

# Groundwork USA

Groundwork USA Newsletter

Winter 2010/11



Planting at Kenilworth Park and cleaning up the Anacostia River for our service project, at Groundwork USA's Annual Assembly & Youth Summit in Washington, D.C., in October 2010.

Hello Everyone,

We hope you are staying warm, wherever you are. We've enjoyed hearing from our Trusts across the country about the great programs they are involved in, and are excited to share them with you in our first quarterly newsletter.

Congratulations to GW Lawrence on winning the 2010 Brownfield Renewal Award for its Manchester Street Park project!

GWUSA is partnering with River Network to offer \$30,000 to \$70,000 grants to build the capacity of urban river groups across the nation. The RFP is being released this week. Please look out for an email from us and check the [GWUSA](#) and [River Network](#) web sites for details.

Finally, please mark your calendars for a week in mid-September this year when GWUSA's Annual

Assembly and Youth Summit will take place in Denver, Colorado (we will send exact dates ASAP). We will be partnering with the National Park Service for an expanded event that will include extensive programming in Rocky Mountain National Park, where the elk are expected to be roaming the mountains that time of year.

Best,  
The GWUSA Team - Rick, Anjali, Kate, & Curt

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## Groundwork News

### GW Denver Partners with Rocky Mountain National Park

GW Denver's Rocky Mountain National Park (RMNP) Green Team worked hard all summer to become our future community and environmental leaders. They completed acres of ecological restoration at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal and RMNP. They learned many "lessons in the thicket" as they removed 840 Russian Olive trees and the invasive Houndstongue plant from 40 acres of thorny Locust thicket soon to be Bison habitat at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal.

The youth ended their summer with a three week internship at RMNP, where they worked side-by-side with National Park staff to complete 120 hours of tundra restoration, waking at 5:00am to get ready for intensive work with a different NPS crew each week. Evenings were spent on educational programs including star-gazing and night wildlife hikes. Other "down-time" was spent exploring NPS careers and internships, like the Student Temporary Employment Program (STEP).



### And Wraps Up an Impactful Year on its Climate Challenge

GW Denver initiated the *Denver Climate Challenge* to empower individuals and businesses to measurably reduce their impact on the environment by reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Climate Challenge programs in low-income neighborhoods also focus on providing immediate benefits to the residents like reducing energy bills, creating jobs and emergency preparedness.

The Porch Bulb Project is a unique strategy to reach Denver's low-income and elderly residents with assistance to reduce their energy bills while engaging thousands of people in the *Denver Climate Challenge*. The straightforward action of swapping a porch bulb opens the door to a more in-depth conversation about energy savings and greenhouse gas reduction. Volunteers offer a range of services including signing families up for free curbside recycling services, providing free street trees, cancelling junk mail, and pre-qualifying the family for free in-home energy services and weatherization. In 2010 alone, 725 volunteers knocked on 27,200 doors and provided services to over 6,000 Denver households, which resulted in huge energy savings.

GW Denver is continuing this program in 2011, expecting even greater results as the program expands to work in communities across the state as well as continuing in Denver.

For more news about the latest at GW Denver, [click here](#).

### **GW Milwaukee Gears Up to Restore Fish Populations of River Estuary**

A grant from the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative has GW Milwaukee and its partners working on improving the habitat for fish along the shipping channel of the Milwaukee River Estuary, by installing Habitat Underwater Baskets (HUBs).

Riverbanks along the shipping channel have been widened and dredged (10-28') for commercial navigation, and lined with vertical steel sheet walls, retaining walls, concrete, and steel bulkheads to provide structural stability and eliminate erosion from passing barges. This massive growth in channel size slows down average water velocities so young fish become trapped in slow currents in a part of the river with no vegetation (caused by the disappearance of the natural sloping stream bank). So young fish do not survive their return trip to the lake from upstream spawning beds.



A pilot project conducted in the Cuyahoga River lasted only one year because of high plant mortality, partly due to the way the Cuyahoga HUBs were installed. The new attachment method allows the baskets to float up and down with the water levels so the specialized "emergent aquatic" plants grown in the HUBs will survive. After installation, the project team will monitor plant and aquatic life, and data collected will be analyzed to prove the success of our pilot project - or point to areas that need correction before we expand with more installation areas.

GW Milwaukee's long-term goal is to increase fish population and improve spawning patterns along the shipping channel of the Milwaukee River Estuary. They are very excited to be working on this project!

For more about GW Milwaukee's programs and projects, [click here](#).

## GW Somerville Builds Schoolyard Gardens with the Kids

GW Somerville was thrilled to be working with students at every Somerville elementary school this past fall! *Garden Club* participants have been busy collecting seeds, harvesting, cooking, eating and playing games surrounded by the plants, bugs, and birds that live in our garden ecosystems. As Maya Jaugust from Argenziano School says, "Gardening is good because we help the plants and animals live. I really liked the planting!"

In the fall the kids learned why leaves change color, how to toast pumpkin seeds, and how to put our gardens "to bed" for the winter. In the first week of November, the gardens experienced their first frost and we watched our vegetable plants reach the end of their life cycle. Pulling dead plants out of the gardens, composting them, and mulching the garden beds kept everyone very busy in November. Generous parent donations allowed clubs at Kennedy School and Brown School to plant flower bulbs and promote school beautification. After working for an hour removing dead plants and tilling the soil, Kindergartner Camilla Gomez exclaimed, "garden club is very very very good! It's good because we get to plant stuff and because together we can shovel a lot of dirt!"



Check out Elizabeth Sheeran's article about GW Somerville's school yard garden programs in the *Somerville News*. [Click here](#) for more about GW Somerville's great programs.

## GW Lawrence Wins 2010 Brownfield Renewal Award

GW Lawrence won the coveted Brownfields award for its role in getting funding, involving the community, and seeing the Manchester Street Park project to its completion after remediation was done. The pre-development phase alone lasted six years. The Park was completed in September 2009 and today is home to children's play equipment, picnic areas and open fields, 30 community garden beds, and bilingual interpretive signage created by local teens. The site, which sits on the Spicket River at the edge of a 19th century mill complex, started down the path to parkland after a 20-year old incinerator on the land was dismantled in 2001. [Click here](#) for more information about the award and the project.



## And Begins Work on Revitalizing the Spicket River

GW Lawrence and the City of Lawrence were awarded \$2.6M from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for their Spicket River Revitalization Project this summer. The funds will facilitate the building of the Spicket River Greenway, which will link the new and existing parks along the River through the lowest-income areas of Lawrence.

The City and GW Lawrence are finalizing the design and will then construct about 2.5 miles of paths along the Spicket River from Manchester Street Park to the outfall of the Spicket River into the Merrimack River. The project will have shovels in the ground this Spring.

Envisioned by the community as an "emerald bracelet" the Greenway will connect neighborhoods and six existing parks - including the recently completed Manchester Street and Dr. Nina Scarito Parks.

For more about GW Lawrence and their programs, [click here](#).

### GW Elizabeth Green Team Cleans Up Elizabeth River Seaport

GW Elizabeth partnered with the E-port Presbyterian Center, the City of Elizabeth, and local volunteers in a successful Saturday morning cleanup of the Seaport that attracted over 100 youth from the Elizabeth community, from points west, and beyond. Both Mayor Chris Bollwage, and 1<sup>st</sup> Ward City Councilman Manny Grova, attended the urban water cleanup with the Mayor commenting that "the dedicated efforts of our local partners and volunteers continue to transform our neighborhoods and improve the quality of life within our City".

Jonathan Phillips, the GW Elizabeth Executive Director, is proud that the Groundwork mission of building communities has taken hold in the State's 4<sup>th</sup> largest City - Elizabeth. Working with these partners to build a River Trail along the banks of the Elizabeth River, Mr. Phillips sought to tie in the cleanup event with the Environmental Protection Agency's Urban Waters Program efforts: "When people volunteer their efforts to improve their neighborhoods, they are taking a big step in improving their lives as well".

For more information about GW Elizabeth's exciting programs, [click here](#).



### New Trust GW Richmond's First Project Is A Hit

For its first community project, GW Richmond partnered with EarthTeam Environmental Network, the Richmond Police Activities League, and volunteer citizens to improve a section of the Richmond Greenway on MLK Day.

High school students and adult volunteers removed invasive plant species, planted native species, and cleaned up a section of the Greenway stretching over two city blocks. The GW Richmond team included about 25 volunteers, and was part of a larger effort to improve the Greenway that included about 400 total volunteers. EarthTeam's *Green Screen* program created a multimedia presentation on the work done which will



be featured on their YouTube channel (see [www.earthteam.org](http://www.earthteam.org) and [www.rpal.org](http://www.rpal.org)).

GW Richmond hopes to have its own website up and running very soon -- look out for it!

### **GW Hudson Valley's Saw Mill River Daylighting Breaks Ground in Larkin Plaza!**

On December 15, 2010, Yonkers Mayor Amicone held a groundbreaking ceremony at Larkin Plaza in Yonkers for the Saw Mill River Daylighting project. Despite the cold, it was well attended by representatives from the Department of Environmental Conservation, EPA, Yonkers City Council, a state senator, community groups, and neighbors.

The Saw Mill River, an important Hudson River tributary, was channelized and put underground where it runs through downtown Yonkers by the Army Corps of Engineers in the early 20th century. Bringing the River back to the light of day (hence the term "daylighting") has been a dream of many in Yonkers for years. The groundbreaking ceremony was held to celebrate the beginning of construction on a new river park in Larkin Plaza.

Where there was once a large parking lot, there will soon be a thriving, dynamic river park! If all goes as planned, construction will be finished in December of 2011. The park will include two freshwater pools and one tidal pool. Meandering paths will run alongside the river, an area for public concerts will be constructed, ample benches for viewing will be installed, and educational interpretive signs will cover the ecology, history and engineering of the park.



GW Hudson Valley has been the City of Yonkers' environmental partner on the daylighting, bringing in grant resources to provide a top-rate habitat restoration plan and involving the public in interpreting the history and ecology of the park. This will assure continuation and enhancement not only of Saw Mill River fisheries, but the central role the Saw Mill has played in the history and future of Yonkers.

For more information about the ecology of the new park and the habitat plan, contact [Ann-Marie Mitroff](mailto:Ann-Marie.Mitroff@groundworkusa.org) at GW Hudson Valley, (914) 375-2151.

### **A Busy Year for the Science Barge**

The Science Barge is a prototype sustainable urban farm that is entirely solar-powered and floats on the Hudson River a few blocks from the GW Hudson Valley office. The Barge closed its doors for the winter in early November, concluding a very busy and successful 2010 growing and education season.

Fieldtrips and tours served more than 3,500 students and adults this year. Visitors included K-12 classes from throughout the region, summer camp and youth groups, university students, a local garden club, Girl and Boy Scout troops, and the Groundwork Bridgeport Green Team. Staff, volunteers and interns worked many long, hard, hot hours in the greenhouse, allowing us to donate over 800 pounds of fresh fruits and veggies to local food pantries and community members. 15



Yonkers high school students worked as interns on the barge from April to November and were

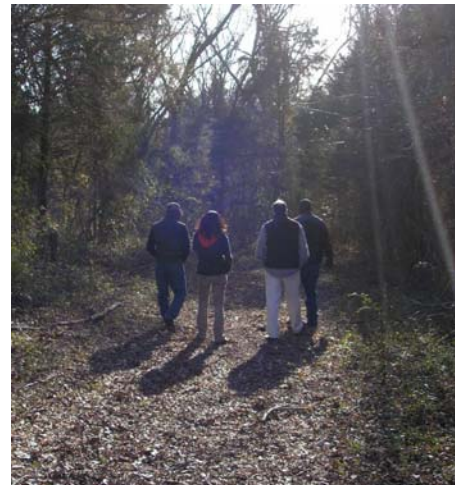
a great asset to our program; apart from leading tours of the barge, these students assisted with crop maintenance and education programs, and participated in lessons related to the environment, food and farming. One student, Patricia Rodriguez, wrote of her experience on the barge: "It opened a lot of other doors for me, but not only that, I learned so much and am able to share that information with others whenever I can." The Science Barge will resume programming for the 2011 season on April 11<sup>th</sup>.

For more on GW Hudson Valley and its many other programs, please [click here](#).

### GWUSA Visits GW Dallas

GWUSA sent a team down to Dallas to conduct a Peer Assessment and Review (PAR) of GW Dallas. The PAR Team, consisting of Dennis Chestnut of GW Anacostia, and Rick Magder and Anjali Chen of GWUSA, met GW Dallas board members and partners, toured program sites and learned about the many exciting projects GW Dallas has planned for the next few years. We also got to taste some decadent and spicy Texas food, and enjoy the hospitality of our partners in Dallas!

New Executive Director Peter Payton took us on a tour of GW Dallas projects in and around the 6,000 acre nature preserve that is the Great Trinity Forest, located in the heart of the City of Dallas. GW Dallas has initiated and successfully undertaken *Adopt-a-Trail* programs with area schools to clear existing trails and to create soft surface trails in and around the Trinity. GW Dallas is also partnering with the new Trinity River Audubon Center and will be bringing students to the Center to work on their trails starting in February this year.



*Let's Cowboy Up* is a program geared towards training at-risk youth living in the community adjoining the Trinity Forest, in horsemanship skills. GW Dallas is partnering with *Let's Cowboy Up* this summer to get Groundwork youth involved in riding and caring for horses, as well as in learning welding and carpentry skills.

For more about GW Dallas and their programs around the Trinity Forest and River, check out their [website](#) (to be updated and given a new look soon!).

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