

# think WATER



## EXPLORING THE CENTRALITY OF WATER IN OUR LIVES

### Anacostia Community Museum's Urban Waterways

Katrina D. Lashley, Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Institution

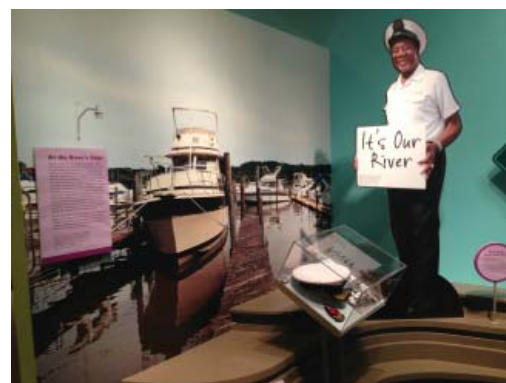
In 2009, staff at the Smithsonian Anacostia Community Museum were discussing what would be the focus of the first project and exhibition under the museum's new mission which had been expanded to focus on issues that resonate within urban communities, the primary sites where far-reaching economic, social, and cultural changes take place. There was the realization the museum, established in 1967 as the Anacostia Neighborhood Museum and whose work has been about and based in the experiences of the communities East of the River, had never done an exhibition or project on the Anacostia River which played an intrinsic role in the shaping of communities east of the river. The physical, political, and social landscape of D.C, the river and its environs had, for centuries, been an area of contest where a variety of parties had battled for or bought its rich natural resources. How then, had it been overlooked as a possible research topic?

The Anacostia Watershed covers more than 175 square miles and is one of the nation's most densely populated with over 2.4 million residents, some of whom are the most economically distressed in Washington. From its headwaters in Sandy Spring, Maryland, the river (just under nine miles long) flows down through eastern

Montgomery and northern Prince George's counties (Maryland), into DC where it joins the Potomac River at Buzzard Point. Discussions at the museum took place in the larger context of debates surrounding the development of DC along the Anacostia River and efforts to protect and restore the river and the communities along its banks.

The Urban Waterways project seeks to explore the relationships between urban waterways and the people living along their banks. At the core of the project is the understanding they affect each other in both positive and negative ways, the health of one impacts the health of the other. This exploration is approached through a variety of paths: ecological, historical, cultural, environmental, political, economic, spiritual, and artistic, acknowledging the various ways in which people and waterways interact with each other do not take place in a vacuum. Specifically, this collaborative Smithsonian effort led by the Anacostia Community Museum is a research and educational initiative which seeks to:

- Create a dialogue between scholars, government officials, organizers, non-profit leaders, and community members;
- Elicit first-hand information and documentation from residents-



Images from *Reclaiming the Edge: Urban Waterways & Civic Engagement* on display at the Anacostia Community Museum from October 2012-November 2013

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- activists, elders, leaders;
- Engage interested parties in activities that will enable reclamation, restoration, and equitable (re)development.

While the focus is on the Anacostia River and its communities, the project also explores the relationships between other urban waterways and their communities.

What issues are residents in other cities facing? How engaged or disengaged are communities from their waterways? In the face of changing cityscapes and waterfronts, how are community groups advocating for themselves and equitable development? How are the toxic legacies of environmental mismanagement being addressed? What impacts does a disconnection from the natural world have on communities' traditional practices and ultimately, their spirits? How can a major event like the Olympics impact the redevelopment of the waterways and neighborhoods?

Participating communities share similar histories with East of the River communities. These communities tend to be places which have at one point played a vital role in the development of their cities, regions and in some cases the nation - yet with the passing of time have been cut off from the prosperity of the larger metro. They are places with a history of being underserved, yet are the first to feel the impact of pollution, environmental mismanagement, and inequitable development practices. Current active collaborations are occurring with community-based groups and organizations in Louisville, Los Angeles, Honolulu, Baltimore, Turkey Creek (MS), Biloxi (MS), Moss Point (MS), Africatown (Ala), and London.

The creation of a network of collaborating communities has



Community activist Mickey Sou gives Urban Waterways project coordinator Katrina Lashley a tour of Biloxi's Vietnamese community. Photo by Susana Raab/Anacostia Community Museum/Smithsonian Institution

allowed the museum to continue in its role as a convener - to provide a space in which partners can exchange information, explore best practices, share victories, and feel empowered. Documentation of efforts to advocate for healthier waterways and sustainable communities has been a key element of the project. An extensive series of interviews with various community activists, non-profit leaders

and others documents community activism around urban waterway issues in partner cities. The Urban Waterways collections also include an extensive archive of photographs, documents, video, and audio material which traces civic engagement along the Anacostia River and other urban waterways. Six issues of the Urban Waterways newsletter have documented the activities and strategies of the project's community partners. Articles have highlighted collaborations between Latino organizers and government agencies to improve the LA river; environmental stewardship of Hawai'ian 8th graders; efforts in Turkey Creek, Mississippi to protect their cultural and ecological heritage; the use of art to engage residents with their waterways; the role faith communities play in encouraging environmental stewardship and the creation of green economies to ensure sustainable communities.

In March of 2015, the project's national network gathered for a day-long Urban Waterways symposium which brought together individuals from diverse backgrounds and perspectives to exchange experiences and best practices focused on environmental activism, community engagement, grassroots activism, and waterfront development. Plans are currently underway for a symposium to be held in 2017.



An attendee speaks at the March 2015 Symposium. Photo by Susana Raab/Anacostia Community Museum/Smithsonian Institution

One of the major products of the research was *Reclaiming the Edge: Urban Waterways & Civic Engagement*,

## Anacostia Community Museum's Urban Waterways (continued from page 1)

an exhibition which ran from October of 2012 through November of 2013. The exhibition explored the history, public use, and attitudes toward the Anacostia River and its watershed. Visitors were asked to envision what a restored river and its communities could look like while weighing the challenges such futures could involve. They were also encouraged to reflect on how their daily routines impact the health of the river and, ultimately, the lives of their fellow residents. Finally, visitors were presented with case studies of the various ways in which five cities (Pittsburgh, Louisville, Shanghai, Los Angeles, and London) have approached issues surrounding the restoration of their waterways. A forthcoming companion volume of essays with contributions from the project's national network in D.C., Los Angeles, Louisville, O'ahu, and Turkey Creek will explore such topics, including houses of worship and environmental concerns, restoration efforts along the Anacostia, water rights in Hawaii and the restoration of traditional management practices, the 11th Street Bridge Project, civil engagement, political outreach and the development of the Louisville Waterfront, and the browning of the green movement and litigation. The volume also profiles several individuals whose work has had a significant impact in the creation of healthier, sustainable waterways, and communities.

Recognizing the importance of engaging interested parties in discussions that will enable the restoration of waterways and their communities, the museum has hosted a series of twenty-two community forums, moderated panel discussions that have encouraged in-depth dialogue among environmental activists, agency leaders, federal and local government officials, and citizen stakeholders. Topics

addressed include waterfront development, citizen science, green jobs, faith and environmentalism, environmental justice, the diversification of the green movement, and youth engagement.



Alison Cawood (SERC), and two members of the second Urban Ecology Engagement Initiative conduct testing in Watt's Creek one of the Anacostia River's 15 tributaries. Photo by Susana Raab/Anacostia Community Museum/Smithsonian Institution

Further highlighting the importance of youth development and education, the museum, and the United Planning Organization (UPO) working in collaboration with the Smithsonian Environmental Research Center (SERC), has developed the Urban Ecology Engagement Initiative, an environmental stewardship and youth-mentoring program in which elementary, middle, and high school students, primarily from East of River communities, are engaged in a water quality monitoring project - students monitor the health of the waterways in the Anacostia Watershed by conducting biological and chemical monitoring according to accepted research protocols. Students also complete research projects focusing on watershed ecology and present their findings to the members of the community.

By providing a space for the histories and continuing work of the various partners in its network, the Urban Waterways project is continuing the Anacostia Community Museum's commitment to active engagement with communities both local and national. By celebrating the work and accomplishments of residents and organizations, the project reminds communities of what can be accomplished and the next possible steps in efforts to reclaim urban waterways for the benefits of all living along them.

*Katrina D. Lashley has served as Project Coordinator of UrbanWaterways at the Smithsonian's Anacostia Community Museum for the past four and a half years. Additionally, she worked with Smithsonian's Museum on Main Street (MoMS) program to document water-based initiatives and programming at the Smithsonian and highlight the efforts of communities in the MoMS network to engage their residents in issues pertaining to their local waterways.*

# Water/Ways in Miami Springs, FL

JoEllen Phillips, Curtiss Mansion Museum

The City of Miami Springs was founded by aviation pioneer, inventor, developer, and American hero, Glenn Hammond Curtiss, and was incorporated on August 23, 1946. This year, the City Council was so pleased about hosting the Smithsonian's *Water/Ways* exhibition they voted unanimously to change the date of its 90th birthday party to incorporate the arrival of the exhibit.

This year's birthday was a three-day event featuring the City's three largest properties - the brand new aquatic center, the refurbished municipal golf course that had been ravaged by recent hurricanes, and the restored Curtiss Mansion, home of city founder, Glenn Curtiss.

The kick-off cocktail reception at the Mansion was held Friday, September 9, 2016. The program opened with folk singer Grant Livingston singing an original composition, "Water Matters," and the ribbon cutting for the *Water/Ways* exhibit. Grandpa Emeritus Ken Wilde's "Generations of Water Fun" photographs taken by one generation or the other were displayed, and contest winners were announced, along with other presentations. The following day was Family Fun day at the aquatic center with water sports, activities, safety and fun served with cupcakes, party treats and jump houses. The third day was a 1920's-style golf tournament on the course that City founder Curtiss had the Seminole Tribe of Florida build; its underground springs were, and to some extent still are, the water source for the entire county.

Throughout the exhibition's six-week stay, almost every aspect of water had a place on our busy agenda. There were panel discussions from Florida International University professor, Dr. Jennifer Vielleux, and University of Miami professor, Dr. Harold Wanless, and also water consultant and "Water Princess" Irela Bague and teenage Sink or Swim founder, Delaney Reynolds. Dara Schoenwald from Volunteer

gave first-hand accounts and memories of perilous water journeys away from dictators and terror to freedom and democracy.

What would a water exhibit be without a Family Day? The day at the Curtiss Mansion included booths from Miami Science Barge, Kids 4 Sharks, Debris Free Oceans, Miami-Dade Extension Services water barrels and conservation division, Rescue a Reef, Biscayne Nature Center, as well as performances by Fantasy Theater Factory and the return of Grant Livingston.

Other programs included a virtual canoe tour of local waterways by canoe enthusiast Bob Williams, identification of South Florida water birds by the Tropical Audubon Society, and presentations by the Curtiss Explorers, 8th grade researchers of American unsung heroes and (s)heroes, with a focus on water-related activities this year. And almost

everyone's favorite use of water - beer! Beer is 97% water, so water quality is very important. Craft-beer aficionado, Paul Bithorn, was on tap to serve up some fine tasting brews, along with some hints for home brewers.

In a sentence, YES, the City of Miami Springs is excited to have hosted *Water/Ways*!!

*JoEllen Phillips is executive director of the Curtiss Mansion Museum and is the coordinator for Water/Ways in Miami Springs.*



The Curtiss Mansion, home of aviation pioneer and founder of the City of Miami Springs Glenn H. Curtiss, was devastated by three arson fires in the 1990s. It was reopened to the public in 2010 after extensive restoration. Courtesy Curtiss Mansion Museum

Cleanup and organizer of the new water stations on Miami Beach was on board to explain a new world of wise water usage. Teacher Debbie Hibbitt's high school students created terrapin turtles from recycled and reclaimed water trash that were used to mark the Terrapin Trail, along with turtle information plaques. The Trail started at the Mansion and led to the on-site acre pond where the "Shall We Gather at the River" chorus performed songs of redemption, salvation and purification in the Southern Negro Spiritual tradition conducted by Florida Memorial University Music Director, Dr. Nelson Hall. Cuban and Haitian exiles who "Braved the Florida Straits"

# The Minnesota Humanities Center – Water/Ways

Jennifer Tonko, Minnesota Humanities Center

“The water itself needs to be protected. Not for political reasons, but for environmental and health reasons, for traditional reasons, that this water is considered a relative.” - Chairman Kevin Jensvold, Upper Sioux Community

Here in Mni Sota/Minnesota, water is part of who we are. Water connects us. Yet the need to protect the water in this place becomes more urgent every day. For instance, the aquifers that supply drinking water to the Twin Cities’ metro area are being drained faster than they are being replenished. Only about 5% of the wetlands that once made up the southern and western regions of Minnesota are still intact.

“All three of our sons were baptized with the water that we live around and that has always been a very powerful part of our family.” - Carolyn Lange Hatlestad, Games Lake and Lake Andrew

When the opportunity to host the new Museum on Main Street *Water/Ways* exhibition was offered, we at the Minnesota Humanities Center had to ask ourselves, “How does an exhibit about water fit within our programming priorities? How can the humanities deepen our understanding of an important environmental challenge? Ultimately, how can the humanities and the Minnesota Humanities Center address the need to care for water?”

“It was definitely the river that brought me back. I bought a cabin on the Kettle, and once I got my cabin I just had to live there. I’ve always felt the pull of the river.” - Ruth Pfaller, Kettle River

Here in Minnesota, we do our best work when we’re in partnership with other organizations and communities. Because of the central nature of water

in our lives, we have a tremendously engaged group of partners: the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, the Minnesota Historical Society, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Minnesota section of the American Water Works Association, and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources. These partners have brought technical expertise, statewide reach, and a deep commitment to planning and shaping the Minnesota story of water together.



Courtesy of Minnesota Pollution Control Agency

The partners decided we really wanted to focus on Minnesotans’ relationships with and responsibilities to water, so we developed *We Are Water MN*, which shares information on water quality around the state juxtaposed with the voices of multiple Minnesotans (some of whom you’ve read here), including farmers, fishers, canoers, ricers, parents, potters, and teachers reflecting on what water means to them and their lives. This story-collecting exhibit provides space for visitors to add their own water stories in order to begin a deep map - a reflection of the places

where *Water/Ways* and *We Are Water MN* have been. These narratives will reinforce, contradict, complement, and compete with each other, and these narratives will help people from each of the six host communities better understand what water means to them and their neighbors. Minnesotans will also be able to add their stories through the [museumonmainstreet.org](http://museumonmainstreet.org) website.

“What we need most in Minnesota is not more laws that try to require or reward clean water practice - they’re last resorts. What we really need is to establish an ethic of clean water practices.” Governor Mark Dayton, Minnesota

Whether you’re from Minnesota or not, we’d love to learn from you! How has water shaped you? Is there a lake or a river that pulls you? How do you protect water? What is your water ethic? Add your story to the *We Are Water MN* conversations on our Facebook page, learn more at [mnhum.org/waterways](http://mnhum.org/waterways), or follow us on Twitter at [@wearewatermn](https://twitter.com/wearewatermn).

“What would I say to water? I think I would ask it to take care of us. And I would say that I am doing my best to take care of it.” - Katie Himanga, Lake City

*Jennifer Tonko is the Minnesota Humanities Center’s program officer for community engagement and traveling exhibits. Her work focuses on the intersections between story and place and how we as humans learn from and with each other through these intersections. Building partnerships that deepen understanding of the past and present so we can be future-focused is her passion.*

# Focus on Smithsonian Affiliates: Millard Sheets Art Center

Thomas Canavan, Millard Sheets Art Center

Located 27 miles east of downtown Los Angeles, the city of Pomona, nicknamed the “urban garden” in the early 19th century, was once known as the “Queen of the Citrus Belt.” Today, the city is still home to Fairplex, the Los Angeles County Fair Association, which oversees the LA County Fair and hundreds of other events throughout the year. The Learning Centers, the educational arm of the Fairplex, among its many programmatic offerings, maintains the Child Development Center, the Career and Technical Education Center, and the Millard Sheets Art Center.

The art center’s mission is to provide access for all to the fine and applied arts through the legacy of Millard Sheets and the California Art Movement. The center is currently preparing for the 2016 LA County Fair and the opening of *The Art Classic: Oasis*. The fine art exhibition began at the first LA County Fair in 1922 and is now known as The Art Classic, which seeks to introduce traditional and contemporary artwork to hundreds of thousands of visitors each year in September.

This year “the classic” will focus on the beauty of water and the integral role it plays in people’s lives. The choice of subject matter was no accident. Thomas Canavan, manager of the art center, points to the role of water in the mindset of California residents. “Water is a big concern, every community has water-saving tips...there are flashing construction signs, reminders that we are still in a drought...they have contests from city to city throughout the state in water conservation techniques and who conserves the most water, who reduces their water use by a certain amount....”

This year’s *Art Classic* will provide an opportunity to introduce art in a meaningful way. Entering the center’s front gallery, visitors will encounter prints of Millard Sheets’ work that features oceanscapes, that will be available for purchase to support the art center, and gives visitors a glimpse of his styles as they progressed throughout the twentieth century. The main gallery will present the work of Los Angeles Art Association members, a combination of photography, paintings, and sculpture. The center’s back gallery will be reserved for work created during the Annual Plein Air Painting competition, by members of the California Art Club, to be held during the first weekend of the LA County Fair. Projects done in the center’s studios will be water-related, and drought-resistant gardens are planned for the center’s patio that introduces guests to water-conscious plants from around the world.

The comprehensive approach to the exhibition aligns with the center’s focus on approaching art at different levels of education and bringing it not only to art students but to the larger community as well. “It was a good opportunity for us to show our guests how art can communicate the needs of our community and how it reflects what is happening around us.” For more information: [millardsheetsartcenter.org](http://millardsheetsartcenter.org)

*Thomas Canavan is the art center manager at the Millard Sheets Art Center in Pomona, CA. The Millard Sheets Arts Center is a Smithsonian Affiliate. Smithsonian Affiliations is a national outreach program that develops long-term, high-quality partnerships with museums and educational organizations in order to share collections, exhibitions, learning opportunities, and research expertise.*



A flyer from the High Springs Museum in High Springs, FL announcing a program on the history of Florida’s springs. Courtesy the High Springs Museum

## See Water/Ways now in these locations:

Red Wing, MN  
Goodhue County Historical Society  
October 1 - November 13, 2016

Riverton, WY  
Central Wyoming College  
October 8 - December 4, 2016

Nampa, ID  
Nampa Public Library  
October 22 - December 4, 2016

Valmeyer, IL  
Valmeyer Community Heritage Society  
October 22 - December 3, 2016

Sanibel, FL  
Ding Darling Wildlife Society  
October 29 - December 10, 2016

Sandstone, MN  
Audobon Center of the North Woods  
November 19, 2016 - January 1, 2017

# Water Hero:

## JOE PODGOR, Miami Springs, FL

Joseph “Joe” Podgor, or “Mr. Water” as he is lovingly referred to in Miami Springs, FL, has served on dozens of local, state, and federal advisory committees, and has been honored locally and nationally for his volunteer work to protect valuable environmental resources for the betterment of South Florida. He pioneered groundwater protection in the United States with the enactment of local regulations to protect wellfields and public drinking water supplies. He is among those who first fostered the formation of the Everglades Coalition, a national conglomerate of groups committed to saving the world’s most precious wetland.

Born in Philadelphia, Joe arrived in Miami Springs with his family when he was 11 years old. Following graduation from the University of Pennsylvania, including two years at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, Joe dedicated his efforts, knowledge and skills to a better environment through awareness and service:

- Founder and long-term member of the City of Miami Springs Ecology Board 1973
- First proposed the LakeBelt, a wetland protection and reservoir plan to safeguard water quality in the primary recharge areas of the Northwest Wellfield in Miami, 1975
- Campaigned for the restoration of the Everglades since 1975, succeeding in gaining allies and ultimately a movement that resulted in a national effort through federal programs to restore the Everglades over a 50-year period
- Assistant to the Director of the Drinking Water Quality Research Center at Florida International University, 1976-78
- Initiated the petition and successfully campaigned for the protection and designation of Miami’s drinking water supply, the Biscayne Aquifer, as a “Sole Source” under the Federal Safe Drinking Water Act, 1978
- Co-editor of proceedings of symposia sponsored by the National Science Foundation, The Handbook of the Biscayne Aquifer, 1978
- Initiated and successfully campaigned for the first drinking water wellfield protection regulation in the country, the North West Wellfield Protection Ordinance, early 1980s
- Director of the Dade Toxics Project, an EPA-sponsored program to educate the public on issues involving toxic



Joe Podgor with writer, journalist, feminist, and environmentalist Marjorie Stoneman Douglas in 1990 on the occasion of her 100th birthday. Ms. Douglas lived to be 108. Courtesy Joe Podgor

substances and hazardous wastes in the environment of Dade County, 1980

- Editor and contributing author of the Dade County Environmental Story, an anthology of essays and a teacher’s workbook on local environmental issues, used by the Miami-Dade County Schools, 1980-1993
- Director of the Environmental Information Service of Friends of the Everglades, group formed by Marjorie Stoneman Douglas, a staunch defender of the Everglades and author of “The Everglades: The River of Grass,” 1980-1995
- Executive Director of Friends of the Everglades, 1991-1995
- Author of 33 publications focusing on environmental issues in South Florida
- Current advisory team member of the Arthur Marshall Foundation’s Environmental Institute and alternate representative to the National Everglades Coalition

Joe’s passion for water has a fun side. In 1973, he started the River Cities Regatta to draw attention to the undesirable state of the Miami River by involving five municipalities that abutted the waterway. The festival celebrated its 43rd year in April 2016. Enough said? Today, Joe is a private consultant on environmental issue systems for Apple Computer, Inc., and is a Special Master for Miami-Dade County’s Code Enforcement Division of the County Clerk’s Office, in which he is a Hearing Officer presiding over cases ranging from zoning to environmental protection. We are eternally grateful to Joe for his foresight and tireless efforts to create a better world for generations to come.

# WATER *Stories*

We all carry within us water stories which are central to who we are. These stories are at the core of a shared human experience. Stories take many forms: audio, video, photographs, and personal memories. Share your water story at [MuseumOnMainStreet.org/stories](http://MuseumOnMainStreet.org/stories).

## Pluff Mud

“Growing up around the tidal regions of the Chesapeake Bay there was always a lot of mud and it was a thick, slippery, slimy, gray brown, smelly mud that I have come to learn is called pluff mud. And if you are not from the coastline, the east coast, or from a region that is affected by tides, it’s hard to imagine the smell of this mud. At low tide you get this very distinctive rotten egg smell that permeates everything and some people find it to be pretty egregious. I think it smells great. I think it smells like home because that’s where I grew up and that’s where I played in the summertime. And when you get in the pluff mud you’re likely to get stuck in it; you’re likely to lose your shoes in it; you’re likely to come home covered with slime; but it’s a lot of fun for a kid. The best thing about the pluff is the fiddler crabs that make their homes in the pluff in tiny little burrows. They come out at low tide. As a kid one of the most exciting things was to catch the fiddler crabs but not get bitten by them or pinched by them because they have large pinchers. It wasn’t until maybe a year or two ago that I learned there was a name for that mud, the pluff mud, that’s so pervasive along the east coast in the United States, and I was so happy to finally put a name to the mud that meant so much to me as a kid.”

– Heather Foster, taken from Stories from Main Street

## Both Sides of the River

“I have a picture of myself when I am seven, and I am standing on both sides of the Mississippi river, because that is what you do, when you go the head waters of the Mississippi river in Itasca, Minnesota. I am from Minnesota originally, land of ten thousand lakes, and that was such a big deal to me. I have that picture somewhere in my computer, this little girl, kind of on both sides of the river. I loved to canoe; I loved to canoe on lakes and to go off to the boundary waters of Canada and canoe up there. This whole thing was primal. I loved it, felt free, felt safe, felt adventuresome, felt strong, as a girl – that was really important.”

–Paula Johnson, National Museum of American History

## Peace and Solitude

“There’s a pond in Maine on Mount Desert Island called Long Pond and it’s pretty far from where we live so we only get to go there every couple of years. But the moment we look out on this pond it brings us peace and solitude and it helps us decompress. And I think it’s the most beautiful space in the world and I don’t know what I’d do without Long Pond on Mount Desert Island because that’s what keeps me going.”

–Theresa Gionis, taken from Stories from Main Street

The Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service (SITES) has been sharing the wealth of Smithsonian collections and research programs with millions of people outside Washington, D.C., for 65 years. SITES connects Americans to their cultural heritage through a wide range of exhibitions about art, science, and history, which are shown wherever people live, work, and play. Museum on Main Street (MoMS) is a Smithsonian outreach program that engages small town audiences and brings revitalized attention to underserved rural communities.