

RIVERWATCH

The Official Newsletter of POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER® NETWORK

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VOLUME 19, ISSUE 1

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CELEBRATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT

Clean Water Act • 50 Years • 1972-2022



The Clean Water Act – 50 years old this year – is the single most important legal tool we have to hold polluters accountable. The law gives everyone – all of us – the right to haul a polluter into court and demand cessation and remediation. That's real power.

In recognition, we are commemorating the Clean Water Act's anniversary this year – and we are really putting our backs into it! We began with a very successful kickoff event at the DC Wharf and were joined by our good friend on Capitol Hill, Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton. The occasion also kicked off our call to Mayor Muriel Bowser to commit this year to lifting the swim ban in DC and to identify new swimming beaches in the Potomac so that all residents and visitors – even those without watercraft – can enjoy our Nation's River.

P.S. – sign the petition to Mayor Bowser to lift the ban; you'll find it on our website.

The Clean Water Act has been so vital to our work. You will read more in these pages, but here's a short list of our achievements based on the Act.

- **Potomac Riverkeeper:** stopped coal ash pollution from leaching into the river, cleaned up lead shot pollution in Seneca Creek, ended

sewage pollution from over a dozen sewage treatment plants

- **Upper Potomac Riverkeeper:** stopped pollution from mining and industry sources such as Verso's Luke paper mill, rock quarries and coal storage yards in Maryland, West Virginia and Pennsylvania
- **Shenandoah Riverkeeper:** strengthened limits on nutrient discharges from the Massanutton Wastewater Treatment Plant, brought enforcement against Norfolk Southern railroad for pollution of Manassas Run.

We have lots more planned – all of our RiverPalooza and RioPalooza events will have a well deserved nod to the Clean Water Act. It wasn't that long ago when our waterways were simply not safe for human contact, but due to our efforts and big investments by DC and Alexandria, water quality is improving. In fact, we have let DC's Department of Energy and Environment (DOEE) know that our testing of water quality in the District demonstrates that the Potomac River is clean enough to support safe swimming most of the time. (And, by the way, as a result of our kickoff event, DOEE issued a statement that lifting the swimming ban in DC is its goal, too!)



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A LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Nancy in her natural habitat

THANK YOU, CLEAN WATER ACT

Greetings,

Many of you either remember or have heard the story of the passage of the Clean Water Act of 1972. The Cuyahoga River was on fire; Lake Erie was dead; and the Potomac River was declared a national disgrace. Fortunately, a large bipartisan majority in Congress passed the Clean Water Act to make our rivers fishable and swimmable. Investment in sewage treatment plants, a permitting program for polluters, and enforcement, including enforcement by Riverkeepers and others on behalf of the public, followed. Today, as a

result, rivers across the U.S. are reviving and being reclaimed by the public as the beautiful, life-enhancing, priceless natural treasures that they are. Here in the Potomac and Shenandoah watersheds, we are the beneficiaries of the vision and hard work of those who came before us to implement and enforce this law – and we carry that work forward for those who come after us. Because while a Swimmable Potomac is within our grasp, it isn't here yet. We need to stay the course and perhaps even hit the throttle to make it a reality. But we are prepared to do so, and, with your help, we expect to spend the hot, muggy days of summer in DC one day soon swimming in the Potomac.

Sincerely,

Nancy Stoner, President



Potomac Swimmers – Carol Wortman

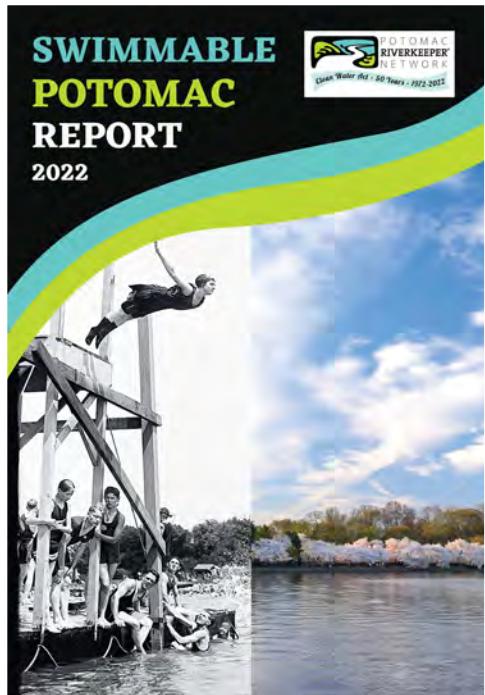
DOLLARS FOR CLEAN WATER

Here at PRKN, we are very proud of our ability to translate your contributions into action; of every dollar, 87% goes to our programs. Check out page 7 of this RiverWatch to see what your generous gift can do for the river.

And help us celebrate the anniversary of the Clean Water Act by making a special 50th anniversary gift or setting up a peer-to-peer walkathon, swimathon, or paddlethon to commemorate the progress that we've made. We promise – your money will be well spent!

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.

PROGRAMS IN THE LOWER POTOMAC – MAKING THE RIVER CLEANER AND SAFER FOR EVERYONE



Swimmable Potomac Report



Morgan Bench making a record for rapid response



Serena Moncion testing at a rapid response site

Fifty years ago, a bipartisan Congress passed the Clean Water Act, over the veto of President Nixon, and provided clean water enthusiasts a weighty legal tool to improve water quality across the nation. We celebrate that anniversary this year with events and goals – about the latter, more in a moment.

Twenty years ago, Potomac Riverkeeper was formed by local conservationists to take on the task of cleaning up the Potomac River using advocacy and enforcement

Dean Naujoks, your Potomac Riverkeeper, is dedicated to that goal the way few others are. His single mindedness and relentless dedication is a great example to all who encounter him – and mind you, some polluters wish they hadn't!

"Fair enough" is never good enough for Dean. Immediately after his incredible success in requiring clean up of the legacy coal ash pollution, he turned his attention from enforcement to programs, by expanding his engagement with volunteers through PRKN's Community Science Water Quality Monitoring. From the original half dozen sites, Dean and his crew now test at 24 locations along the Potomac.

The results from the campaign, now in its third year, have demonstrated that swimming is frequently safe in the waters of the Potomac in DC and in neighboring jurisdictions. Check out the Swimmable Potomac Report on our website to get

the details. Those same results have encouraged Dean to work locally with supporters and elected and appointed officials to lift the decades old swimming ban in DC.

We are also working to identify appropriate locations for safe swimming in the Potomac throughout the DC metropolitan area – swimming beaches that would be available to everyone and would be monitored frequently to ensure that swimming is safe.

Other programs? He has them, including his Trash Free Potomac campaign and new volunteer-led Rapid Response Team. Dean's infectious enthusiasm has been instrumental in growing the volunteer base necessary for clean ups; he built on that level of support to begin working with local communities and elected officials to work toward elimination of single-use plastics, and he hopes to find the funding required for "trash traps" to prevent garbage from entering waters and ultimately reaching the Chesapeake Bay. The same ability to attract volunteers has also enabled him to implement the Rapid Response Team initiative: a tip from the public provides the basis for a member of the Rapid Response Team to visit the site, collect and analyze a water sample, take photographs, and, if action is needed, submit the results of the investigation to appropriate authorities for action – all within 24 hours!

Enforcement is a key activity of all Riverkeepers; equally important is a dedication to and implementation of programs to monitor the day-to-day health of the river, identifying those trends that warrant further investigation.



Sign our petition to lift
the swim ban in DC

UPPER POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER®

VOLUNTEER BACTERIAL MONITORING IN THE UPPER POTOMAC



Bacterial Monitoring in the Upper Potomac

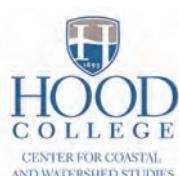


Catherine in the lab

Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls is a busy one – his is the largest watershed protected and defended by Potomac Riverkeeper Network and thus, his hands are, well, full.

Readers of these pages are aware of his successes in enforcement against polluters and how he has led the way nationally in the use of drone technology to document those violations. But there is more than enforcement to a Riverkeeper's portfolio – investigation and assessment, along with advocacy, are keys to improvement in the health of rivers and streams.

Brent is recognizing the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act by implementing a new bacterial monitoring program in his watershed. Thanks to collaboration with Hood College in Frederick, MD, he and his rock star Hood College grad student Catherine Gaudlip are able to start building a database of these results from nine sites in the Upper Potomac and its tributaries.



They collect, analyze and publish timely water quality data for popular river recreation sites in Washington County so that the public can make informed decisions about when and where to recreate in the Upper Potomac Watershed. The Upper Potomac River and many of its tributaries are very popular for river recreation, yet local counties and Maryland do not test for bacteria in many places where people swim, paddle, and fish.

The monitoring program will utilize the Colilert test approved by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency as a method for total coliform and E. coli detection in drinking water and for E. coli detection in all types of waters: ambient waters, surface water, ground water, and wastewater.

They and their 13 volunteers will collect weekly samples, test them, and make their findings known through a report prepared every Friday through *Swim Guide*, retrievable via app or website. This information will be a benchmark at first and then a growing source of data so that regulators and the public will know what locations need enforcement and remediation and when and where contact with the waters is safe.

Remember: our Riverkeepers investigate, assess, advocate, and enforce to assure the health of our waterways. No single component can exist without the others, so Brent's undertaking of water quality monitoring will be an essential element in his continued work.

UPPER POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER CONTINUES THE FIGHT AGAINST PFAS TOXIC CHEMICALS

Brent Walls, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper, is a leading voice in the fight against PFAS legacy chemicals in Maryland and now nationwide. Recently, he was invited to participate on a committee, sponsored by the Chesapeake Bay Consortium, to assess and guide scientific research in the next steps to resolve this grave problem affecting our drinking water.

The two day conference, joined by nearly 40 scientists, researchers, and regulators from across the country, focused on the research we have and we need to address PFAS. Brent learned, for example, that there are over 12,000 different PFAS compounds, creating a tremendously complex research challenge. He and his colleagues in the scientific community will be urging research into those compounds which bioaccumulate more readily. And alarmingly, the panelists at the conference also noted that because the chemical bonds in PFAS are so stable, they are much more durable – that is, less likely to break down – than PCBs.

Among Brent's contributions to the discussion? Brent shared his research showing a source of PFAS in Maryland is wastewater treatment plants. And thus his insistence on statewide action for further testing at these sites.



TRASH FREE SHENANDOAH – A NEW CAMPAIGN OFF TO A BLOCKBUSTER START

SRK Earth Day Clarke County

The Shenandoah River and its tributaries have historically been regarded as among the most beautiful stretches of water in America. Shenandoah Riverkeeper Mark Frondorf and Alan Lehman, Program Manager, work relentlessly to protect the river from nutrient pollution and other harmful results from poor and outdated agricultural practices.

Unfortunately, the popularity of the waterways comes with a price and that is an increase in trash pollution from thoughtless users. And, some residents even use the shores and waters as dumping grounds for old tires and unwanted household items.

Mark and his dedicated cadre of volunteers, including river guides committed to protecting these waters, have for years undertaken shoreline clean ups. These have typically been in response to tips

called in or, even more frequently, from trash hot spots identified by Alan in his frequent paddle patrols.

This year, the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act, Mark, along with his stalwart volunteers, Frank and Lisa Filipy, put out the call to a broader coalition of organizations, both public and private, as well as his growing list of SRK members, to start the Trash Free Shenandoah campaign. Inaugurated in March and centered around Earth Day on April 22nd, scores of volunteers attacked 62 sites throughout the watershed. Yep – 62! Sixteen organizational partners and over 100 volunteers participated in the week-long series of clean ups. The photo tells the story.

Mark intends to keep this up – if you like clean rivers, contact him at mark@shenandoahriverkeeper.org for dates, locations, and times.

ENJOY THE SHENANDOAH: IN IT, ON IT, NEAR IT!

The Shenandoah River is hard to beat for its beauty and opportunities for fun. Mark and the staff of Potomac Riverkeeper Network, along with their varied partners, are proud to offer a wonderful lineup of events to take advantage of the river.

Some of you may have joined Mark in June on the annual RiverPalooza birdwatching float with renowned birders, Heather McSharry and Mark Abdy, who are the Washington County Coordinators for the Maryland Ornithological Society's Breeding Bird Atlas 3 Project. A placid and informative day for those who were there!

Mark and Potomac Riverkeeper Network are also proud to host this year's third annual RioPalooza on September 17th, a unique riverside festival to reach out to the Hispanic community in the region. This is a great family event with music, tubing, food, the Buffalo Soldiers, and lots of fun and information about how the river serves us and how we should serve the river.

RioPalooza welcomes the Latino community to this FREE, family-friendly, fun day filled of exploration and learning. Children, and their parents, can participate in a variety of activities such as fishing, tubing, snorkeling, riding horses, dancing and so much more in this celebration of the Shenandoah Watershed, National Hispanic Heritage Month, and the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act!



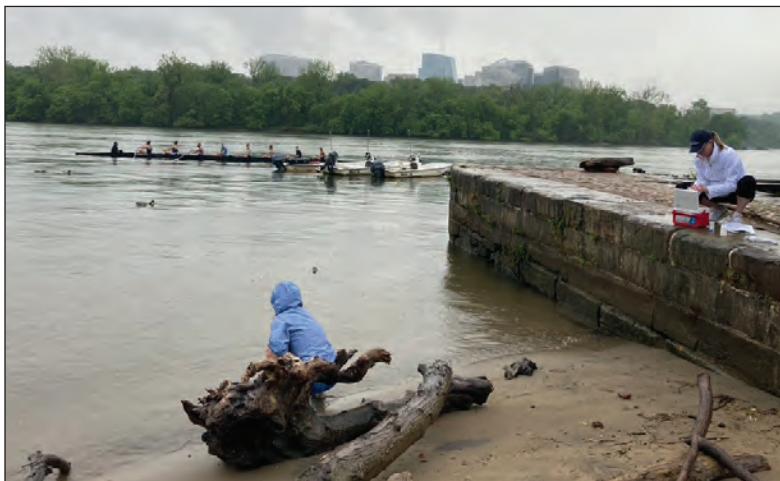
Great Blue Heron Rookery

VOLUNTEERS – OUR LIFELOOD

Vigilance in protecting nearly 15,000 square miles of waterways is realistically only possible when we have volunteers to carry a large part of the workload. Happily, we do! And we would like to celebrate their work in this issue.



Hearty volunteers hard at work – thanks!



Volunteers water testing at Thompsons Boathouse



Oxon Cove Earth Day – photo credit National Park Service

Volunteering is easy – to do a clean up, all you need is a willingness to get your hands dirty. To be a volunteer scientist for our water quality monitoring or rapid response, you do need to go through some short online training modules, but those can be viewed at your convenience. We need you, but more important: our rivers need you!

When we talk about “volunteers”, it’s easy to think of the cheerful faces you see in the photos we circulate. And we would like to tell their story, through the experience of one, Lisa Wu. (For the record, she was shy about the focus, but we insisted!)



Lisa Wu aboard the Sea Dog lab

“ As a student and an educator who spent many years in the field, I was familiar with using the Potomac as a laboratory. Now, as the lab manager aboard the research vessel Sea Dog, I have been able to continue to grow professionally using community science to make a positive difference in the health of our Nation’s River. With volunteers from the District, Maryland and Virginia, our program is truly a team effort and a great example of how when the community is involved, change happens. I encourage others who appreciate this precious resource to join the fight for clean water. We follow the science to find solutions. You’ll learn, have fun, meet like-minded neighbors, and enjoy the River with a new perspective.”



Lisa Hard at Work

PEER-TO-PEER FUNDRAISING – HELP COMMEMORATE FIFTY YEARS OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT



Sam Stokes joined Pat on her peer to peer fundraising – photo credit Pat Munoz



Kids with mussels!

NEED A LITTLE MORE MOTIVATION (BEYOND THE SUPPORT YOU WILL BE GIVING US)?

- Each individual who raises \$250 by August 24th will receive a Potomac Riverkeeper Network t-shirt, towel and dry bag!
- Top individual fundraiser wins a brand new sit-on-top kayak donated by John Gibson from Downriver Canoe Company
- Top Team wins a trip on the Sea Dog – PRKN's 42' Research Vessel! (limit 10 people)
- Wrap-Up Party with live music, food trucks, and raffle prizes on October 15th at Port City Brewing, Alexandria, VA for all participants and guests.

START YOUR FUNDRAISER TODAY!

Old Town Kayak (and photo) – courtesy of John Gibson and DownRiver Canoe



SO FAR OUR COMMUNITY'S PEER-TO-PEER EFFORTS HAVE RAISED NEARLY \$25,000!
OUR GOAL FOR THE YEAR IS \$50,000 AND WE'RE ALREADY HALFWAY THERE,
CAN YOU HELP US CROSS THE FINISH LINE?

The Clean Water Act (CWA) is without a doubt our most powerful tool to hold polluters accountable. In the 50 years since its passage, the CWA has enabled Potomac Riverkeeper Network to take legal action when necessary to stop pollution on behalf of the public. When we tell polluters "We will see you in court," they know we mean it.

This year we need your help to hold polluters accountable! You can start your own peer-to-peer fundraiser and help us raise much needed funds to keep our watershed clean.

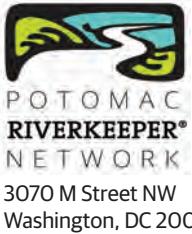
For example, you can choose to walk, hike or paddle around the watershed (at so many dollars per mile or per hour you spend), and set a dollar goal for your P2P campaign. Then, share with your friends – get them to support what you are doing, and why. (For more complete details, scan the QR code.)



SCAN ME

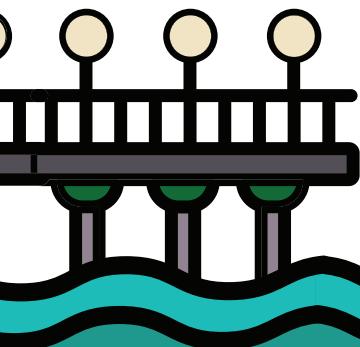
HOW DO YOUR FUNDRAISING EFFORTS PROTECT AND DEFEND OUR RIVERS?

1. Support legal action to put an end to legacy coal tar pollution seeping into the Potomac River from a manufactured gas plant operating in Alexandria in the early 20th century
2. Build a network of Rapid Response Team volunteers trained to investigate pollution incidents reported to PRKN by vigilant members like you
3. Create a series of floating nurseries to support propagation of native freshwater mussels to filter contaminants out of the river



Party on the Pier

ANNUAL BENEFIT GALA



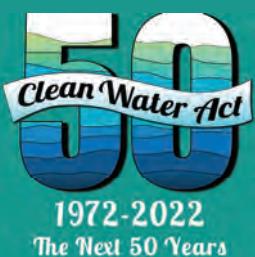
Scan QR Code to
Purchase Tickets



Join Us at The Wharf
101 District Square, SW, Washington, DC

Saturday, October 8, 2022
6:00pm - 10:00pm

for Drinks, Dinner, and Dancing
and as always – loads of fun!



*Celebrating the Power and
Promise of the Clean Water Act*

POTOMACRIVERKEEPERNETWORK.ORG/GALA2022