

# RIVERWATCH

The Official Newsletter of POTOMAC **RIVERKEEPER**® NETWORK

**AUTUMN/WINTER 2023**  
**VOLUME 20, ISSUE 2**

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## PARTY ON THE PIER – A HUGE SUCCESS!



*Board member CJ Gross and his wife, Kerryann*



*Smiles all around that night!*

This year's Gala was a terrific success, thanks to so many! Nearly 290 attended and, for our most important fundraiser of the year, we raised over \$300,000!

Whom to thank? Our Host Committee, our Sponsors – and of course, the folks who attended and went deep into their pockets to bid on our fantastic auction items or to donate to support the Riverkeepers' clean water work. The photos tell the story – what a great event!

We were especially pleased to recognize Martin

“Marty” Gary, as Protector of the Potomac and Shenandoah and Jill MacNeice, as Volunteer of the Year.

And this year, our menu recognized our “Water Footprint” – we conserved over 138,000 gallons of water by selecting food which requires less water to produce – and it was delicious!

*Photos courtesy of Anthony Bolognese  
Capitol Hill Photo*





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*Nancy, Brenda Richardson, Board Member, and one of our guests interns at our Wine by the Stream gathering*

Welcome to Autumn and Winter! We love this time of year and its wonderful holidays during which we are with family and friends.

We had a wonderful summer – our RiverPalooza continues to be so well received, both among those who are regulars and those who are new, either to us or to our rivers.

And last month, our Annual Benefit Gala was, thanks to our Host Committee and our sponsors, a huge success. Our guests had a great time – see some of the photos on the front cover – and they were, as always, so generous in supporting our clean water programs during the live auction and mission rally. Thank you!

Regular readers of RiverWatch will observe a different theme in this issue – ordinarily, we bring you up-to-date on our enforcement and advocacy efforts across our watershed. This RiverWatch will bring you a little insight into what a day in the life of a Riverkeeper looks like. Our Riverkeepers are so dedicated and hard-working, but we want you to get a better sense of how they do what they do.

And we are also trying to feature some stories which represent, in individual human ways, the benefits our hard work produces. If you have such a story to share, please let us know – connect with us on Facebook or Instagram or send me a note.

Sincerely,

Nancy Stoner, President



*Nancy and intern, Sarah Zavala at Riverbend Bluebell festival*

Potomac Riverkeeper Network is a proud member of both EarthShare Mid-Atlantic and Combined Federal Campaign (CFC). Employees can choose to designate a portion of their paycheck to Potomac Riverkeeper Network. Our EarthShare and our CFC number are the same – #87828.



# POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER<sup>®</sup>

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RIVERKEEPER – CHAPTER 1



*Dean with a guest at Wine by the Stream*

Although Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks has been in the Waterkeeper movement for more than 20 years in three different watersheds, he will tell you that describing a “Day in the Life of a Riverkeeper” is difficult – because each day is so varied. But he will also tell you that each day is incredibly rewarding.

Since joining Potomac Riverkeeper Network in 2015, he has an impressive list of achievements, all hard won and all the result of what he does best and enjoys most: connecting with fellow clean water river enthusiasts and working with decision makers to protect and defend our Nation’s River.

A recent day exemplifies precisely that. Dean started his day by patrolling the river in the Parker, his patrol boat – it’s a favorite pastime for him and part of his duties as a Riverkeeper. Then, he was off to a meeting with some local oyster farmers near Colonial Beach. They are concerned about bacterial levels affecting their leasing rights to oyster beds. (Dean has developed close ties to Chesapeake watermen in part because of his courageous stand

against the Navy’s failure to obtain a Clean Water Act Permit for its weapons testing in the Potomac.) The watermen’s concern about pollution levels is of major importance to Dean and one of the reasons he was behind the effort to expand PRKN’s Water Quality Monitoring program by opening a laboratory in Colonial Beach.

After a listening session with the oyster farmers, Dean was off to a meeting with Prince William County (VA) Supervisors and his colleague, Prof. Tyler Frankel from University of Mary Washington to discuss new data he and the professor have gathered and analyzed regarding coal ash contamination in Quantico Creek. Readers of these pages will recall that Dean along with a coalition of others in the Commonwealth were behind historic legislation to remove and recycle coal ash in 2019. He never gives up on a fight, and he will continue to work with the Board of Supervisors to address this new evidence of the public health threat posed by coal ash.

Investigation, advocacy, enforcement: All in a day for Dean.

How did the day end? With a sunset walk along Piscataway Creek.



*Dean is a compelling speaker – wherever he is*



*Dean on camera for local media to tell our story far and wide*



# UPPER POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER<sup>®</sup>

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RIVERKEEPER – CHAPTER 2



*Brent doing what he loves: patrolling for pollution sources with fellow Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks*

Brent Walls, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper, leads a rewarding and demanding life; for him, it is satisfying. Let's take a look at his world.

Brent and his wife, Mandy, operate a working horse farm near Williamsport, MD – one mile from the Potomac River's Big Slackwater at Dam No. 4. They are a blended family with five children but soon to be empty-nesters. Empty, that is, except for the seven horses, three dogs, and three cats.

Brent's day, like any farmer's, starts, after a coffee, with the care of the horses – feeding, watering, mucking stalls. Sounds fun, until we remember that it has to be done every day, for horses don't acknowledge holidays, and they do not excuse tardiness because of bad weather.

Brent finds that his farming life is a distinct benefit to his Riverkeeper life and balancing an active working farm with Riverkeeper work, while difficult, is a real asset. When he approaches farmers in his watershed, he and they have an instant rapport and thus, if a farmer initially has some suspicion, it quickly diminishes.

The watershed of the Upper Potomac is huge – from one corner to the other is a three hour drive, and so much of Brent's day is on the road. He is always prepared with what he calls his "Riverkeeper kit": his drone, spare water sample bottles, and a water quality test kit. The kit is necessary for the days of the week when he is in the field for investigation. And he has plenty of investigating to do – he reviews permits for about 10 facilities every week in addition to the results of the sampling done by Catherine Gaudlip, his technical assistant from Hood College, and their volunteers. Their bacterial monitoring and testing of acid mine drainage inform his travels.

Although at least two days of his week are spent in the field, Brent's effort to connect with community members, lawmakers, regulators, like minded advocates – and lawyers – takes much of his time. Patrolling the watershed is a critical part of his job description, but because of the size of the watershed and the importance of being present in public gatherings, a lot of his patrolling is from his car, his motorcycle, or with the help of his drone. (Readers of these pages will recall that Brent is one

of the most skilled and experienced drone operators in the Waterkeeper movement, and he shares that knowledge with his fellow Waterkeepers.)

Back home at the end of the day – you probably guessed it. Farm chores again. And maybe a beer.



*Brent with a big four legged friend*



# SHENANDOAH RIVERKEEPER®

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A RIVERKEEPER – CHAPTER 3



*The beautiful Shenandoah – worth protecting*

Mark Frondorf, Shenandoah Riverkeeper, will cheerfully tell you that he has the best office in the country – some of the most beautiful scenery in America is found in the Shenandoah Valley.

What is a day like for him? Well, his watershed captures 3000 square miles of river and tributary drainage with about 300 linear miles of water; patrolling and in person investigation takes time. While he is on the river about once a week, he acknowledges tremendous help from Alan Lehman, Shenandoah Agricultural Project Manager, who, among his many other tasks, is usually on the river twice a week to investigate and document pollution and algae blooms. Investigation and assessment lead to enforcement!

Protecting the Shenandoah and its tributaries requires Mark to be quite a diplomat. Dealing with lawmakers from the Valley – which he does nearly daily during the Commonwealth's General Session – and some regulators – which he does weekly during the rest of the year – requires considerable tact. Naturally, advocacy is a key part of Mark's portfolio – his skills helped pass the cattle exclusion bill in 2019 and create the funding for the \$2.5 million Harmful Algal Bloom study.

In addition, much of his watershed is economically supported by a variety of farming operations. Many farmers are great supporters of his work in the Respect the Shenandoah campaign, but others, especially those engaged in industrialized meat production, generate the pollution that results in harmful algal outbreaks each summer. Investigations, especially concerning poor farming practices that pollute the river, occur several times a week. And on top of that, he also reviews permits with the same frequency.

Education is an intensely important part of Mark's duties as Shenandoah Riverkeeper. His meetings, which he estimates as three per week, can be in front of Rotary Clubs, community groups, or county planning committees. And because one may be an hour and a half in one direction with another two hours in a different, Mark knows the roads in his watershed nearly as well as the waterways.

What originally drew Mark to the Riverkeeper movement is his love of fishing – he is among the most experienced guides in the Valley. So if he has a regret, it is that he is rarely able to spend much time fishing. But when he does, he calls it a “Zen save my soul” moment. Happy he is that he can walk a few steps from his door to the river for that experience.

Mark is also an enthusiastic beekeeper, so his days include some time looking after them. And how does a day end? On the best of days, it ends with a fish at the end of his line.



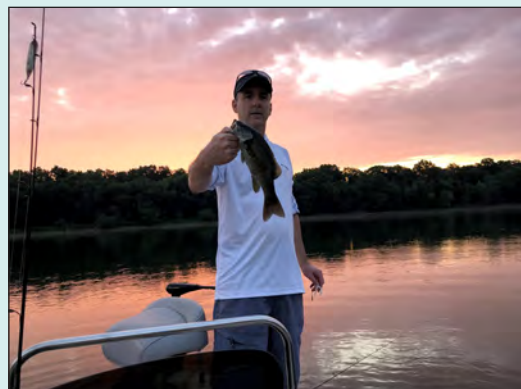
*Mark and his daughter enjoying a welcome day of fishing*

# RIVERKEEPERS – THEY PROTECT MY PLAYGROUND!

That's how Joe Nielsen, a long time PRKN member, describes the impact of Potomac Riverkeeper Network's efforts.

Joe, a resident of Poolesville, MD, has been fishing in Montgomery County since his youth; he now fishes the Potomac from Seneca Banks to White's Ferry. And you anglers out there – prepare to be jealous: he gets out and about 50 times a year!

He appreciates that the riverkeepers are on the water, and listen to everyone else who is – and he particularly applauds their willingness to sue polluters!



*Joe Nielsen in his natural habitat –  
photo credit Joe Nielsen*

Downstream from the wastewater treatment plant in Capon Bridge, West Virginia, was not a great place for water recreation a few years ago, certainly not after a big rainfall. "Heavy thunderstorms would just flush the system" into the Cacapon River," said Tim Reese, a downstream landowner and farmer.

The 1980s-era plant was owned and operated by the town, which with 420 current residents doesn't have the resources to keep it upgraded. "Over time, the plant was failing," said Reese. "It was pretty alarming. I fish, I swim, I have five grandchildren." In 2016, he began reaching out to environmental organizations for help; Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls jumped in. Reese and Walls began meeting regularly and tested the plant's outflow for fecal coliform. They found that 99% of it was from human waste, Reese said – that was sometimes thousands of times over regulatory limits.

Town officials appeared to be dragging their feet on the issue until Walls, working with Reese and others, drafted a Clean Water Act notice of intent to sue that was circulated to dozens of local and state officials, including the governor. It was the impetus for action; money was soon found from federal and state sources. Now Capon Bridge has a state-of-the-art plant, and monthly independent testing of the outflow verifies regulatory compliance. "Brent and the Potomac Riverkeepers were there when we needed them most with scientific, strategic and legal assistance," Reese said. "This wouldn't have been solved without their help."

Guest Author: Viveca Novak,  
member of PRKN Leadership Council

Paul Simpson, an oyster farmer in the Northern Neck of Virginia, was reluctant to speak out against the Navy firing munitions into the Potomac – even though it hadn't obtained a Clean Water Act permit. The munitions were contaminating the river with toxic metals, solvents and other harmful chemicals.

"We have a business. I didn't want to make waves or be against the Navy," said Simpson, owner of the Nomini Bay Oyster Ranch.

But Dean Naujoks, Potomac Riverkeeper, who had told Simpson about the Navy's testing program, convinced him to break his silence. "Things have to be right, they have to be fair," Simpson said. "I want everyone to play by the same rules." When PRKN and the Natural Resources Defense Council sued the Navy in federal court in June, Simpson assented to Naujoks's request that he make a statement.

"Dean does not give up," said Simpson, who harvests between 150,000 and 200,000 oysters a year around Montross. "I really appreciate what PRKN is doing. I know it's tough."

Guest Author: Viveca Novak,  
member of PRKN Leadership Council

Mark's oversight we have always respected; we use him as a resource when we learn of pollution because we know he will investigate and act. He is invaluable – some of the best work I have seen is the cattle exclusion Mark and Alan have accomplished, which has reduced fecal matter and river bank degradation. And, the better the river is, the better my business will be and my customers happier, many of whom have told me that they noted the absence of cattle in the river, and that water clarity is improving.

The river is in a better place than it was 10 years ago, thanks to Mark.

Don Roberts, owner and founder,  
Front Royal Outdoors



*Mark connecting with his watershed community*



# RIVERPALOOZA – OUR SIGNATURE FUN ON THE WATER



*The legendary Ghost Fleet at Mallows Bay*



*Intern Denisse Suasnavas says, What could be better than a day on the water with a dog*



*Go snorkeling to see the river from a different perspective!*

Every year, we have so much fun bringing the experience of enjoying our waterways to our supporters and friends – both old and new.

This year was no different – neither the weather nor the water disappointed!

From historical tours such as the Ghost Fleet at Mallows Bay, to the always popular Shenandoah Birdwatching tour, and from our newly inaugurated DC Pride float, to the now well established Women on the Water, from easy tubing at Harpers Ferry, to a terrific weekend of floating and camping at Paw Paw Bends, scores of water enthusiasts got in touch with what we do – protecting and defending our watershed and feeling what it's like to be out on our beautiful rivers with friends and family.

Next spring, look for the RiverPalooza lineup – and if you haven't enjoyed one of these trips, find out what you have been missing!



*Makes you want to be there!*



*What fun to share the river with a friend!*



*Success on the water!*





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Our 2023 Goal**

**Won't you please  
lend your support?**

With your help we can continue to  
protect this precious natural resource  
and ensure a safer future for  
your children and grandchildren.

On behalf of us all,  
happy holidays and thank  
you for your generosity.



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