

***"Water is life's matter and matrix, mother and medium. There is no life without water."***

- Albert Szent-Gyorgyi, Hungarian biochemist and Nobel Prize Winner for Medicine

Water is a critical resource. An essential component of life on our planet, water powers the environment's engine, impacting climate and helping to shape and sculpt the landscape. Humans and animals rely on water for health, hydration, food supplies and hygiene.

Water's impact on humans is not just biological and environmental; it serves as a source of peace and contemplation. Water carves out a place in our memories of where we live and we play. We cherish our connections to nature, particularly the sights, the sounds, and the sense of place we feel at the water's edge. Many faiths revere water as a sacred symbol. Authors and artists are inspired by the duality of water – a substance that is seemingly soft and graceful that is yet a powerful and nearly unstoppable force.

Water also plays a practical role in American society. The availability of water had a significant impact on settlement and migration patterns. Access to water and control of water resources are a central part of political and economic planning. Human creativity and resourcefulness provide new ways of protecting water resources and renewing respect for the natural environment.

***"Anyone who can solve the problems of water will be worthy of two Nobel prizes - one for peace and one for science."***

- President John F. Kennedy



A consideration of what water means to people provides a perfect bridge between the humanities and natural science. Efforts to harness the energy and life-giving force of water are an important part of American history. A simple substance that is central to life is also invested with deep societal meaning. Many of the core questions about the relationship between people and the natural environment can be considered through a look at water.

*The Water Project* will reveal the deep relationships between water and our society – through the stories of Americans interacting with the environment. Video interviews and audio segments paired with photographs will show not only how Americans use water, but how they reflect on water, how they treat water as a resource, and how they interact with nature. The Museum on Main Street exhibition (title to be determined) themes will explore:

- The centrality of water in our society – we not only need water to live, the availability of water also plays a role in the stability of our culture.
- How do Americans use water? How is water represented in our society?
- How does water unite communities? How does conflict over water emerge and how do communities resolve it?
- How does water affect the way we live, work, worship, create and play?
- How do we care for our water and protect the resource for the future?



*The Water Project* exhibition is just one element of a large-scale Smithsonian Institution emphasis on water and waterways. State humanities councils participating in the project may be able to incorporate additional exhibitions and programmatic initiatives developed by the Smithsonian as part of a statewide emphasis on civic engagement about water.

### **Sample Humanities Programs and Local Activities**

Host communities for *The Water Project* can explore a wide array of exhibition and program opportunities. Local content possibilities include: the impact of water on local settlement, work and transportation; discussion of public water policies; exploration of the impact of environmental movements at the local level; water and recreation; the impact of dams and hydroelectric power on communities; and the impact of water on the natural landscape.



### **Curator and Advisory Team**

The exhibition will be developed in collaboration with a variety of Smithsonian partners, including the Anacostia Community Museum, Smithsonian Affiliations, the Smithsonian Associates, and the Smithsonian Consortium for the American Experience. The project may also include national partners including the American Museum of Natural History.

### **Funders**

*The Water Project* is part of Museum on Main Street, a collaboration between the Smithsonian Institution and state humanities councils across the nation. Support for Museum on Main Street is provided by the United States Congress.

### **Availability to State Humanities Councils**

Exhibitions available for tours beginning May 2016 (council participation begins spring 2015)

### **Contents and Crates**

Free-standing exhibition with audio, video, and interactive components, banners, and artifacts mounted in cases. Requires 650 square feet of exhibition space. Number of crates and weights to be determined.



## ***The Water Project Resources Provided***

### **Administrative Resources**

- State coordinator manuals featuring program development strategies, sample budgets/contracts and other support materials. Provided in hard copy format and also available online at [www.museumonmainstreet.org](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org) for easy access and for quick distribution of information;
- Museum on Main Street listserv for state council coordinators and national organizers providing answers to project questions and opportunities for networking and project development;
- The MoMS team provides advice and assistance in all areas of program development and tour coordination.

### **Workshops and Meetings**

A state council MoMS coordinator will attend and/or host the following workshops and meeting.

- National MoMS Orientation Webinar — for state council staff members to meet with Smithsonian project directors to learn more about MoMS in advance of the tour (state council coordinators that have completed a MoMS tour are not required to participate);
- National Meeting — state council staff member to meet with the MoMS team, exhibition curator, and other participating state councils one year in advance of the tour;
- State Program Workshop — Smithsonian personnel co-host a program planning workshop for all in-state participating venues and partners;
- State Installation Workshop — Smithsonian personnel co-host a workshop at the site of the exhibition's tour opening for all in-state participating venues.

### **Public Relations/Marketing**

- Participation in national publicity efforts by the Smithsonian;
- Smithsonian web page, at [www.museumonmainstreet.org](http://www.museumonmainstreet.org), featuring each state's rural itinerary and homepage links to each state humanities council;
- Project press kit: digital press images, and news releases for local use;
- One multi-colored outdoor banner featuring state council name;
- Full color poster with state council logo, along with full color postcards for promotional use

### **Fundraising Resources**

- MoMS informational brochure;
- Foundation proposal template;
- Upon request, letters of support from SITES, exhibition curator;
- Opportunities to provide underwriting credit on exhibition's credit panel.

## Education Materials

- Educational activities (available on line in PDF format);
- Docent handbook and training materials;
- Local Exhibition Support Manuals featuring program development strategies, local exhibition development guidelines, exhibition script, and installation instructions. Provided in hard copy format and also available on-line (1 per local site and 1 for state coordinator);
- Access to Stories from Main Street, a digital archive of stories about small and rural communities in the United States. Host councils and organizations can contribute local stories, audio clips and videos via the project website at [www.storiesfrommainstreet.org](http://www.storiesfrommainstreet.org) or through the Stories from Main Street application for iPhone and iPad.

