

RECLAMATION

Managing Water in the West

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LOWER COLORADO REGION

The Regional Report

Secretary Salazar visits Los Angeles River President Obama's Urban Waters Federal Partnership event and America's Great Outdoors Initiative

Editor's note: The following article was submitted by Jack Simes, Southern California Area Office.



Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar speaks to the audience during his recent visit to Los Angeles to tour the City's redevelopment efforts along the Los Angeles River. Standing to the Secretary's right is Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa. *LCR photo by Amy Witherall*

Watershed revitalization efforts are the focus of Urban Waters Federal Partnerships. And on Jan. 12, **Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar** visited the City of Los Angeles and joined Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and other dignitaries on a tour of the Los Angeles River to view the latest developments and discuss the City's planned Los Angeles River Urban Waters Federal Partnership Pilot project river restoration activities.

In addition to supporting local efforts, pilot project goals include enhancing flood control, improving water quality through green infrastructure improvements, enabling safe public access, and restoring a functional riparian ecosystem.

The Los Angeles River is one of seven locations selected for the nation's new Urban Waters Federal Partnership. It is intended to reconnect urban areas, particularly those that are under-served or economically distressed, with their waterways and to improve

collaboration among the federal agencies working to improve those waters.

The Urban Waters Federal Partnership's focus is three-fold:

- 1) breakdown government program silos to energize existing programs and create meaningful new ones;
- 2) ensure local communities are full partners in restoring and protecting their waterways; and
- 3) leverage area expertise and funding so early and visible victories fuel long-term action.



Taking time for a photo during his recent visit to Los Angeles, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar poses with SCAO Water Resources Planner Amy Witherall. He was in Los Angeles to view Los Angeles River restoration efforts. The encounter proved to be an opportune time for SCAO staff members Witherall and Jack Simes to discuss their office's efforts in the Urban Waters Federal Partnership. *LCR photo by Jack Simes*

Among the touring group were **Will Shafroth**, Counselor to the Secretary for America's Great Outdoors, and Southern California Area Office's Water Resources Planner **Amy Witherall**, who is a member of the Los Angeles River Urban Waters Federal Partnership, and Area Planning Officer **Jack Simes**.

Both Witherall and Simes said they were glad for the time with the Secretary, which gave them an opportunity "... to explain Reclamation's role in Los Angeles River restoration efforts as part of the Urban Waters Federal Partnership," said Simes.

President Obama launched the America's Great Outdoors (AGO) Initiative to develop a 21st Century conservation and recreation agenda.

AGO takes as its premise that lasting conservation solutions should rise from the American people – that the protection of our natural heritage is a non-partisan objective shared by all Americans. It recognizes that many of the best ideas come from outside of Washington. Instead of dictating policies, this initiative turns to communities for local, grassroots conservation initiatives.

Instead of growing bureaucracy, AGO calls for reworking inefficient policies and making the federal government a better partner with states, tribes, and

local communities.

AGO is connected with the Urban Waters Partnership, as indicated in the report at <http://americasgreatoutdoors.gov/>.

Shafroth also took a tour of various sites along the river with members of the federal partners to see first-hand the realities and possibilities. The Los Angeles River has potential to connect communities, and greatly expand recreation options. More than 70 percent of the city's residents do not live within a one-quarter mile of a park or open space.

This pilot could transform the river into more of a public asset, expanding access to parks and open space while driving economic development and job creation.

The federal partner agencies plan to work with the City of Los Angeles, other interested municipalities, California State agencies, and local non-governmental agencies.