



POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER NETWORK

Strategic Plan

PRKN's mission is to protect the right to clean water for all communities and all those who live in and rely upon the Potomac and Shenandoah watersheds by stopping pollution, making drinking water safe, protecting healthy river habitats, and enhancing use and enjoyment.

We envision a day when the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers sustain healthy communities and abundant wildlife with clean water for all.

2023-2026

Photo by Liz Guertin

Introduction

For over two decades, the Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) has been steadfast in its mission to stop pollution and restore clean water in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and their tributaries. Our commitment is unwavering, and our track record speaks volumes. Since our founding in 2000, we've emerged as a formidable force in the watershed, employing a comprehensive approach that combines community engagement, assessment, advocacy, and enforcement to protect these vital waterways.

When the Potomac Riverkeeper was founded, the need for a dedicated advocacy group to safeguard clean water became evident. The watershed, spanning 14,700 square miles across 4 states and the District of Columbia, demanded grassroots advocacy and legal action. Since 2003, the addition of Riverkeepers for the Shenandoah River in 2005 and the Upper Potomac in 2009 marked significant growth. In 2014, the organization expanded to become the Potomac Riverkeeper Network, reflecting our broader reach and influence.

Our three PRKN Riverkeepers are not just experts; they are champions of the watershed. Their in-depth knowledge and strong local connections have been instrumental in holding polluters accountable. By enforcing the federal Clean Water Act and state and local clean water laws, we've secured multiple legal victories protecting and restoring clean water throughout the watershed. Our dedication has also attracted substantial pro bono legal support, exceeding \$1.5 million annually.

This 2023–26 Strategic Plan has been meticulously prepared to guide our mission in the coming years. We remain steadfast in our commitment to our core values and vision for clean, accessible waterways. Our strategic plan, outlined in the following sections, charts a course to further protect the Potomac and Shenandoah watersheds, ensuring that clean water is a reality for all who depend on these rivers.

Programmatic Goals and Actions

PRKN's strategic plan defines clear programmatic goals to guide our mission of protecting clean water in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers.

Our approach involves these key strategies:

Assessment: finding pollution, identifying the source, and developing solutions.

Advocacy: persuading the polluter and/or government to take action to stop the pollution.

Enforcement: compelling polluters and/or government to comply with or enforce the law through legal action.

Engagement: actively participate in the communities we represent.

We outline our programmatic goals below in Watershed Wide and three sub-watershed initiatives.

Watershed-Wide Goals and Actions

Enhance pollution detection and response:

- Continue to partner with universities, tech companies, and communities
- Expand tech tools for better pollution detection, identification, and measurement
- Increase our focus on environmental justice for underserved communities

Reduce health impacts from contaminants:

- Partner with communities impacted by coal ash for monitoring and cleanup
- Raise public awareness of health risks of contaminants
- Advocate for state-level controls on the toxic "forever chemicals," Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) and plastics

Promote freshwater mussel propagation:

- Expand pilot projects and identify suitable restoration sites
- Increase awareness of the pollution-trapping benefits of mussels
- Advocate for broader funding



Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls flying drone to identify and assess pollution.



PRKN VP of Programs, Betsy Nicholas explains pollution and runoff with a watershed model.



Volunteers tagging mussels.

Programmatic Goals and Actions

Upper Potomac River Goals and Actions

Use science and collaboration to drive investment in Water Quality Improvement

- Build our community science water quality monitoring program for bacteria, PFAS, and acid mine drainage (AMD)
- Identify and reduce PFAS risks
- Collaborate with Maryland's Department of the Environment to monitor AMD treatment
- Develop watershed plan with community input to improve water quality



PRKN Water quality monitors.



SharkFest Swimmers in the Potomac River



Lower Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks investigates a coal plant.

Lower Potomac River Goals and Actions

- **Protect the public from exposure to bacteria that can cause illness**
 - Expand community science water quality monitoring and raise public awareness through media
 - Release Swimmable Potomac reports in 2024 and 2026
- **Enhance access to safe swimming in the Potomac River in DC:**
 - Organize local support to lift the D.C. swim ban
 - Advocate to DC Mayor and DC Council for enhanced public notification of swimming safety at designated locations
 - Persuade DC Mayor and DC Council to open at least one swimming access point in DC
- **Ensure wastewater utilities meet sewer overflow reduction goals:**
 - Advocate for infrastructure investments by Alex Renew and DC Water
 - Oppose proposals to lower water quality standards
 - Ensure legally mandated sewage capture goals are met
 - Maintain water quality standards based on public health standards
- **Safely manage coal ash at Possum Point and Morgantown plants to protect public health:**
 - Organize VA policymakers and community leaders to compel Dominion Energy to excavate or recycle Possum Point coal ash by 2026
 - Obtain sampling data and community support to compel GenOn to manage and excavate or recycle coal ash at its Morgantown plant by 2026
 - Achieve wastewater treatment of coal ash to prevent further leaching into the groundwater and Potomac

Shenandoah River Goals and Actions

Drive action to reduce harmful algal outbreaks

- **Engage policymakers** for algal monitoring, Shenandoah impairment determinations, and water quality standards
- **Monitor** algae and advocate agriculture controls, informing the public of toxic algal outbreaks
- **Expand presence** in media coverage, and increase the number of advocates
- **Obtain enactment of** legislation to reduce sources of nutrient pollution



Shenandoah Riverkeeper Mark Frondorf tests algae.

Organizational Goals and Actions

The strategic plan establishes organizational goals and actions designed to maintain and strengthen governance, Staffing, communications, and fundraising in order to better achieve our programmatic goals.

Development Goals and Actions

Increase revenue, membership, and partnerships to expand PRKN's pollution-fighting capacity

- **Develop outreach strategy** emphasizing PRKN's pollution-fighting approach for businesses and residents
- **Integrate communication and fundraising** to expand PRKN's base of support
- **Expand the Major Donor program**, engaging members with board and staff, including the Leadership Council
- **Increase Shenandoah outreach through events and fundraising**
- **Fundraise** for technology and scientific tools and project-specific work
- **Seek funding** for clean water programs impacting those most affected by pollution



Staff & Volunteers at Occoquan RiverFest



Attendees at the 2022 Gala enjoy the live band



Students from Right Directions DMV learning about PRKN Programs



PRKN Staff at World Rivers Day

Organizational Goals and Actions

Communications Goals and Actions

Get the word out that PRKN is the “go-to” group for **stopping pollution** through its monitoring work, investigation of apparent contamination, direct engagement with polluters, and litigation and advocacy

- **Reach a broader audience through traditional media, digital marketing, social media, and in-person events**
- **Activate PRKN’s board, Leadership Council, and supporters throughout the watershed to serve as our ambassadors**



Staff and Board members speak at World Water Day

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Goals and Actions

Ensure the benefits of clean water are enjoyed by everyone in the watershed

- **Set clear performance goals**, tracked collaboratively by staff, the board, and the JEDI Committee
- **Integrate JEDI initiatives** into PRKN’s budget, staffing, and fundraising strategies
- **Establish connections** with underserved and overburdened communities through fighting pollution and improving river access in their locales, prioritizing community engagement and input from local leaders

Science and Technology Goals and Actions

Expand the pollution-fighting ability of the Riverkeepers with enhanced technology

- **Identify the top science and technology (S&T) needs** of each Riverkeeper and meet those needs through partnerships and in-kind and cash donations, with Board S&T Committee support
- **Expand membership of Board S&T committee so it can effectively guide PRKN** on S&T matters and identify funding opportunities and partnerships to enhance PRKN’s use of S&T to accomplish its mission
- **Develop a long-term vision and funding strategy** for a fully-equipped water monitoring program to further PRKN’s mission



Bi-lingual materials at a PRKN event



PRKN and Howard University Students aboard the Sea Dog



PRKN tabling at DC Pride Event

Organizational Goals and Actions



Board member Scott Plein speaks to guests at the Shenandoah Low Down Festival



Board member Frank Fillipy leading youth fishing lessons at RioPalooza in 2022

Board of Directors Goals and Actions

Continue to build PRKN's board with new members who can contribute to PRKN's financial growth, broader watershed coverage and increased visibility, while also bringing to the table a broad range of skill sets and demographic diversity representative of the watershed

Activate and empower board members in fundraising, communication and outreach to heighten PRKN's pollution-fighting role throughout the watershed

Staff Goals and Actions

Continue to prioritize staff salaries and benefits to attract and retain the best of the best

Strive to increase demographic diversity among staff, contractors, interns, and fellows in new hires and contract engagements in order to understand the needs of and communicate as effectively as possible with the many different communities in the watershed



Staff float the Potomac River on the 2019 Staff retreat.



Staff braving the cold during the 2023 Polar Plunge.

We thank you for your
ongoing support of
our program

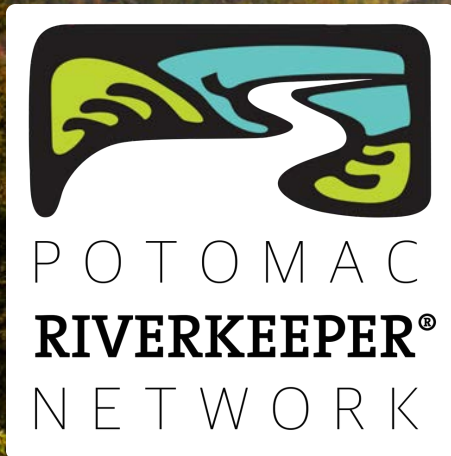


Photo by Liz Guertin

Potomac Riverkeeper Network
13070 M St, NW
Washington DC 20007
202-888-2037
potomacriverkeepernetwork.org



PRKN is a member of Waterkeepers Alliance & Waterkeepers Chesapeake. Riverkeeper is a registered trademark and service mark of Riverkeeper, Inc., and is licensed for use herein. PRKN's EIN # is 54-1982624. Financial statements can be provided upon request.