION, MISSION & PRINCIPLES

OUR VISION

Through our partnership, we will revitalize urban waters and the communities that surround them, transforming overlooked assets into treasured centerpieces and drivers of urban revival.

THE NEED IS CLEAR

Many of our nation's urban rivers, streams, lakes, forests and wetlands are polluted, degraded or inaccessible. The surrounding communities often are not reaping the environmental, economic and social benefits that living near a water body can provide.

Research demonstrates that a clean, safe, accessible, urban environment – including urban forests, gardens, parks, lakes, aquifers, and rivers – is directly linked to improved public health, stronger local economies, and lower crime rates.

We believe a deeper connection to local water bodies can bring a new cycle of community hope and energy that will lead to healthier urban waters, improved public health, strengthened local businesses, and new jobs, as well as expanded educational, recreational, housing, and social opportunities.

OUR MISSION

The "Urban Waters Federal Partnership" will help urban and metropolitan areas, particularly those that are under-served or economically distressed, connect with their waterways and work to improve them. This federal partnership will put communities first. We will work to break down government program silos and to ensure that our collective efforts will reverse past neglect, energize existing programs, and engage new partners. We will listen to, engage and serve the communities where we work, ensuring they are full partners in restoring and protecting the water that surrounds them. We will establish strong partnerships with effective community-based organizations and local government officials to make the most effective use of economic incentives and other beneficial actions. With the right set of federal, state, and local tools and the local commitment of political will, the partnership will leverage existing neighborhood assets. These actions will be geared to promote early and visible victories to fuel long-term action. Success will advance the missions of our partnership, our agencies, and the federal government as a whole.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

To guide our work, we will:

- **Promote clean urban waters.** We must enhance the value and health of urban waters, recognizing their rich history, spiritual value, natural beauty, and economic and recreational potential, as well as their role in basic services, such as water supplies. We know clean water is a foundation for sustainable communities and healthy ecosystems, and that the watershed is the fundamental planning unit for water quality protection. That means the Partnership will work with urban communities to connect them to upstream areas including rural parts of the watersheds, where the large majority of our country's water originates. In addition to addressing the direct challenges presented by physically, chemically and biologically degraded urban waters, we will engage these communities in the broader process of enhancing the value and quality of water resources supplying urban areas using approaches to protect, manage and restore the lands that surround those waters.

- **Reconnect people to their waterways.** Many communities do not have access to their urban waterways. This cuts them off from a valuable community asset. These assets can be used to spur commercial, recreational (such as parks, green spaces and cultural centers) and educational opportunities. Indeed, the reconnection of distressed communities to their waterways can act as a catalyst for greater economic revitalization and growth as well as improvement in resident well-being.

- **Water conservation.** We shall strive to meet urban water needs in a sustainable manner by increasing the efficiency of water use. The Partnership therefore will strive to educate and work with urban communities to conserve this precious resource. We will increase efforts to address infrastructure needs, especially in underserved urban areas where modernization of aging and inefficient infrastructure can lead to significant water savings. We believe conserving water and using it wisely will be fundamental to our success.

- **Use urban water systems as a way to promote economic revitalization and prosperity.** Healthy and accessible urban waters enhance any area's economic competitiveness. In urban communities, water-related environmental improvements will be integrated with other community priorities, such as revitalizing local businesses, creating jobs, and improving access to job training. Community revitalization through the promotion of clean urban waters must minimize displacement of existing residents, expand opportunities for current and new residents, and fully tap into the potential of the local and regional communities. To achieve these objectives when working locally, the Partnership will particularly focus on revitalizing communities that are, or have been, disproportionately impacted by pollution or economic burdens.

- **Encourage community improvements through active partnerships.** Strong multi-agency partnerships at the federal, state, local levels, and with the tribes, will integrate many of the services needed for community revitalization. Aligning federal policies and funding will break down traditional silos, remove barriers to collaboration, and increase the accountability and effectiveness to plan and act for future growth. These goals will also be achieved through innovative regional collaboration and approaches that connect policies and programs at every level of government and across multiple sectors.

- **Be open and honest, and listening to the communities is the best way to engage them.** We will work with urban populations, not act for them. This means, among other things, to recognize their values and seek to understand environmental issues through their eyes. We will work from the bottom up rather than taking a top down, one-size-fits-all approach.

- **Focus on measuring results and evaluation will fuel future success.** We need short-term improvements, but also an analytical view toward sustainable and systemic improvements we can measure using meaningful outcome measures. We will invest and focus our resources on what is working in targeted places and draw on the compounding effect of well-coordinated action. By evaluating conditions to design better solutions and monitoring progress to respond quickly when change is needed, we will learn what works to develop best practices.

SIGNATURES

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