



River Network

Connecting People, Saving Rivers

July 11, 2012

Michael Shapiro
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Deputy Assistant Administrator
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Office of Water
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Mike:

As the lead national conservation organization working to assist hundreds of local river and watershed groups across the country, staff at River Network have seen first-hand how locally led river restoration efforts can literally transform a community. So it is in that spirit that we heartily endorse the collaborative *Green Grand Rapids* process, in the City of Grand Rapids, Michigan, and urge you to consider this community as a “new location” for the Urban Waters Federal Partnership.

The plan that has been developed in Grand Rapids embraces the critical importance of the Grand River – running through the heart of the core urban area; connecting downtown with underserved neighborhoods, suburban communities and rural landscapes. The Grand River can and should play an increasingly important role in enhancing the city’s quality of life. This can be achieved by continuing to expand the visibility of the river, improving access to and along its edges and encouraging active uses on and adjacent to the water.

This project will also build on a project currently underway on Plaster Creek - a tributary that enters the Grand River right in Grand Rapids. As you know, the Plaster Creek project is one of five that has been funded by EPA under the Urban Waters grant with River Network. The Plaster Creek Stewards also just received a \$375,000 federal grant for major restoration work on Plaster Creek to reduce stormwater peaks.

So it is no surprise to us to find that community and business leaders in another part of the Grand Rapids watershed have worked with local government and recreational enthusiasts to launch an initial project at the heart of the urban river restoration vision – to restore the namesake rapids in downtown Grand Rapids. In addition to serving as a community catalyst for full river restoration, the project will remedy the degradation of the River’s ecosystem functions caused by five low head dams, flood walls, urban encroachment, and channelization.

Finally, the project could go a long way to further revitalize the downtown corridor of Grand Rapids, enhance the quality of life and provide significant habitat benefits by restoring the river bed, banks, and aquatic ecosystem. All of this work would in turn improve water quality in this most important tributary waterway to Lake Michigan.

I hope that the summer finds you well and that you are staying cool during this extremely hot season. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can offer any further thoughts regarding this most worthy project.

All the best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Todd Ambs". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Todd L. Ambs
President

cc: Susan Hedman, EPA Region 5 Administrator
Ann Mills, USDA
Lisa Pelstring, US DOI
Michael Rains, USFS