

**South Platte River Urban Waters Partnership (SPRUWP)  
Full Partners Meeting  
November 14, 2023, 1:00 pm – 3:30 pm  
Meeting Summary - FINAL**

**ATTENDANCE**

*Participants:* Matt Ashley, Chauncie Bigler, John Davenport, Christopher Hawkins, Jordan Parman, Jim Rada, Aaron Rector, Donny Roush, Nona Shipman, and Abigail Wright

*Facilitation Team:* Dominique Ashe and Samuel Wallace

**ACTION ITEMS**

<b>Matt Ashley</b>	Reach out to Aurora Parks, Recreation, and Open Space to ask about their interest in Metro DNA and share any connections with Chris Hawkins.
<b>Samuel Wallace</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reach out to Chris Hawkins to identify how Metro DNA and SPRUWP can work together moving forward.</li><li>• Coordinate and develop agenda for the upcoming February 20, 2024 in-person full partners SPRUWP meeting/ field tour.</li></ul>

**PARTNER UPDATES**

SPRUWP partners shared updates related to their organizations. Those updates are summarized below.

***Trout Unlimited***

The Trout in the Classroom program doubled the number of classrooms in their program this year and distributed 14,800 eggs statewide. They are continuing to request more trout eggs from Colorado Parks & Wildlife (CPW). All the trout are past the hatching stage and are in the alevin stage. Out of the 70 schools, 13 are tier-three schools. Tier-three schools have a very engaged program where students do most of the work and conduct eDNA research. Including these schools, Trout Unlimited has over 40 sites of eDNA testing to measure biodiversity, macroinvertebrates, and algae.

***City & County of Denver***

The City and County of Denver is beginning to schedule 2024 engagement programs. Any SPRUWP member with programs they want to promote should contact Donny Roush.

***Denver Water***

Denver Water is installing low-tech process-based restoration (LTPBR) projects in the North Fork of the South Platte River to eliminate sediment entering Denver’s reservoirs. This is Denver Water’s first LTPBR project.

***Landlife Company***

The organization has planted over 1 million trees in the Spring Creek fire watershed post-disaster recovery.

***One World, One Water***

The organization is preparing classes, events, and tours for 2024. The Your Water, Your Life contest for university students is ongoing. The organization is looking for individuals willing to judge in the competition. Anyone interested in participating as a judge should contact Nona Shipman.

### ***Aurora Water***

- Aurora Water has moved into a new office across from Aurora Reservoir and the Binney Water Treatment Plant. This move was an effort for the agency to consolidate the workforce for administration and operations. Aurora Water is offering to host an upcoming SPRUWP meeting and tour the Binney Water Treatment Plant.
- Aurora Water is working on a Wildfire Ready Watershed grant with Denver Water and Jefferson Conservation District (JCD) to select a consultant to develop the wildfire-ready action plan. After developing the action plan, the organizations will be eligible for pre-fire projects and additional grants.
- Aurora Water is also finalizing its Source Water Protection Plan. Matt Ashley will share this plan once it is finished, which could be a potential SPRUWP presentation.

### ***Metro Water Recovery***

The organization is finalizing fish surveys for the year. The Metro Water Recovery Northern Treatment Plant could be another SPRUWP field tour, especially since it connects with the Aurora Water Prairies Water project upstream of where the Binney Water Treatment Plant pulls water out of the South Platte.

### ***Jefferson County Public Health***

There will likely be new rules for the Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDL) at Bear Creek Reservoir. Announcements will be forthcoming.

### ***Denver Department of Transportation & Infrastructure (DOTI) - Division of Green Infrastructure***

The division is growing its team to expand green infrastructure across Denver. This winter, the division is growing its programming around equity and green infrastructure, specifically assessing how green infrastructure is implemented equitably around the city. The division will plan the projects and develop an ongoing maintenance strategy for the infrastructure.

### ***SPRUWP***

- SPRUWP worked with the Washington office to develop a 10-year partnership anniversary video.
- The SPRUWP Education & Outreach and Science & Data Committees are meeting in December to work on 2024 work plans. All SPRUWP participants are encouraged to attend and contribute to developing these work plans.

### **METRO DENVER NATURE ALLIANCE (METRO DNA) PRESENTATION**

Chris Hawkins, Cities Program Director for the Colorado Chapter of The Nature Conservancy, presented on Metro DNA. His presentation is summarized below.

- Metro DNA was formed 12 years ago and now has over 50 member organizations across seven counties in the Denver metro area, including Boulder, Broomfield, Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas, Denver, and Jefferson. The coalition is made up of a seven-representative executive committee and a twenty-person steering committee based on various volunteer organizations.
- Metro DNA's mission is to align nature-based efforts to ensure more equitable access to nature and to promote healthy people, communities, and natural places.
- Over the past several years, Metro DNA began creating a regional vision through high-level concepts and likely outcomes that are mutually agreeable regardless of individual/organizational perspectives. Metro DNA invested in two projects a couple of years ago to

begin the foundation of this regional vision: the regional conservation and equity assessments.

### ***Regional Conservation Assessment***

- The Regional Conservation Assessment was led by TNC, which partnered with Biohabitats to look at high-priority areas in the seven-county region to protect, connect, restore, and enhance ecosystems. This project was launched in coordination with land managers and decision-makers to ensure buy-in from all the counties, open-space programs, Mile High Flood District, Go Outdoors Colorado (GOCO), and CPW, among others. The assessment included a leadership council and was supported by a technical advisory team of ecologists, biologists, and other science representatives.
- The assessment was divided into three geospatial sub-analyses: 1) land cover and habitat classification, 2) habitat quality, and 3) connectivity. The team identified different types of habitat patches across the region and developed a minimal threshold for ecological functions. For the habitat quality analysis, the team looked at five ecological indicators (e.g., patch size, patch shape, the perimeter-area ratio of edge context, patch type homogeneity, and resilience/ biodiversity). The combined summary showed the natural and habitat value of suburban and urban areas, although not at the same ecological value as a forest. The connectivity analysis assessed landscape resistance by scoring different land use and land cover features and applying resistance values. A lower resistance score indicated that organisms had lower resistance to moving from one patch of land cover to another. This assessment helped Metro DNA understand where concentrated flows of species movement occur and use it to identify high-priority protection, restoration, or enhancement areas specific to connectivity.

### ***Regional Equity Assessment***

- The regional equity assessment focused on identifying barriers and opportunities to equitable access to nature and evaluating the accessibility of nature across various communities in Metro Denver based on geographic interest and identity. The intent of the assessment is to guide investments and policy recommendations that will improve access to nature and reduce barriers to communities. A working group was established to bring in a range of voices and experiences to surface relevant issues, develop an equity-in-nature framework, and establish definitions. A research team based out of the University of Denver supported the working team's direction.
- The framework became known as the Equity-in-Nature Framework and includes six dimensions of equity in nature. Through a storytelling approach, each dimension is defined, includes related stories from working group members, explores data, and lists questions focused on action.

### ***Opportunities for SPRUWP Members to be Involved***

- Metro DNA hosts a semi-annual partners meeting that convenes about 80 to 90 organizations. The next one will occur on December 8, 2023. SPRWUP members are encouraged to attend.
- Metro DNA hopes to increase its presence and impact in the community. It recently updated its branding and website. The website provides access to both assessment reports mentioned above. Additionally, the website has an interactive web map tool to understand better and communicate habitat value. This web mapping tool is available to any user who can directly download data or maps from it to create a tailored report. Metro DNA intends that the reports not just sit on a shelf but be shared with other organizations and agencies

to create funding for projects that build the regional vision of people and nature. Metro DNA envisions implementing demonstration projects that help to understand better issues, barriers, and opportunities related to habitat connectivity and equitable access. The coalition seeks other entities, such as SPRUWP members, interested in participating to help form a regional funding model for these demonstration projects.

### ***Questions Regarding the Metro DNA Presentation***

SPRUWP members asked Chris questions following his presentation on Metro DNA. Their questions are indicated below in italics, with the corresponding responses in plain text.

*Has Metro DNA worked with Aurora Parks, Recreation, and Open Space?*

Because Aurora Parks, Recreation, and Open Space had an interim director, they did not have the capacity at the time to engage with Metro DNA as a new relationship.

### **DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPRUWP WATER QUALITY ASSESSMENT TOOL UPDATE**

Samuel Wallace, Peak Facilitation Group, provided SPRUWP members with an overview and demonstration of the recently developed SPRUWP Water Quality Assessment Tool (WQAT). His presentation is summarized below.

- This tool was developed to help provide transparent and easy-to-access data to the public while helping scientists, officials, and educators collectively review, assess, and track water quality data across the watershed. This tool also helps identify trends that can subsequently inform strategies to improve water quality. This update is the third iteration of the WQAT. Whereas the second (previous) iteration relied upon static data, this updated WQAT automatically integrates data from the Colorado Data Sharing Network and the National Water Quality Data Portal every night.
- The SPRUWP Science & Data Committee identified parameters of interest to include in the tool, and Leonard Rice Engineers is the consulting firm that helped develop the tool. The firm can add new parameters if SPRUWP members express interest in adding more.
- Some new features of the WQAT include a map explorer that shows individual monitoring locations and a watershed explorer that shows data at the Hydrological Unit Code (HUC)-12 level. SPRUWP members can use the WQAT to identify hotspots, visualize data (daily and annual time series), note benchmarks, periods of record, trend analysis, and read narrative storylines.
- SPRUWP members interested in a WQAT demonstration at their organizations are encouraged to contact Samuel.

### ***Comments on the WQAT***

At a previous demonstration, a concern arose about how benchmarks are interpreted regarding compliance. The benchmarks in the WQAT are not indicative of water quality compliance and should not be interpreted as regulatory guidelines.

### **NEXT STEPS**

- The next SPRUWP full partners meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, February 20, 2024, from 1 pm to 3 pm. The meeting will be in person. The meeting details are TBD.
- Any SPRUWP member with ideas for tours in 2024 is encouraged to contact Samuel Wallace, who is planning for the upcoming year.