

**New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters Pilot
Face-to-Face Meeting
January 15 – 16, 2013
Meeting Notes**

**Meeting Location
Customs and Border Protection
423 Canal Street
New Orleans, LA 70130**

Meeting Purpose: Meet with agencies, other organizations, and stakeholders to discuss status of the identified projects for the Year 1 work plan and identify opportunities to update, refine and/or expand activities as we move into Year 2.

Overview:

The general meeting spanned two days with three sessions beginning with a meeting of the Federal partners on Day 1, state and local agency representatives in the morning of Day 2, and ending with the local stakeholders/non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the afternoon of Day 2. The Federal, state, and local agency representatives were encouraged to attend the final session with the stakeholders/NGOs, if possible, to optimize communication and potential collaboration opportunities. Attachment 1 provides a roster of attendees over the two days.

Following is an overview of the meeting discussions. The updated work plan is attached and includes recommended changes identified over the three sessions.

Background:

As outlined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) on the Urban Waters Movement, the agency is “seeking to help communities — especially underserved communities — as they work to access, improve and benefit from their urban waters and the surrounding land.” A fundamental component of the EPA’s approach is leveraging existing programs to support projects and build partnerships with a variety of Federal, state, tribal and local partners that foster increased connection, understanding, and stewardship of local waterways. The agency’s Urban Waters Vision states that the combined efforts of the many partners and stakeholders will “restore urban water quality, revitalize our communities and reconnect communities to their urban waterways.” This collaboration will:

- align Federal government programs and investments in these communities;

- expand partnerships;
- build local capacity; and
- find innovative ways to communicate the environmental and economic potential of safe and clean urban waters.

EPA's approach in achieving these goals is outlined in the [Urban Waters Strategic Framework](#). For more information on the Urban Waters Movement, please visit www.epa.gov/urbanwaters. For more information on the Federal partnership, please visit www.urbanwaters.gov.

Day 1 (Tuesday, January 15th)

The first session of the meeting included many of the Federal partners working with the New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters Pilot. Since each of the pilot's projects must have a Federal lead identified, this session was important to establish a baseline for the subsequent sessions with the state/local partners and the stakeholders/NGOs.

The session began with a greeting and introductions followed by a full-morning review of the Year 1 work plan developed by the partners at the August 2011 meeting and the status of efforts identified for that work plan. The Federal lead for each of the projects recapped efforts over the past 18 months pointing out successes, delays, and other challenges in moving the project forward. Refer to the "Outputs and Outcomes of Year 1" section of the revised work plan for a recap of Year 1 successes and challenges.

After a break, the Federal partners reconvened for the afternoon session to view mapping demonstrations from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and to discuss development of a website for the local pilot.

Dustin Hogenson, HUD, provided an overview of a Google Earth based map developed in the summer of 2012, which shows the five pilot projects as well as other layers including the NFL Legacy Project potential locations and HUD's Choice Neighborhoods projects. The purpose of Dustin's map was to provide a screening-level "resource quilt" identifying areas of partnership opportunities, especially along the Lafitte Greenway Project.

Phil Turnipseed and Marc Comeaux, USGS, provided an overview of the ESRI-based mapping tool they are developing for the local Urban Waters Pilot. In addition to the five pilot project locations, USGS has incorporated several data sources into their mapping tool including EPA Brownfields and National Priority List sites; water quality and hydrology data from USGS and other agencies including the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and EPA; water quality data from Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation (LPBF); parks and landmarks locations; census data; and others. USGS's tool is still under development, and the group identified other data sources that could be incorporated including Sewerage and Water Board of New Orleans (S&WB) and Louisiana Department of Wildlife and Fisheries (LDWF) monitoring sites in and around Bayou St. John.

The afternoon session ended with a discussion of the soon-to-be-developed website for the New Orleans/Lake Pontchartrain Urban Waters Pilot. EPA has made this a priority for the seven pilot locations throughout the Nation, so the group brainstormed ideas of website content, links to other sites, etc. Danny Wiegand will work with EPA Region 6 staff to develop the website and solicit input from the partners/stakeholders for pictures, links, language, etc. on the various pilots.

Day 2 (Wednesday, January 16th, Morning Session)

For the morning session of Day 2, the Federal partners met with the state and local agency representatives/partners to provide a forum for continuing existing partnerships between participating agencies as well as foster new partnerships and areas of collaboration. Similar to Day 1, the meeting began with a greeting and introductions followed by opening remarks by Bill Honker, Division Director of EPA Region 6's Water Quality Protection Division.

Bill's opening remarks provided an overview of the Urban Waters initiative for those new to the partnership and highlights of Year 1 successes. An example success story is LPBF's rebuilding of the New Canal Lighthouse. Carlton Dufrechou of the Greater New Orleans Expressway Commission (GNOEC) added to Bill's remarks that through assistance from the local pilot partners (notably EPA) the LPBF was able to finalize negotiations of a lease agreement with the U.S. Coast Guard. Renovations of the exterior of the lighthouse structure have been completed, and LPBF is in the final stages of completing the interior. Future plans include landscaping with a fountain plaza, signage, and staffing.

A second success story is the effort led by the USGS in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) on a wetlands education video highlighting the CERF and the local Urban Waters partnership. USGS hopes to have the final product by the second week of February.

Other success stories include but are not limited to the West End Pier and Pontchartrain Beach. Through extensive cooperation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), plans for the rebuilding of the West End Pier are moving forward and in the final stages of approval. Also, discussions on revitalizing Pontchartrain Beach and the pier at this facility have been moving forward with FEMA's help.

Another Urban Waters success for the New Orleans area is the award of a grant to Groundwork New Orleans through the EPA Small Grants Program. Groundwork New Orleans will use their Urban Waters grant to help transform vacant, underutilized land into an educational demonstration project called "The Green Slice," based in the Lower Ninth Ward. The Green Slice will be designed as a demonstration and interdisciplinary research site for water management and water quality improvement impacting local urban watersheds and developing tools for experiential learning and neighborhood-based outreach.

Bill concluded his remarks noting that two agencies joined the Federal Partnership including the Department of Education and the Department of Energy. Stakeholders and partners should keep them in mind as we move forward into Year 2, and EPA will work to get points of contact engaged in the local pilot projects as needed. Lastly, 11 new pilot locations are expected to be announced this year, which

will expand the network of pilot locations across the Nation to 18. This will further punctuate the Federal Government’s commitment to the Urban Waters Movement.

The Day 2 morning session concluded with a recap of the Year 1 work plan discussion similar to Day 1 and incorporated the perspectives of the participating state and local agency representatives. Refer to the “Outputs and Outcomes of Year 1” section of the revised work plan for a recap of Year 1 successes and challenges.

Day 2 (Wednesday, January 16th, Afternoon Session)

The afternoon session of Day 2 included most of the Federal, state and local agency partners from Day 1 and the morning session of Day 2 and added participation of the stakeholders/NGOs. The agenda was similar to the morning session and covered many of the same topics but incorporated the input, feedback, and perspectives of the stakeholders/NGOs. Refer to the “Outputs and Outcomes of Year 1” section of the revised work plan for a recap of Year 1 successes and challenges.