



America's Forgotten Urban Waterways

An estimated 40 percent of the U.S. population lives in coastal counties; in the North Atlantic, that number is over 80 percent. The connection to our coasts and rivers is a part of our regional identity. We have four of the top ten most populated metro areas in the coastal zone in the country: New York City (1), Philadelphia (5), Washington, D.C. (7), and Boston (10); cities with a long and storied history due to their role as manufacturing/industrial centers and the associated large population growth.

These cities share a reliance on urban waterways - they have the power to connect millions of people to the goods and services their communities need. Urban waters also impact large populations in adjacent upstream and downstream communities. They receive large amounts of pollution from a variety of sources, including polluted runoff from urban landscapes, which creates public and environmental health hazards.

NOAA's Office of Response & Restoration's (OR&R) Director David Westerholm is coordinating NOAA's broader participation in a government-wide effort to restore our neglected urban waterways; he is supported in this role by Simeon Hahn (also with OR&R) based in Philadelphia.



An impacted urban river shoreline.

"Urban waterways often get overlooked when you're talking about habitat restoration. The problems are in some cases, so massive, so overwhelming, that you want to give up before you start. But for those of us who live in these urban centers, there is nothing more critical to our community's health and well being," said Hahn.

The multi-agency Urban Waters Federal Partnership (UWFP) was announced in 2011 to reconnect urban communities with their waterways by improving coordination among federal agencies, driving them toward coordinated action to address the myriad causes of urban waterway decline and help overcome barriers to collaboration.

"I think the potential of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership is incredible; it demonstrates the link between our society, our urban and coastal development and ultimately the health of our oceans," said Jason Tuell, NOAA's North Atlantic Regional Team (NART) Lead. "It's just the kind of thing regional collaboration was designed to address."

The missions of NOAA and the UWFP are strategically aligned to focus on (1) coastal management and restoration of tidal rivers, estuaries, and habitats that support coastal resources, (2) predicting and adapting to changes in climate and weather, (3) improving and sustaining economic (cont. p. 2)

vitality by revitalizing urban water ecosystems and communities, and (4) achieving healthy oceans and coasts by protecting the quality of rivers and watersheds.

But for all NOAA's 80 plus locations and approximate 9,000 employees and contractors in the North Atlantic region, the number of staff located in New York City, Philadelphia, and Boston can be counted on your fingers and toes. It is also difficult to determine the amount of NOAA resources dedicated to these areas. Certainly NOAA's vision of 'healthy ecosystems, communities, and economies that are resilient in the face of change,' applies to our urban centers, yet many of NOAA's activities in these urban areas are scattered across line offices located throughout the region. Hahn's role is to try and coalesce these activities and align them with the goals of the Partnership, where applicable.

There are 18 locations for the UWFP nationwide, with six in the North Atlantic. The Anacostia River in Washington, DC, Bronx and Harlem Rivers in New York, New York, and the Patapsco River in Baltimore, Maryland were announced in 2011. The Mystic River Watershed in Chelsea/Everett/North of Boston, the Passaic River in Passaic, New Jersey, and the Delaware River Watershed in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania were added in 2013. Of these six locations, NOAA is active in four: the Patapsco, Anacostia, Bronx/Harlem and Delaware. Although NOAA is the Federal co-lead in only one of the 18 focus areas, the Delaware, Hahn would like to demonstrate progress in every location in the region, and joined the NART to help get the word out about the Partnership and gather interest and momentum from across NOAA.



NOAA restoration site on the Delaware River at Lardners Point

"Although it may be unrealistic to restore habi-

tats to their original condition, localities are taking the lead in improving ecosystem functions that enhance and restore fisheries, water quality, and recreational services. They just need more federal interest and expertise," said Hahn.

"NOAA is doing great work in the region on climate predictions and adaptation planning, living shorelines, wetland and stream restoration, green infrastructure, construction of fishing piers and boat launches, and managing contaminants. I want to learn more about what else we can do to restore these urban waterways."

If you've got an interest in connecting your program's activities to the Partnership, contact Simeon.Hahn@noaa.gov.

What's a GARFO?

NOAA Fisheries has changed the name of the Northeast Regional Office to the Greater Atlantic Regional Office (GARFO) at the direction of Congress to better reflect the broad extent of the region, which spans from Maine to North Carolina and includes the Great Lakes. The office is located in Gloucester, Mass. This change is consistent with recent efforts to expand the office's presence in the Mid-Atlantic region. The new Assistant Regional Administrator for Stakeholder engagement, Kevin Chu, is based in Annapolis, Md., and oversees communications and fishing industry outreach teams.

The new GARFO is in the process of updating their operating systems, communications, and documents to reflect this change. Constituents are not expected to be impacted in this transition.

For more information about what GARFO (formerly NERO) go to <http://nero.noaa.gov/>



NOAA & New Jersey Borough Make Their “Mark”

The northern coastal New Jersey borough of Manasquan experienced record flooding when the surge associated with Super Storm Sandy moved ashore on October 29, 2012. As part of National Weather Service Flood Safety Awareness Week, Weather Forecast Office Mount Holly hydrologist Ray Kruzdlo, meteorologist Joe Miketta, and Jacques Cousteau Reserve community resiliency specialist Christopher Huch, joined Manasquan’s mayor and council members in unveiling a high water mark sign with Bob Wood, owner of the Wood Real Estate Agency, one of many businesses in the borough hard hit by flooding during that epic event.

Some communities shy away from bringing attention to past flood events. Manasquan officials know that while living and vacationing near the ocean is normally a serene experience, sometimes the water level goes up, and on rare occasions, floods happen. By placing high water mark signs in prominent places throughout the community, residents and visitors alike will be reminded about the power of water and the need to stay prepared and informed. This is especially evident inside the office of Wood Real Estate Agency, where a high water mark sign indicating the maximum water level during Sandy makes customers aware of the natural cycles associated with living near the ocean as they contemplate buying or renting a home. Through the efforts of the Manasquan Office of Emergency Management director Chris Tucker, 25 of these signs will be posted in locations throughout the borough such as bars, restaurants, stores, and utility poles. These high water mark signs will provide a reference point for future floods as residents will be able to compare the forecast flood height with what occurred during Super Storm Sandy, helping them make informed decisions.

Contact George.McKillop@noaa.gov for more information about this program.

NOAA Place in the North Atlantic

NOAA National Weather Service Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office

The NOAA NWS Baltimore/Washington Forecast Office located in Sterling, Va. is responsible for weather forecasts and warnings for 44 counties in Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia, in addition to the District of Columbia.

A staff of 28 people, led by Meteorologist-in-Charge James Lee, provides 24-hour a day coverage to a wide customer base including the general public, marine (Potomac River and Maryland portion of Chesapeake Bay), river flooding, aviation (3 major airports are in the service area), and fire weather communities. The WFO also provides support for potential incidents relating to homeland security, a particular concern due to the proximity to the nation’s capital.

The WFO has an active outreach program and was selected as one of six offices across the nation to be part of a pilot project to develop new ways to convey weather information and reach the community. Existing efforts include schools talks and tours, aviation and boat show participation, and SKYWARN spotter training. This WFO also maintains a Twitter feed (@NWS_Balt-Wash) and a Facebook page to reach the community through social media.

For more information go to:
www.erh.noaa.gov/lwx/



NOAA People in the North Atlantic Region

Richard Okulski, NOAA National Weather Service

What are your duties and areas of responsibility for?

I am the Meteorologist In Charge of the NOAA/NWS Office in Caribou, Maine. We are responsible for issuing weather forecasts and warnings for northern and eastern Maine.

What do you consider your most significant achievements as a NOAA employee?

My service during high impact weather events are my most notable achievements. These events include service as an Incident Meteorologist on large wildfires in the Western U.S., as a Warning Coordination Meteorologist during several historic tornado outbreaks including the April 27, 2011 Super Outbreak, and landfalling hurricanes such as Isabel (2003), Irene (2011), and Sandy (2012).

Do you have any achievements outside of NOAA that you would like to mention?

I was a U.S. Army Combat Engineer Platoon Leader in the First Infantry Division during the 1991 Persian Gulf War. My unit witnessed the post war peace talks at Safwan, Iraq as part of the honor brigade.

How does what you do impact the public and why is it important?

Government agencies and citizens make decisions every day based on

our weather forecasts and warnings. It could be as simple as whether to wear a coat in the morning to as serious as whether to evacuate your home because of an approaching hurricane. Government agencies move personnel and equipment prior to events to respond to high impact weather events. The Maine Department of Transportation positions rock salt prior to winter storms based on our information. This is especially critical this winter since it has been unusually wet and cold.

What is your favorite part of your job that makes you feel most fulfilled?

I love working with employees during forecast and warning operations. I became a meteorologist due to my love of weather. It also allows me to work "hand in hand" with the people I supervise and see their passion, challenges, and successes.

What is your favorite motto? And/or your favorite hobby?

My favorite is Yogi Berra's "it ain't over till it's over." People get tired at the end of a major weather event, especially severe weather. It is easy to let your guard down when the adrenaline rush subsides.

My favorite hobby is hiking. I hiked the Gulf Hags Trail in central Maine last summer. It is just off the Appalachian Trail and is called the Grand Canyon of the East.



NART Background

The NART is one of eight regional teams created by NOAA's Regional Collaboration effort. It is composed of 17 members from five line offices and is currently led by Jason Tuell. Nicole Bartlett is the NART Regional Coordinator. For more information on team members and activities visit: http://www.regions.noaa.gov/north_atlantic