

2011 National River Rally  
June 3-6  
N. Charleston, South Carolina  
FINAL REPORT

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## Summary

It was a hot time at River Rally this year, both figuratively and literally. Nearly 450 people from 42 states, the District of Columbia and Canada gathered together to better understand and begin creating solutions for our nation's challenging water issues. Participants represented 187 nonprofit organizations, 35 local, state and federal public agencies, 3 foundations and 25 companies. A focal point this year was exploring opportunities to reclaim and restore our urban river systems.

Notable highlights include:

**Mickey Fearn, Deputy Director for Communications and Community Assistance at National Park Service**, asking "*how can we do a better job of working together as Federal agencies to support local efforts?*"; stating that we need to **restore the outdoors as a sacred place for children**; and that rivers provide innumerable benefits to society, including as Tourist attractions, Education outlets, Power generators, Places of Discovery, Economic engines, Archives, Art, Wellness, Health and Fitness, Historical & Cultural trusts, Transportation, Habitat and ecosystems, Sewage systems, Food systems and Political systems (deliberately keeping sewage and food together to drive home an important point).

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, River Network, and Groundwork USA **announcing \$600,000 in grants to five organizations working in urban communities**. Stan Meiburg, Deputy Regional Administrator (EPA Region 4), recognized the awardees in attendance and spoke of the increasing opportunities to improve the nation's impaired urban water resources.

River Network, National Wildlife Federation and the Water Protection Network **generating more than 400 comments** from Rally attendees **supporting EPA's current efforts to restore Clean Water Act protections** to wetlands and thousands of streams.



*Rain Garden Service Project*



*Announcing \$600,000 EPA Urban Waters Grants*

Highlights continued –

**Bill Werkheiser, Associate Director Water Resources U.S. Geological Survey**, showcasing the agency’s monitoring and mapping prowess, and putting out the call for citizen assistance in gathering data.

Speaking to a hushed and rapt audience, **Janisse Ray** providing a powerful afternoon keynote on “River Politics and the Landscape of Wholeness,” mixing into her poems and personal anecdotes a discussion on the conflicted relationship humans have with water, why our work is so important, and on how **water is for re-making local landscapes** so that we can live in community, both human and wild, and end the destruction of the things we love.

**Rudy Mancke**, a noted naturalist and television series host, taking us on a journey through the Carolina Lowcountry Region, along the way **reminding us of the magic of nature and that our surroundings are always changing**, as well as the wisdom of keeping a pillow case in your glove box in case you come across a Diamondhead rattle snake along the road and the fact that elephant skeletons can be found on the ocean floor forty miles off the coast.

The **Water Unites Us** plenary panel exploring the challenges and possibilities of **diversifying the water protection movement**. Six individuals, representing land trusts, water districts, federal agencies, interfaith environment coalitions, consultants and tribes discussed how to better engage new constituencies, address critical social justice needs and the intentional focus needed to engage the many forms of diversity– race, ethnicity, social-economic, professional focus –in order to become more effective in our work.

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*River Rally has sustained me as a leader for years, helping me bring home to my watershed and organization new knowledge, relationships, fundraising potential, and energy. River Network is our most valuable national partner, and River Rally is a must-attend event. We could not have attended regularly without the generous financial support from Rally partners, and we are so very grateful to you!*

Beth Stewart, Cahaba River Society (AL)

### **History and Purpose of River Rally**

What began 18 years ago on the banks of the Rogue River in southern Oregon as a small gathering of state-wide river leaders has since grown into the National River Rally. Since 1999, River Network has organized and hosted the National River Rally in Minnesota, California, North Carolina, Washington (twice), Virginia, Colorado, New Hampshire, Ohio, Maryland, Utah and now, South Carolina. This one-of-a-kind event brings together river leaders, volunteers, staff, board members, stewards and funders for an intensive sharing and collaborative learning experience that has proven to be the single most effective way to build and maintain a national movement of educated, effective river advocates and sustainable watershed protection organizations.

Attendees come home with a better understanding of solutions to watershed and organizational problems, dozens of new contacts, and a renewed spirit of commitment to their cause. Those who are new to River Rally, as well as seasoned participants, say that the event provides unprecedented opportunities for professional development, networking, rejuvenation and celebration, and is the single most important annual event for anyone working to protect our nation’s waters.

*Meeting with river people from all over the country tells me that what I'm doing back here at the office is work well worth doing.* Stephen Paul DeVillo, Bronx River Alliance (NY)

## Participants

Attendees from the following 42 states, district and province joined us in South Carolina. Within these numbers lie the passion, expertise, knowledge and skills that represent nonprofit organizations, natural resource consultants, Native American tribes, federal, state and local agencies, and businesses. They come from small rural communities and large urban centers with one common goal: to gain skills, connections and renewed passion to continue their work on behalf of our country's waterways.

Alabama 12	Maine 2	Pennsylvania 4
Alaska 8	Maryland 24	Rhode Island 1
Arizona 3	Massachusetts 11	South Carolina 34
Arkansas - 1	Michigan 14	Tennessee 17
California 14	Missouri 2	Texas 1
Colorado 9	Mississippi 3	Utah 5
Connecticut 6	Montana 2	Vermont 3
Florida 3	New Jersey 7	Virginia 14
Georgia 23	New Mexico 2	Washington 4
Idaho 2	New York 10	West Virginia 11
Illinois 9	North Carolina 50	Wisconsin 17
Indiana 4	Ohio 26	Wyoming 1
Kansas 1	Oklahoma 2	Washington, DC 45
Kentucky 4	Ontario, CAN 2	
Louisiana 11	Oregon 24	

## Education & Training

The core of River Rally is the impressive selection of workshops. Top-notch professionals provided 144 hours of enriching learning experiences through more than 80 workshops and intensive half-day sessions. Unlike many national conferences where the focus is on panel discussions, River Rally seeks to ensure that workshops provide tangible tools and resources which participants can use in their professional life.

Topics this year included:

- Education & Outreach
- Clean Water Act
- Diversity
- Stormwater Management
- Green Infrastructure
- Fundraising & Communications
- Sustaining Healthy Organizations
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Monitoring & Mapping
- Human Health
- Climate, Energy and Water
- Urban Water Systems
- River Habitat
- Protection & Restoration

The 2011 River Rally Program provides details about each workshop online at:

[www.rivernetwork.org/sites/default/files/RRProgram2011\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.rivernetwork.org/sites/default/files/RRProgram2011_FINAL.pdf)

*I would love to have been able to be in two or three places at the same time. Your educational sessions were superb - as were the presenters - and the participants who added to each presentation.* Melissa Macdonald, Eagle River Watershed Council (CO)

*Investing in River Network, and particularly River Rally, is an opportunity to not just double or quadruple your contribution, but to literally multiply it by 500 (or whatever the number of organizations that participate annually is). That's because this investment affords small organizations focusing on water quality issues NATIONWIDE the opportunity for access to specialized training they couldn't afford otherwise.* Jenny Sanders, Little Tennessee Watershed (NC)

### **Sponsors and Supporters**

The following foundation, agency, corporate and nonprofit sponsors and supporters provided essential financial and in-kind support. Assistance from these groups helped keep River Rally affordable for smaller grassroots organizations. In addition, more than \$125,000 was raised for the River Rally Scholarship Fund. As a result of this generosity, 261 participants who might not otherwise have been able to attend received scholarships for their River Rally experience.

#### **Lead**

U.S. EPA\*  
Katherine & David Moore\*  
Tom's of Maine\*

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service  
Summit Fund of Washington\*  
Wisconsin Dept. of Natural Resources\*

RiverSafe RainBarrel Enterprise of RiverSides  
Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation\*

#### **Basin**

Charles Stewart Mott Foundation\*  
Patagonia, Inc.\*  
U.S. Forest Service  
U.S. Geological Survey

#### **Stream**

Chesapeake Bay Trust  
National Park Service  
Ohio Department of Natural Resources\*  
YSI Foundation, Inc.\*

#### **Friend**

Alabama Rivers Alliance  
Enviroscape  
Freshwaters Illustrated  
Gulf Restoration Network  
LaMotte Company  
McDonald & Woodward Publishing  
Marc Alston Coaching  
Rain Water Solutions, Inc.  
Southeast Watershed Forum  
ThinkShout  
Water Protection Network  
Water Words That Work  
*\*Contributor to River Rally Scholarship Fund*

#### **Watershed**

The Coca-Cola Company  
Planet, Inc.  
True North Foundation

#### **Spring**

Agua Fund\*  
American Rivers  
Gulf Coast Fund for Community Renewal and Ecological Health\*  
IM Rivers by Vertices  
Keith Campbell Foundation\*  
Park Foundation\*

#### **River**

Anonymous\*  
Biophilia Foundation  
Budweiser\*

**In addition, seeded with contributions from River Network board and staff, an individual fundraising appeal during River Rally netted just over \$4,000 for the 2012 National River Rally Scholarship Fund.**

### **River Rally Stewards**

Pilot Captains provided financial support, marketing efforts and leadership, helping steer River Rally to success. We are also grateful to the Local Host Committee for their time, energy and hospitality.

#### **Pilot Captains**

- Alabama Rivers Alliance
- American Rivers
- Clean Water Network
- Earth Force
- Gulf Restoration Network
- Land Trust Alliance
- Southeast Watershed Forum
- Union of Concerned Scientists
- Upstate Forever
- Water Protection Network

#### **Local Host Committee**

- American Rivers –Southeast office
- Charleston Waterkeeper
- Coastal Conservation League
- Gills Creek Watershed Association
- Santee Riverkeeper Alliance
- Savannah Riverkeeper
- Upstate Forever
- Waccamaw Riverkeeper

## Field Trips

Leveraging the heart, skills and commitment of River Rally participants, River Network, in conjunction with the U.S. EPA, began what is to become a new tradition –an afternoon of service. More than thirty people rolled up their sleeves and—despite temperatures nearing 100 degrees – helped install a rain garden at a community center in N. Charleston’s Chicora-Cherokee neighborhood.

Additionally, a number of field trips provided the opportunity for informal networking, exploration of the region and burn-out prevention. Participants had the option to kayak the Wambaw River, canoe the Edisto, tour Civil War historical sites, visit Bull Island and view some of areas innovative Low Impact Development projects.



## Special Events

River Rally is also about rejuvenation, networking and sharing stories of success and passion, and nothing highlights these goals like crowd pleasing extracurricular events including:

- Forty people enjoyed a **pre-Rally social evening** with the Charleston River Dogs baseball team.
- **Wild and Scenic Film Fest** Sponsored by the South Yuba River Citizen’s League, highlighted nine short, independent films that offered both inspiration and thought-provoking content.
- A special showing of the feature film **The River Why**, with producer and screenwriter in attendance to discuss ways nonprofits could show the film in their community and develop a call to action program.
- **Pub Trivia** provided our participants with the opportunity to flaunt their river knowledge in a friendly competition. Teams wracked their brains to answer questions about the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, classic films and art depicting rivers and various river terms (thalweg, anyone?). The winners were treated to a gift package from Planet Inc.
- **Exhibits** again showcased a wide variety of products and services for both organizations and individuals to help them be better stewards of their environment.
- More than a dozen organizations presented in the first-ever River Rally **Poster Session**; we’re excited to make this an even larger part of future Rallies.

*With its mission to 'empower and unite' the watershed movement, the River Rally does this in one stroke; it is both an intensive learning conference but also a 'family gathering' where we get to reaffirm our passion for our work and support each other.* Peter Raabe, American Rivers (DC)

## **2011 National River Heroes and James R. Compton River Achievement Award**

The culmination of River Rally is the River Heroes Banquet where we celebrate the passion, enthusiasm, tenacity, creativity and courage of six individuals nominated by their peers and selected by committee. The nominations are submitted by peers. The Heroes are selected by peers. Even the wooden paddles presented to each Hero are made by peers. It is the dedication to and love of rivers and water that inspires all who hear from these River Heroes, together we laugh, we cry, and then we dance. Tom's of Maine is the proud Presenting Sponsor of these annual awards. For details about each River Hero visit <http://www.rivernetwork.org/rally/heroes>.



### **Margo Farnsworth, Missouri**

Margo is one of only nine Biomimicry Fellows in the world and is currently engaged in a project using biomimicry as a model to restore coastal communities. During her 10-year association with the Cumberland River Compact in Tennessee, she led the effort to be one of the first 20 grant recipients of the EPA Targeted Watershed Initiative Grant in 2003.



### **Robert Hunter, founding board member and staff attorney for WaterWatch of Oregon**

WaterWatch is devoted to restoring and protecting natural flows in Oregon's rivers and was the first conservation organization formed specifically to address instream flow and water allocation issues in the West. Bob co-drafted Oregon's landmark Instream Water Rights Bill in 1987, and is a lead person on the removal of Savage Rapids and Gold Ray Dams on Oregon's Rogue River.



### **James McMillan, Family Farmer, Tennessee**

James was born into six generation family of farmers. From the time he was a little boy, he loved the land and loved to farm, hunt and fish. In 2002, James' creek overflowed with mud from upstream developments. After numerous conversations with authorities, he was urged to make stormwater a bigger cause than just his farm. James was instrumental in starting the stormwater program at Tennessee Clean Water Network and continues to work diligently and without pay to monitor sites all over Knox County, and in other nearby counties.



### **Beth Stewart, executive director of Cahaba River Society, Alabama**

Cahaba River Society's mission is to restore and protect the Cahaba River watershed and its rich diversity of life, which includes the river's globally-significant freshwater life and the diverse people of central Alabama who rely on the Cahaba watershed for drinking water. Beth also founded the Kentucky Waterways Alliance and contributes to the Society's programs on low impact development, storm water management, drinking water conservation, and faith-based care of creation.



### **Dean Wilson, executive director of Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, Louisiana**

At the age of 24, Dean came to South Louisiana from Spain, and for the next 16 years he made his living as a commercial fisherman and hunter. Over time, Dean began to notice that pollution, illegal development, sedimentation and poor water quality were threatening the existence of his livelihood as well as those of Cajun fishing families and the countless fish and wildlife species dependent upon the basin. However, it was the clear-cutting of cypress forests for the production of mulch that made him stand up for the watery wilderness he loved. Dean found the Last Wilderness Swamp Tours, LLC to raise awareness about the plight of the basin. In 2003, he was voted Chair of the Atchafalaya Basin Committee and in 2004 Dean helped found the Atchafalaya Basinkeeper, dedicated to protecting and restoring the environmental health and productivity of the basin.



**Chris Brown** was honored with River Network’s *James R. Compton Lifetime Achievement Award*.

For over 30 years, Chris Brown has been a champion of our nation’s rivers. As the Conservation Director and Acting Executive Director with American Rivers, Chris led campaigns to protect over 1,000 river miles and secure \$25 million in appropriations. In 1988, Chris joined the National Park Service as Branch Chief for Technical Assistance, where he helped to create the Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program. RTCA staff continues to provide technical assistance to communities so they can conserve rivers, preserve open space, and develop trails and greenways. He worked extensively with urban river coalitions, hydropower relicensing, water trails, floodplain management.

In 2006, Chris became the Director of Wilderness and Wild and Scenic Rivers for the U.S. Forest Service; in this capacity, he was responsible for 35 million acres of Forest Service Wilderness and 4000 miles of Forest Service-administered Wild and Scenic Rivers. Two years later, Chris led the national celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.

Chris retired in 2011 and is an avid cyclist and canoeist, and continues to be involved with forestry and social service. Chris has paddled, rafted or fished on rivers in 36 states; a life goal is to descend the entire 380 miles of his home river: the Potomac



*I look forward to Rally all year long. The National River Rally helps to provide me with the inspiration and rejuvenation necessary to continue leading a statewide river organization.*

Judith Petersen, Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KY)

## Feedback/Evaluations

Workshop and event evaluations play a major role in the outcome of River Rally each year. We do our best to gather scored rankings for each participant at each workshop, as well as anecdotal evaluation about River Rally as a whole. The following describe the National River Rally experience:

*River Rally is the greatest! We learn that we're not the lone reed blowing in the wind, but one of many organizations nationwide that work for our rivers, our lands, and our future generations.*

T. Butler, Dan River Basin Association (NC)

*What an amazing, inspiring and empowering experience. I feel revitalized and more connected to so many other river advocates. I will definitely attend next year!*

Shelly Backlar, Friends of the Los Angeles River (CA)

*Seeing so many talented colleagues and hearing about their struggles and successes enriched my professional skills and recharged my resolve to work hard for clean water and free flowing rivers. I try to support and encourage all kinds of people to have hope and work hard for a clean water future--it was personally swell (and much needed) to swim in an ocean of support during Rally. I feel like I have new strategies and new contacts with which to meet the challenges before me.*

Kim Wright, Midwest Environmental Advocates (WI)

*The waters of the Earth are the life force of the Earth. When NASA scientists search for life on other planets they look for water. Water is the sign of life. Those who protect the waters are the protectors of life. Through River Rally we all learn how to do our very best to that effect. We learn how to protect life. Thank you for that.*

Cheri Foytlin, Gulf Change (LA)

## Looking Ahead

River Network believes that the strength of our movement lies not only in our individual work, but in the resources we can leverage via the partnerships we form. River Rally 2012 will partner with both the National Water Quality Monitoring Council and the Waterkeeper Alliance.



While the National River Rally is our major annual event, River Network provides services and support to the watershed community year-round. For more information about all our programs and our 5-Year Strategic Plan of Action, please call us at 503-241-3506 or visit our website at [www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org).