

2023 IMPACTS





It is our 35th year supporting local leaders who work on the ground to protect waters across the US, and 2023 is among the most exciting yet for River Network.

Today, our national network includes over 2,500 individual members representing nearly 1,000 organizations working to ensure abundant clean water for all. This network connects Tribal, rural, and urban communities, people of all backgrounds, and local and national advocates. This broad and dynamic network is and always has been the source of our collective power.

This year we launched a refresh of our Strategic Plan, which defines the network's impact and guides future action. It brings alive our vision of a world with healthy, resilient rivers; safe, affordable drinking water; and climate-resilient communities. One of our own, Raj Shukla, took on a new role as CEO. For the network, we built new learning tools, connected members across water advocacy, and are meeting an historic moment for federal funding of water projects. These projects and more are detailed throughout the following impact report, which we are honored to share and hope inspires you.

We look forward to the next three years—and beyond—anchored by a clear vision, shared purpose, and actionable priorities. We'll continue to invest in local leaders protecting important river communities.

We will drive historic public and private resources to leaders with transformational projects, including through the largest gift in our organization's history through the USDA's Urban Forestry program. And we will always ensure our network reflects the diverse communities we serve.

There will be opportunities to meet our team, including Raj, in the coming months and we look forward to gathering with you at River Rally in Grand Rapids in May. Together, we will build the future we envision, powered by local leaders with a national mission. **Rivers need us. Communities need us. Climate change calls on us to act. With you, we will.**



JUMANA VASI
RIVER NETWORK
BOARD CHAIR



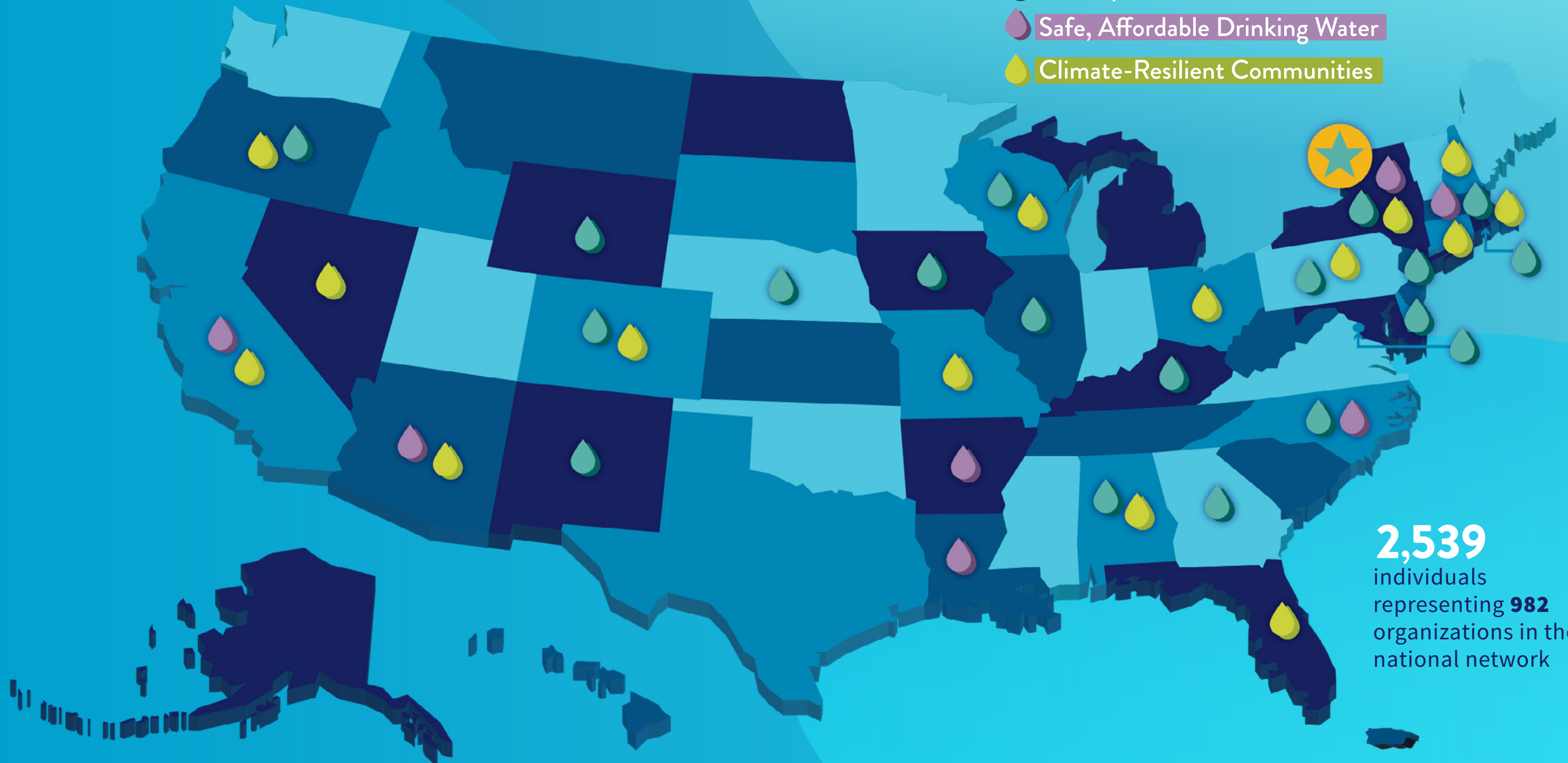
RAJ SHUKLA
RIVER NETWORK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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OUR NETWORK, OUR FOCUS

Through River Network membership, we bring together local and regional nonprofits, tribes, government agencies, and businesses to create a transformational national network of water, justice, and river advocates. We have three focus areas that define the network's collective impact and represent the future for people and nature we envision and are helping to create.

-  Healthy, Resilient Rivers
-  Safe, Affordable Drinking Water
-  Climate-Resilient Communities



2,539
individuals
representing **982**
organizations in the
national network

OUR IMPACT

Our **2023-2026 Strategic Plan** includes these three priorities, the key methods by which we will achieve our updated mission and vision. Look for corresponding icons throughout this report for how these priorities show up across our work.



GROW CAPACITY

Increase capacity of organizations and coalitions throughout the network through new tools, research, and hands-on assistance, and more.

2,567

people trained and educated through **80** events

\$311,871

in direct support to **40** local groups

1,923

hours provided in direct consulting with local groups



EXPAND & CONNECT

Expand and connect a more diverse and powerful network through peer learning, working groups, and more.

5,405

discussions and engagements among **1,600** members in our Online Community

119,776

people connected through our website, newsletter, and social media

61

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color participating in River Network's Leaders of Color group



ACTIVATE FOR WATER POLICY

Activate the network to advance equitable water policies and practices through alignment and resources for advocacy and campaign skill-building.

38

groups engaged on policy advocacy, reaching **27** decision-makers at all levels of government

3

Online Training Courses launched with **227** active participants



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Throughout the following pages, you'll meet the **Hudson Valley Flood Resilience Network (FRN)**, a network of cities and towns that addresses flooding, co-facilitated by longtime River Network member **Hudson River Watershed Alliance (HRWA)**. FRN and HRWA's work intersects with each of our focus areas in unique ways, all tying back to River Network's year-long relationship and support in creating **FRN's five-year strategic roadmap**.



We knew bringing together the FRN was a good idea, but needed help understanding how we could grow and defining our program priorities and niche to be sustainable. In New York State we get really focused on what's happening here, so **we were excited to work with River Network because of the national purview**; they connected us with national and regional flood resilience networks.”

– Emily Vail, Executive Director,
Hudson River Watershed Alliance

Learn about how River Network, FRN, and HRWA have collaborated across our focus areas throughout this report, knowing this is just one example of the way River Network makes a difference: water, justice, and river advocates across the country have similar stories to share.

OUR FOCUS:

HEALTHY, RESILIENT RIVERS



PLANNING TURNS TO ACTION FOR THE YAMPA RIVER



For the last four years, tucked in the northwestern corner of Colorado, a group of 27 stakeholders has come together to write an Integrated Water Management Plan (IWMP) for the Yampa River. River Network staff helped launch and lead this process including releasing the complete plan in late 2022. What's more, this process has created a model for groups across the entire Colorado River Basin and the nation, to plan for the future of local rivers. While ***the Yampa plan turns to action***, River Network remains active in this space, regularly convening Colorado Stream Management Planning leaders to share successes and build community for river planning across the state.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Hudson River Watershed Alliance

Watershed planning is a key element of Hudson River Watershed Alliance's work. They lean on best practices from River Network resources as they create guidance and templates so their members can do this work, too. River Network has helped connect the dots on community engagement in planning processes, including being in right relationship, lifting up local knowledge and information (resident photos, community science, city plans, and more) and supporting inclusive planning processes.





EQUIPPING THE NETWORK THROUGH THE CLEAN WATER ACT

To mark the 50th Anniversary of the Clean Water Act on October 18, 2022, we released a fully updated edition of our landmark ***Clean Water Act Owner's Manual***. Throughout 2023 our policy team brought this foundational resource to life and provided in-depth workshops on the Act. Participants in Alabama, Colorado, the Delaware Basin, Georgia, and Pennsylvania found connections to their own work through local case studies and hands-on exercises.

We also created an ***online training series based on the Manual***, making this valuable resource available to an even wider audience.



We received overwhelmingly positive feedback about the Clean Water Act Manual workshop at Alabama Water Rally from both professional and novice clean water advocates. Participants were excited to have this great resource updated to use in their communities and suggested we have this workshop every year at our annual gathering!
– Cindy Lowry, Executive Director, Alabama Rivers Alliance



What does it take to build and sustain a formal collaborative and how do these collaboratives leverage federal funding to support their work? River Network explored these questions and developed case studies of coalitions across the Western United States that have effectively leveraged federal funds for river restoration and water management projects. By collecting and sharing these stories, groups across the national network can now replicate the success, access this important funding source, and bring more resources to their communities and their local waters.

[Learn more.](#)

OUR FOCUS:

SAFE, AFFORDABLE DRINKING WATER

GOING DEEP ON STATE REVOLVING FUNDS



Preparing water community to access historic federal funding for water means understanding State Revolving Funds (SRFs). In response, River Network is providing multi-platform resources to local water leaders, including a new ***SRF Advocacy Toolkit***, a hybrid training cohort, and a ***new self-paced training series***. We also co-convene the ***SRF State Advocates Forum***, a national community that collaborates on SRF advocacy best practices for local communities.

Equity in the SRFs: Supporting State and Local Advocates



As co-conveners of the SRF State Advocates Forum, we helped launch ***srfadvocatesforum.org*** this year. It includes educational materials, recorded trainings, and in-depth fact sheets breaking down multiple SRF topics in both English and Spanish. These resources make it possible for more advocates to participate in their state's funding processes, advancing equitable water for all.





Victoria Miller, Director of Advocacy Research at Alabama Rivers Alliance (ARA), was one of the 20 members of our first SRF Advocacy Training cohort and is now an active member of the Forum, leading this work in Alabama. “I knew a bit about federal funding prior to taking on this role, but there was more to explore. We saw SRFs could have impact on the ground in Alabama, where everyone could finally flush their own toilet, and wanted to learn more,” shared Victoria.

During the cohort training, participants heard from experts like Janet Pritchard, Director of Water Infrastructure Policy, at EPIC. Victoria shared that completing our SRF training was instrumental in opening doors to experts like Janet: “After going through the series I felt confident enough to approach Janet and see if ARA could be involved. Now I’m deep into my first policy memo... and still connected with others from the cohort.”

The training series is now also available year-round as a self-paced option with 60 participants already engaged. This toolbox is essential for water leaders to understand these complex federal programs, run with their knowledge to advocate in their states, and share success.

“ I’ve become a bit of a local expert [on SRFs]... I always keep [the SRF Toolkit] open in another tab, and go back to it over and over. I am bound and determined to make Alabama use the full capabilities of their State Revolving Funds to make water equity a reality.”

– Victoria Miller, Director of Advocacy Research, Alabama Rivers Alliance

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

Hudson Valley Flood Resilience Network

FRN’s five-year roadmap included a commitment to provide members with targeted technical training. River Network staff suggested and provided an SRF training, ensuring all FRN members had shared language around this important funding tool. This also opened opportunities around New York State’s Environmental Bond Act: when FRN connected with New York State representatives at their listening sessions, members were prepared for the complex conversations. **“It was exciting to have these deep conversations with [state representatives] and provide them with feedback on community needs on funding to connect projects related to flood resilience, wastewater, and climate resilience,”** shared Vail.



OUR FOCUS:

CLIMATE RESILIENT COMMUNITIES



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Hudson Valley Flood Resilience Network

The Hudson River Valley experiences multiple types of flooding challenges as a coastal watershed: tidal flooding, storm surge flooding, stormwater flooding, and traditional river flooding. FRN's five-year roadmap is now opening doors for new funding opportunities to shape flood resilience in the Hudson.

Vail shared, **“The roadmap has been a great conduit to apply for implementation funding. Having such a strong, member-developed plan is such an important tool.”** As an example, FRN is applying for NOAA's Climate Resilience Regional Challenge, thanks in part to national connections made through River Network, including with the Association of State Floodplain Managers.



URBAN WATERS WIN IN RALEIGH

In April 2023, Raleigh, North Carolina, became the 21st **Urban Waters Federal Partnership** location, which is supported by and connected to the **Urban Waters Learning Network**. River Network staff attended the **Designation Celebration** on April 21 and the **Our Creeks, Our Communities Festival** on April 22, fostering established relationships and making new connections. This step forward was a major win for local partners in the area, including Partners for Environmental Justice, an organization **River Network has supported through many stages of growth**. We can't wait to continue the collaboration in this new way.



COMMUNITY-LED RESEARCH TO ACHIEVE DRAINAGE JUSTICE



Formed during Hurricane Harvey by community members looking to help their neighbors survive and then recover from the historic floods of 2017, West Street Recovery (WSR) and its long-time partner, the Northeast Action Collective (NAC), are now focusing on changing the very systems that contribute to climate injustice in the majority Black and Brown neighborhoods of Northeast Houston.

Using River Network's ***Fostering Community-Led Research and Knowledge*** tool to assess the financial and health impacts of flooding on residents, WSR and NAC are building the skills and expertise of local residents to engage in discussions of local water infrastructure needs and investments. For the residents in the majority-BIPOC neighborhoods of Northeast Houston, their demands for the city to provide pathways for meaningful public participation in drainage investment decisions is key to ***achieving the goal of #DrainageJustice***, a key component to achieving racial justice in the City of Houston.



The network is generally familiar with federal agencies like EPA, the Forest Service, and others with a close environmental tie. Additional federal funding for water, however, means that many new opportunities are now available, including programs at FEMA (BRIC, FMA), HUD (CDBG-DR), and NOAA (NCRF) to name a few. This alphabet soup can be confusing, which is where River Network is stepping in. We've expanded our team to provide additional support and education to network groups in accessing these new-to-them programs and leverage federal dollars for their local waters.

INCLUSION AS A PRACTICE

We are committed to embracing and advancing equity, diversity, inclusion, and justice in all areas as we work. This starts within, through our approaches to communications and philanthropy.

INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS

With the generous support of the Fresh Sound Foundation, this year we expanded our communications team, focusing additional capacity on researching, writing, and releasing our first-ever ***Inclusive Communications guide*** and implementing these findings within our own work. The Guide provides both communications and accessibility guidance to the network, including **373** registrants for our session hosted in collaboration with the Water Hub.

“As usual, River Network is leader of the pack on including EVERYONE, knowing that many hands and viewpoints make for effective and broad-reaching change. Walking the talk. I’m so impressed with how River Network made the plunge and really has made changes to its organization and practices— from the top!”
– Ann-Marie Mitroff



INCLUSIVE COMMUNICATIONS
BEST PRACTICES + BROAD GUIDELINES



FLOW FUNDING KEEPS FLOWING



Now completing its second cycle, the **River Network Climate Justice Flow Fund Circle** distributes funds without an application, reporting, or other strings attached. This year, the Circle was fortunate to gather in New Orleans, hosted by **Flow Funder Arthur Johnson**, touring the Intracoastal Waterway, Mississippi River-Gulf Outlet, Surge Barrier, and the Leona Tate Museum, connecting water to social and civic issues, in recognition that water flows through everything.



We have evolved into talking about housing, underserved communities, quality of life, that because of the waterways, because of the environment, that these are not isolated domains—they do connect together.”

– Arthur Johnson, Chief Executive Director, Lower 9th Ward Center for Sustainable Engagement and Development (CSED)



RIVER RALLY 2024

Grand Rapids, Michigan
May 13–16

RIVER RALLY 2024 IS COMING!



The 25th River Rally will bring the network together in Grand Rapids, Michigan! In 2023, River Network took an ***intentional pause*** to build a decentralized event that shines a light on the local hosting community and network wins. In this space, we've ***reimagined awards at River Rally*** with more opportunities for the network to learn from local, regional, and national water heroes. We've also engaged a ***local planning committee***: network members local to Grand Rapids who are infusing River Rally 2024 with their local knowledge and enthusiasm. Thank you to our long-time partner, the Wege Foundation, for bringing River Rally back to the Grand River!





BUILDING STRONG ORGANIZATIONS & LEADERS



Foundational to our mission to grow and strengthen the network is our Strong Organizations & Leaders work. We expanded this work in 2023, with two exciting programs in the Chesapeake Bay watershed: a new 18-member Executive Director cohort and leadership trainings for young professionals in the Chesapeake Bay Conservation Corp. Both the cohort and the Corp members are receiving training on giving and receiving feedback, setting boundaries in the workplace, and other topics to better face challenges in their work.

Our staff also returned to in-person support in a huge way, working with many different groups. River Network facilitated strategic planning retreats and provided board development trainings, work planning guidance, one on one Executive Director coaching, and other support that goes into ensuring a nonprofit is the best it can be.

“ We don’t have time and expertise as a staff of one to provide everything our members need, we rely [on River Network staff] to bring their expertise for approach and implementation.”
– Emily Vail, Executive Director,
Hudson River Watershed Alliance

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

Hudson River Watershed Alliance

FRN and Hudson River Watershed Alliance’s own membership looks to them for organizational and leadership training. Through River Network, and our Online Community, they have been able to connect with other people and groups from across the country. Now, they’re bringing in solutions from other regions. “I found conference presenters through River Network, including New York State connections I wouldn’t otherwise have made... it’s so important to feel like we’re part of a larger network,” said Vail.





COMMUNITY SOLUTIONS FOR LITTER

In 2023, thanks to a new partnership with Bridgestone, **River Network** supported three large-scale litter cleanups, including the annual **Great LA River Cleanup** hosted by Friends of the LA River (FOLAR). In celebration of Earth Day, the Great LA River Cleanup engaged over 1,300 participants during two weekends, removing two tons of trash. Participants also removed thousands of invasive plants, attended nature walks, and reflected on the important role the river plays in the community.

This year also brought the expansion of our partnership with the Coca-Cola Foundation into the Mississippi River Basin. In June, our partner **Freshwater** installed a litter trap on an urban lake to capture litter that escapes through storm drains and into the water. **Check out this video** to learn more about the project and its impacts in the community.



“A main goal of this project is to get people thinking upstream, about actions they can take to help their watershed. This litter capture boom is just one way that Freshwater gets more people thinking about a problem and taking collective action to solve it.”
– Kris Meyer, Senior Programs Manager, Freshwater

OUR TEAM

STAFF



Left to right: Raj Shukla, Renée Mazurek, Diana Toledo, Barbara Long, April Ingle, Erin Kanzig, Amy Boal, Lisa Runkel, Katherine Baer, Campbell Simmons, Kala Megrdochian, Chelsea Silva, Carly Schmidt, Grace Fullmer, Brenna Goggin (front)



Ayana Harscoet, Shelby Cline, Hannah Mico



Colleen Walters



Brian Murphy

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Left to right: Raj Shukla (President and CEO), Kevin Jeffery, Andrew Fahlund (Secretary), John Weiss, Suzi Wilkins-Berl, Mekayle Houghton, Jumana Vasi (Chair), Julia Blatt, Bob Sproull, Richard Roos-Collins, Sandra Postel, Emily Warren Armitano, Rebecca Wodder, Gary Collins, Scott Miller (Treasurer), Julian Gonzalez. Not pictured: Joya Banerjee, Bill Brandt, Ronda Chapman (Vice Chair), Ellen Gilinsky, Kim Milligan

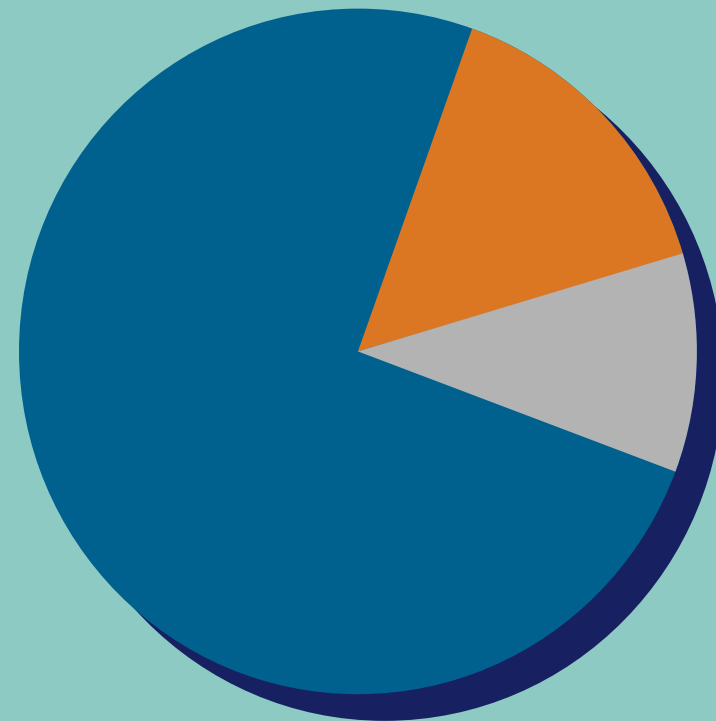
Board of Directors during fiscal year 2023.

SUPPORT A STRONG NETWORK

With the launch of our refreshed 2023–2026 strategic plan, we reflect with gratitude for the meaningful accomplishments we have made together to align and empower our network toward collective action. Thank you for being a part of our journey and for continuing to engage with River Network as we move through our bold and ambitious path ahead.

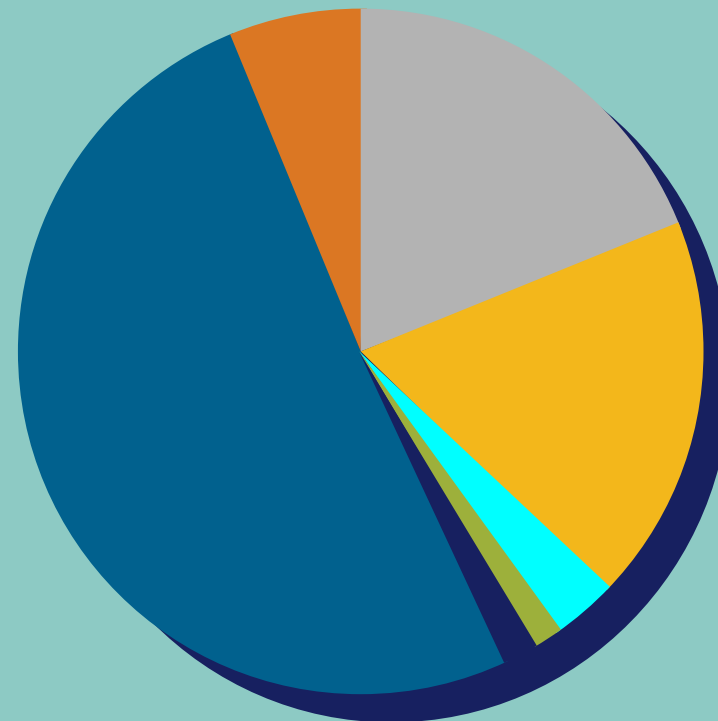
[Donate Today](#)

FINANCIALS



EXPENSE

- Program Services — 75%
- Management & General — 15%
- Fundraising — 10%



INCOME

- Foundation — 51%
- Corporate — 6%
- Government — 19%
- Individual — 18%
- Program Contracts/Fees — 3%
- Membership — 1%
- Interest & Other — 2%

TOTAL INCOME 3,209

Program Services	2,465
Management & General	478
Fundraising	334

TOTAL EXPENSE 3,277

INCOME - EXPENSE (68)

FY23 ENDING NET ASSETS

Endowment	500
Restricted	2,124
Unrestricted	804

(\$ thousands)

Unaudited financials as of November 2023.
See rivernetwork.org for full financial reports.

OUR SUPPORTERS

Support from our corporate and foundation partners allows us to continue to innovate and provide impactful resources and programs for our nationwide network. We express our deep gratitude to our funders—both new and old—who sustain our work, including those who have been with us for five or more years, indicated with an asterisk.

FOUNDATIONS, GOVERNMENT, AND NONPROFITS

Anonymous Foundation
Agua Fund*
Alabama Rivers Alliance
Amazon Smile Foundation*
Broad River Watershed Association
C. S. Mott Foundation*
Catalyst Fund of the Network for Large Landscape Conservation
Chesapeake Bay Trust*
Coca-Cola Foundation*
Colorado Water Conservation Board
Community First Foundation*
Coosa Riverkeeper
CultureTrust Greater Philadelphia
David and Katherine Moore Family Foundation*
Eaglemere Foundation*
Fidelity Investments Charitable Gift Fund

Fresh Sound Foundation*
Georgia Wildlife Federation
Groundwork USA*
Holdfast Collective
Hudson River Watershed Alliance
Huron Pines Resource Conservation & Development Council, Inc.
Jane A. Lehman and Alan G. Lehman Foundation*
Keel Haulers Canoe Club*
Low Impact Hydropower Institute
Lower Susquehanna Riverkeeper Association
Mighty Arrow Family Foundation
National Association of Clean Water Agencies*
National Park Service*
National Wildlife Federation*
Park Foundation*
Pennsylvania Association of Conservation Districts
PolicyLink

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
Sand County Foundation
Spring Point Partners
Sweetgrass Foundation*
The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment*
The Kresge Foundation*
United States Environmental Protection Agency*
United States Forest Service*
United Way, California Capital Region*
United States Fish and Wildlife Service
Urban Waters Learning Network*
Walton Family Foundation*
Water Foundation*
Waterkeeper Alliance
Waterkeepers Chesapeake
Western Resource Advocates
We the People of Detroit
William Penn Foundation*

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PRADCO Outdoor Brands*
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The Kresge Foundation*
The National Park Service
The Nature Conservancy
The Wege Foundation*
Urban Waters Learning Network
Walton Family Foundation*
William Penn Foundation

*Fundors who have supported River Network for five or more years.

OUR SUPPORTERS

We recognize there are many worthy and important causes and are honored and humbled by the individuals and family foundations who choose to support River Network. Supporters new and old have helped catapult our work and create impacts that ripple throughout the nationwide network of water, justice, and river advocates. We recognize our stalwart supporters who have provided support for five or more years with an asterisk.

INDIVIDUALS (UNDER \$1,000)

Jeff Abrams
Martin Albrecht
Karen Anderson
Hilary and Seth Arens*
Rachel Baer
Katherine Baer*
Tridib Banerjee
Guy Bateman*
Liza Berdnik*
Vernon Berry and Jennifer Wood
Sally Bethea*
Kathryn Beurer
Danielle Blaskovics
Richard and Danielle Boal
Terry Book
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Chris Brown and Mary Rollefson*
Rosemary Brown
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Renu Zaretsky

*Donors who have supported River Network for five or more years.

HEADWATERS DONORS

Headwaters Donors are individuals and families who contribute \$1,000 or more annually to River Network. We thank the following Headwaters Donors for their generous support during our 2023 fiscal year which continues to sustain us.

Julia Blatt and Ken Siskind*
 William and Joanne Brandt*
 Lynn Broaddus and
 Marc Gorelick*
 Dell Brooke*
 Dan Carrigan
 Katherine Couch
 Sally Davidson*
 Andrew Fahlund*
 Margo Farnsworth and
 Jim Pascoe*
 Clarissa Fetrow
 Valerie Gates
 Andrea Geisser*
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 Thomas Jesulaitis

Melinda Kassen*
 John and Jane Lewis*
 Jack Ohly*
 Sandra Postel*
 Elizabeth Raisbeck and
 Zell Steever*
 Joan Rechnitz
 Richard Roos-Collins*
 Lisa and Ted Runkel*
 Raj Shukla and Victoria Frank*
 Robert and Lee Sproull
 Greer Tidwell*
 Suzi Wilkins Berl*
 Rebecca Wodder and
 James Van Erden*

River Network is grateful to have an established endowment thanks to a gift from Katherine C. Moore and late husband, David E. Moore, given in memory of daughter, Kate C. Moore.

*Donors who have supported River Network for five or more years.

DONOR PROFILE:

Sustaining Support from Suzi Wilkins-Berl

Suzi Wilkins-Berl—in the blue sweater below—has dedicated her life to river conservation making an indelible impact through both her professional endeavors and her personal philanthropy. River Network has been fortunate to have her involvement and leadership for nearly 25 years, first as contract staff, then later serving as a board member and chair. This year, Suzi graciously included us as a recipient of the Suzanne Berl Sustainability Fund which will provide critical, unrestricted funding to River Network over the next 10 years. Suzi has also included us as a beneficiary in her estate plans. We are grateful and honored to serve as a conduit for Suzi to see the impacts of her support during her lifetime and beyond.





River Network grows and strengthens a transformational national network of water, justice, and river advocates. We envision a powerful and inclusive movement that ensures abundant clean water for all people and nature to thrive. We believe that joy and hope for our planet flows through our rivers.

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