

QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT FOR MERAMEC AND BIG RIVER
URBAN WATERS AMBASSADOR
Interagency Agreement DM95864001-0

Report Period and Budget

The second quarter for the Urban Waters Ambassador (UWA) was from November 22, 2014 – February 22, 2015. The UWA expended \$35,233.48 USEPA dollars toward salary and travel costs during the second quarter.

Summary of the Second Quarter

The second quarter was focused on collaboration and ‘soft approach’ contacts with federal agencies. Other highlights were the official engagement with the Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) initiative and the decision for the UWA to work regionally with the SC2 team and point person Charlie Foley. The UWA co-hosted a “Watershed Strategy Session” with three local non-profits, made three major presentations at conferences, and held engagements with two urban schools to talk about the UWFP and clean water in the region.

Detailed Initiatives with Associated Tasks

The Interagency Agreement (IA) and associated Scope of Work (SOW) outlined tasks that the UWA would be responsible. A detailed discussion of work completed this quarter, divided by the SOW task, is below. The tasks are in blue text, while the discussion of work is left in black text.

- 1) [Assisting in the planning and tracking progress toward completion of the Meramec and Big River UWFP pilot project\(s\) and other relevant projects identified by the UWA or stakeholders.](#)
 - a. The Meramec and Big River Project Joint Feasibility Study (FS) was included in the President’s Budget that was announced on February 2, 2015. This is a huge achievement for the partnership and the UWA. This achievement is due in part to the work of the UWA as well as the extensive collaboration on the part of the Corps, EPA CERCLA.
 - b. The FS was also selected to receive advanced funding to get the FS started and an additional 50k was given by the Corps to get the cost sharing agreement set up.
 - c. The FS was also selected for funding during the ‘work plan’ session. An additional 100k was made available for FY15 to be used after the cost sharing agreement is signed.
 - d. The UWA collaborated with MDNR and USEPA on best management of the Joint FS study with senior leadership of each organization. The UWA role allowed for the conversation to avoid silo-ing issues/projects and helped with facilitating from a third party perspective.

- 2) Attending related project-specific meetings as feasible in furtherance of the Meramec and Big River UWFP pilot effort.
- a. Met with Missouri Botanical Gardens and Missouri Department of Conservation regarding partnering with UWFP and MDNR on education activities in the Meramec and Big River. Conversations are ongoing, and at the least will lead to a guide for teachers that will provide all education resources in our region and in all of Missouri.
 - b. Education and Outreach is a component project of this UWA role, and this quarter presented two unique opportunities to engage with urban youth. The first is what I hope will be an ongoing series with a charter school in the intercity of St. Louis. Together with Tracy Haag we brought the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) as well as our knowledge of natural resources and environmental issues to their science classrooms. Approximately 300 kids (3-5th graders) were able to see the MSD presentations over a two day period. See picture below:



- c. The second opportunity to engage with urban youth came at the request of a group of students. A classroom at Maplewood High School received a grant for two thousand dollars and asked that Tracy and the UWA guide them on how best to use the funds to make the greatest impact on the community. Over two sessions they guided the students on best management practices, problems in the community, watersheds, and assisted them with choosing a location for their project. In the end a local non-profit, the Open Space Council, was coordinated with to lead the project through completion. The final project included a cleanup of a lake

that drains to the Meramec River and environmental outreach for individuals who were attending the park during the cleanup.



- 3) Coordinating activities with the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Our Missouri Waters Initiative, an effort that champions local partnerships and community-led action.
 - a. The UWA and the Our Missouri Waters Team have been collaborating on a weekly if not daily basis. On a larger level they have been brought in as partners for the Joint FS with Corps and USEPA study by looking at innovative ways they can use their dollars as a cost share for the project. At least weekly the UWA and Tracy Haag meet at the MDNR building or at an offsite meeting to coordinate work and to work on joint projects.
- 4) Coordinating activities with the Big River Task Force.
 - a. The UWA attended the BRTF Conference Call in January and reported out on the progress as well as the plans for the BRTF+ meeting that could be an opportunity to add additional Federal partners from the UWFP.
 - b. Coordinated on the BRFT+ meeting with Tracy Haag and Travis Abernathy in order to provide a 2 day meeting that captured interest and expanded the partners in the Meramec and Big River UWFP.
- 5) As required and where/when appropriate assist in identifying and connecting projects with local businesses, laborers, contractors, and/or land-owners.
 - a. During the second quarter an IA with USEPA CERCLA and the Corps was going to construction and the UWA was able to sit in on negotiations as part of his Corps of Engineers duties. The contract was awarded to an out of state contractor; however, they were forced to hire laborers from a local union. During construction, two laborers and three construction equipment operators were employed for approximately 6 months and were given lead removal safety training. Presumably these five individuals can take this experience and training and be more employable in the local economy in the future.
- 6) Developing a Meramec and Big River UWFP strategic plan in collaboration with the EPA, the USACE, the Missouri Department of Natural Resources' Our Missouri Waters Initiative, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Big Rivers Task Force and other identified stakeholders and stakeholder groups as needed to determine the role, goals/ direction, tasks and priorities for the UWA position.
 - a. The UWA Strategic Plan was developed in the first quarter and approved during the second. No updates to the plan were made during this quarter.
- 7) Engaging stakeholders, convening meetings and using electronic information sharing tools to improve communication and further achievement of the stakeholders' overall goals, objectives, and strategic plan.
 - a. The UWA co-hosted a 'Watershed Strategy' meeting with approximately 50 selected guests were invited. The conversation was facilitated by a local nonprofit organization. A few presentations were made questions were asked and breakout sessions were facilitated. The UWA gave a

presentation on UWFP Pilot as well as the grant opportunities that were available.

- b. The UWA and Tracy Haag worked with the East West Gateway Council of Governments to help, host, and sit in on a panel discussion with invited guests from the St. Louis Metro area to discuss Water Resources.
 - c. The UWA convened meetings with Corps and MDNR professionals and St. Louis University Hydraulic Engineering Professors/Researchers surrounding the sediment issues on the Big River.
 - d. Participated in and mentored the Meramec River Conservation Action Plan (CAP) Steering Committee which was hosted by The Nature Conservancy (TNC). The CAP is an amalgamation of many plans and a wide array of data within the Meramec River basin. The data and plans were compiled into one document and were put out by TNC. The outputs of the plan needed and still need some buy in from the stakeholders which the UWA attempted and will attempt in the future to facilitate with the Steering Committee. As part of this effort the UWA attended TNC's Watershed Symposium that highlighted some of the individuals in academia who are doing work in watersheds. Professors and researchers from St. Louis University.
- 8) [Seeking opportunities to support stakeholders by engaging with participating organizations, such as the Meramec River Tributary Alliance.](#)
- a. Previous to the UWA role Matt Cosby participated in the city of St. Louis's Strong Cities, Strong Communities (SC2) federal board. After the national UW meeting and conversations with Region7 and Headquarters staff the role of the UWA was expanded to include collaboration with the SC2 Team and the SC2 leader Charlie Foley. Three meetings were held in the second quarter and the UWA has joined the 'Urban Vitality SC2 Project' for the SC2 team.
- 9) [Recruiting new federal partnerships, identifying and providing technical, financial and other assistance for the Meramec and Big River UWFP priorities while communicating regularly with federal agencies to provide information that supports stakeholders and identified relevant projects.](#)
- a. Made first strategic engagement with the US Forest Service, met with Jeremy Peichel a Watershed Forester to better understand how what role he can plan in the watersheds and how he can most effectively participate in the UWFP.
- 10) [Organizing UWFP communications and support strategies via partnerships with new leaders and organizations with possible group visits to specific projects and/or Washington, DC, as necessary.](#)
- a. The UWA met with and presented the UWFP to St. Louis University. St. Louis University is active with TNC and with the Corps of Engineers and this meeting bridged the role of the UWA into the work the larger team is currently going on in the Meramec Basin.

- b. UWA sat on East West Gateway Council of Government's "Water infrastructure and Management in St. Louis" panel and talked about how the UWFP and other partnerships are key to leveraging federal funding, leveraging academics, as well as getting community buy in for projects.
 - c. UWA spoke at the Missouri Natural Resources Conference with the Big River Task Force about the progress made in the Big River with the partnerships of the Task Force, UWFP, and Our Missouri Waters.
 - d. UWA spoke on the UWFP Project at the State of Missouri's Non-Point Source Conference addressing local watershed coalitions, local soil and water conservation districts, and other community leaders in the water resources fields across Missouri.
- 11) Coordinating with the other 17 national Urban Waters pilot locations to identify best practices, and apply these practices for further implementation of priority projects and advance the overall goals and objectives of the local partnership.
- a. Attended the UWFP National Meeting in Washington DC December 1-4, 2014. Participated in all UWA activities as well as the rest of the conference. Collaborated and connected with the other UWA as well as lead staff at each of the project locations.
 - b. Attended monthly calls with Caroline Klos reported out on progress and opportunities.
- 12) Developing a Communication Plan that outlines the process to communicate the direction and accomplishments of the local partnership via written reports, verbal presentations and other media to a wide range of audiences.
- a. Communication Plan was developed in the first quarter and no updates were made. Several presentations were conducted to large and small audiences that were consistent with the Communications Plan and are detailed above.