

# MAKING A VISIBLE DIFFERENCE

## ATLANTA'S PROCTOR CREEK



### COMMUNITY SUMMARY

The Proctor Creek watershed located in Atlanta, Ga., part of the larger Chattahoochee River watershed, is 28.6 square miles with a population of 127,418 people living in over 38 different neighborhoods. The watershed is located

west of downtown Atlanta, and includes the Sam Nunn Federal Center, the new Atlanta Falcons Stadium, CNN,



Phillips Arena and the Georgia World Congress Center, all of which are in the headwaters. Due to decades of neglect, the watershed experiences overlapping environmental and public health issues such as illegal tire dumping, numerous brownfields, lack of access to greenspace and healthful foods, blighted sites, impaired water quality, pervasive flooding and combined sewer/sanitary sewer overflows.

### EPA ACTIVITIES

In 1998, City of Atlanta (City) entered into a Consent Decree (CD) with EPA and Georgia Environmental Protection Division (GAEPD) to address water quality violations. The work completed thus far under the CD has reduced sanitary sewer overflows by an estimated 97 percent since 2004 at a cost of \$1.5 billion. The City previously completed all work required under another CD to address combined sewer overflows, which discharge excess wastewater directly into waterways during wet weather events. This work was completed at a cost of \$760 million, and included separating portions of the sewer system, building large underground

tunnels to capture stormwater for treatment and disinfecting combined sewer overflows. The City also successfully implemented a \$25 million Supplemental Environmental Project to acquire and preserve greenway areas surrounding waterways in metro Atlanta. A 2012 amendment to the CD extended the deadline to 2027 for the City to complete the limited remaining repairs to eliminate sanitary sewer overflows.

A Monitoring Team made up of EPA, the Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper, GAEPD, representatives from the Proctor Creek community and the City of Atlanta, is collaborating to provide monitoring and water quality sampling of Proctor Creek. The results will provide critical information for a plan to clean up the creek, mitigate associated public health threats, and remove the waterbody from the list of impaired waters. EPA is also collaborating with the U.S. Geological Survey to install two additional gauge stations in Proctor Creek for stormwater sampling and monitoring during significant rain events.



EPA and the City continue to identify brownfields for eventual cleanup actions within the watershed. The term "brownfield" means real property, the expansion,





redevelopment, or reuse of which may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of a hazardous substance, pollutant, or contaminant. The City's Department of Watershed Management is currently assessing Maddox Park under the Brownfield Program. Results from the assessment will be utilized for the Proctor Creek Watershed Health Impact Assessment (HIA), to provide additional information for public health decisions within the watershed and to support the implementation of more green infrastructure in the watershed. A sampling event is also planned in the watershed for an urban soil assessment. Community outreach, to include area schools, will be conducted to educate and demonstrate the methods and utility of subsequent data.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

EPA in collaboration with the Proctor Creek Stewardship Council met with the 11 Neighborhood Planning Units and 38 neighborhoods to begin the process of community engagement in the entirety of the watershed. EPA is committed to continuing dialogue with the community as we continue to work collaboratively with the Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

A number of other training, technical assistance and outreach activities are planned throughout the year including a community showcase hosted jointly by EPA and the Proctor Creek Stewardship Council, Healthy Homes Training and a grant writing workshop.

## INTERGOVERNMENTAL COORDINATION

In the spring of 2013, Proctor Creek was designated as an Urban Waters Federal Partnership watershed. EPA's federal partners include: the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Department of

Transportation, Federal Emergency Management Authority, Army Corps of Engineers, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Forest Service, National Parks Service, Economic Development Administration, Geological Survey and Department of Agriculture. Four supporting nongovernmental organizations also serve as members of the partnership, including: The Conservation Fund, the Trust for Public Land, Groundwork USA and American Rivers. The collaboration is working to address the environmental, water quality, and health-related issues facing underserved communities. The goal of the partnership is to bring about visible improvements within watersheds by reconnecting communities with their water sources.

## ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

EPA continues to strengthen collaborations with the communities, our governmental partners and all other interested stakeholders to

achieve a meaningful outcome in the community. EPA is currently using an HIA to assess the distribution of both environmental and health impacts of a proposed area-wide environmental district to determine how green infrastructure techniques and practices, low impact development, and land-use planning can help solve the complex flooding and stormwater issues in Proctor Creek.



## SUSTAINABILITY

EPA funded a \$400,000 grant to the City of Atlanta through GAEPD to implement a green infrastructure project to address community concerns about flooding and stormwater. The design phase of the project is 30 percent complete. The goal of the project is to help reduce flooding and provide capacity relief for the combined sewer system, provide cleaner surface and groundwater, improve streets and sidewalks and provide economic revitalization.