



**Strategic Plan
2017-2020**

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FLOWER AND PLANT ESSENCES

KWA is the proud Kentucky Affiliate for the National Wildlife Federation, and the official Earth Month partner of AVEDA Corporation.



Our Vision

KWA envisions a Kentucky that sustains and celebrates our vast network of healthy waterways.

Kentucky's lakes, rivers, streams, and wetlands support thriving aquatic ecosystems, healthy fish and wildlife populations, abundant recreation, and dependable, clean water supplies for future generations.

Our Mission

To protect, restore, and celebrate Kentucky's unique waterways and their watersheds.

Our Core Functions

Kentucky Waterways Alliance is the voice for the lakes, rivers, and streams of Kentucky. We are the only water-focused organization with a state-wide scope in Kentucky.

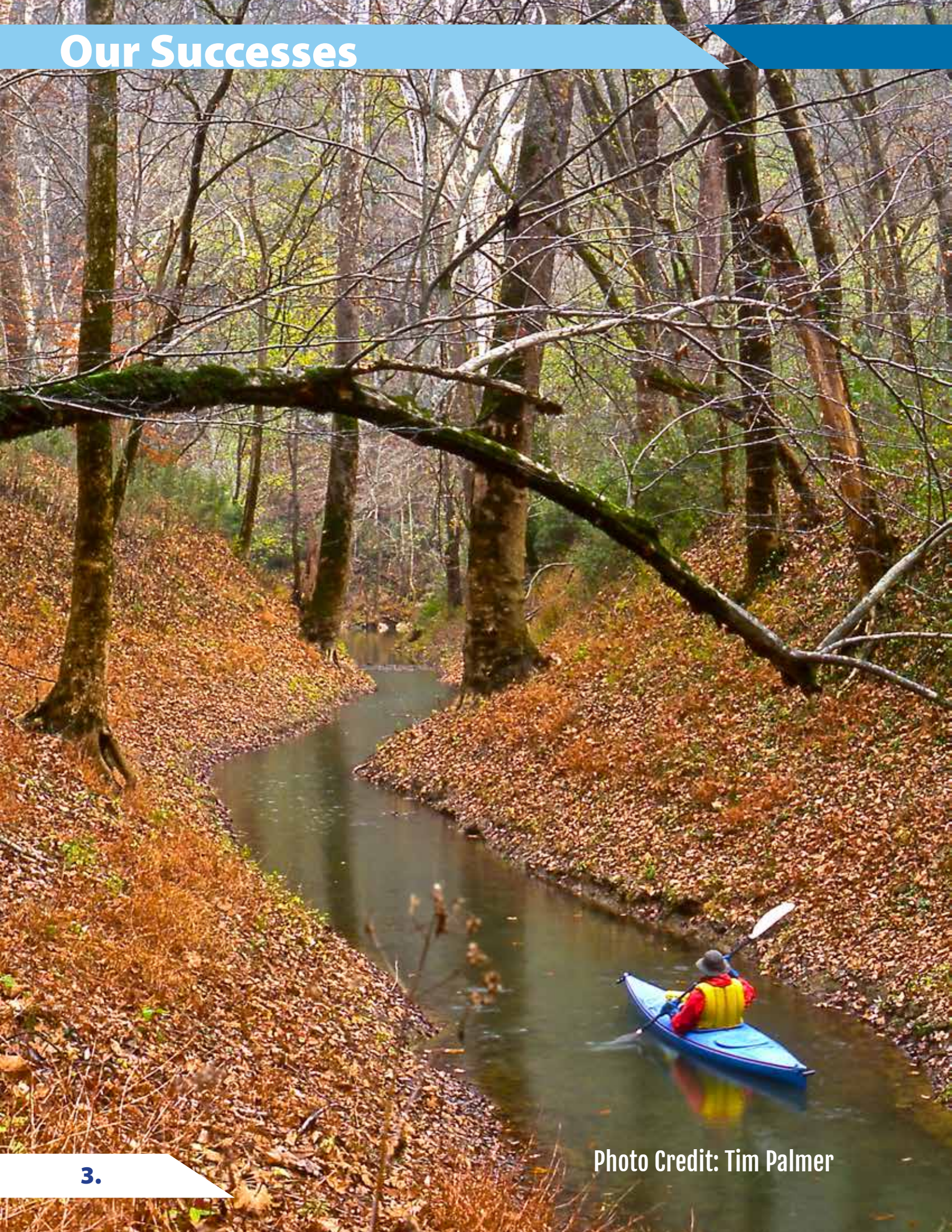
We work in partnership with many organizations to perform the following core functions:

Protection: We advocate for clean water and protecting our streams from the impacts of pollution. We engage citizens and provide them the tools they need to speak up for our critical water resources.

Restoration: We work in key watersheds and communities to facilitate the restoration of unhealthy streams. We assist in funding unique projects that can help restore threatened and endangered species as well as their environments.

Celebration: Many Kentucky waterways are national treasures, providing clean water and unique habitat to world-class biodiversity. We live, work, and play in the watersheds across the state and we celebrate their unique values.

Our Successes



3.

Photo Credit: Tim Palmer

Our Successes

1. Provided stronger legal protection for over 90% of Kentucky's waterways from new or increased pollution, setting a national precedent.
2. Ensured that coal mines will no longer be able to use a generic nationwide permit to legally dump debris in valley fills which pollute streams and drinking water sources, impede their flow, and impact aquatic species.
3. Provided aid to over 50 watershed groups across the state, including thousands of hours of staff time and re-granting over \$300,000 to support their efforts.
4. Advocated to add new Outstanding National Resource Waters that permanently protected over 62 miles of streams and 2040 acres of wetlands in Kentucky.
5. Protected cold water habitat designations for 16 Kentucky trout streams.
6. Established and managed the Kentucky Aquatic Resources Fund, creating a sustainable source of funding for aquatic ecosystems and Kentucky's threatened and endangered fish, mussel, and aquatic species.
7. Created a new Watershed Organizations Advisory Committee within ORSANCO (Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission), providing an equal voice for watershed groups when water quality decisions about the Ohio River are being made.

Our Principles

KWA is an advocate for healthy waterways and communities. Operating under these principles and values we:

- Work across, ecological, political, and social boundaries.
- Regard local watershed groups as vital to our mission.
- Are inclusive rather than exclusive.
- Make decisions based on sound science.
- Value environmental education.
- Make alliances that aren't limited to water advocacy organizations.
- Collaborate first, to solve problems, but not to the exclusion of administrative or judicial remedies.
- Strive to enhance and protect our ecosystems and the variety of aquatic life in our waterways.



Photo Credit: Tim Palmer

Advancing Our Mission

Goal 1: Revitalize and restore key watersheds through community engagement, advocacy, watershed planning, and other targeted strategies.

We work with community members to learn about and foster support for better stewardship of their local waterways. Our watershed program work has engaged thousands across many communities in learning about and gaining more appreciation for local streams, creeks, rivers, lakes, and wetlands. We work with communities to help implement projects that will improve water quality in places of need. In Bacon Creek, where we've worked for over 16 years, young fish have been seen for the first time in decades. In Eagle Creek, we supported the formation of a local watershed group that many years later helped improve creek conditions enough for it to be deemed healthy again!



Volunteers pull tires from Green River

Strategies For Success

Expand and continue watershed planning projects and support for watershed groups.

- Strive for the entire length of Bacon Creek to be fishable and swimmable through continued implementation of the Upper Bacon Creek Watershed Plan; propose new watershed plan for the Middle Bacon Creek.
- Expand engagement with local residents and improve water quality in the Beargrass Creek Watershed through the *Every Drop* program and other stewardship initiatives.
- Reduce bacteria pollution in Darby Creek through implementation of the Darby Creek Watershed Plan.
- Improve Harrods Creek water quality through completion of the Upper Harrods Creek Watershed Plan and collaborate with the Harrods Creek Alliance in developing a plan for the entire watershed.
- Educate and empower citizen scientists through Upper Green River Watershed Watch and Salt River Watershed Watch.
- Improve water quality in the Red River and the Red Bird River in collaboration with the U.S. Forest Service through implementation of watershed plans.

Develop a transparent process to prioritize for future watershed planning projects.

- Create a statewide water quality-based assessment of watersheds and waterways in need.
- Integrate new program work into the evaluation process.
- Implement new projects based on past and ongoing watershed work.
- Cultivate current and past partnerships and opportunities for sustainable community support.



Goal 2: Defend clean water and champion sound public policy to protect Kentucky's waterways so they support healthy communities of plants, animals and humans.

Clean water is a right; it belongs to every Kentuckian. However, with government cutbacks, the influence of many industries has grown. KWA's role is to be the watchdog for clean water and to help balance the influence of industry, who may wish to externalize their costs rather than pay to reduce the pollution they discharge into the water. The role of community members in protecting our waterways is often overlooked or undervalued. KWA helps communities understand how they can effectively engage to protect their local lakes, rivers, and streams, empowering them to make a difference. KWA led the charge to get over 17,000 comments to ORSANCO opposing mercury discharges into the Ohio River.

Strategies For Success

Advocate for full implementation, regulation, and enforcement of the Clean Water Act.

- Review and comment on permits that propose to impact streams, wetlands, lakes, and floodplains.
- Continue to review and comment on state and federal Clean Water Act legislation to ensure further protections for our waterways.
- Sustain and strengthen work with Mississippi River Collaborative partners, including efforts to reduce nutrient pollution and a new initiative to reconnect rivers to floodplains.
- Lead collaborative effort to protect Ohio River from mercury and nutrient pollution.

Expand work on clean water issues outside the realm of the Clean Water Act.

- Establish strategies to address emerging threats to Kentucky's waterways, such as climate change, fracking, tar sands, and microbeads.
- Organize and campaign for specific issues of interest through meetings with government representatives.

Organize, educate, and engage the public to take action on public policy and advocate for clean water.

- Engage faith-based, rural, and minority communities towards clean water activism.
- Strengthen outreach efforts through development and implementation of new activism calendar and updated action alert system.
- Create training programs empowering citizens to have a greater impact on water policy issues.

Goal 3: Increase the community awareness and knowledge about water, its connection to our health, and issues facing Kentucky's waterways.

We recognize that good water quality is important to everyone. We provide opportunities that make it easy for anyone to become engaged by volunteering, donating, or becoming more educated. By making clean water advocacy simple and relatable, we ensure that our message reaches as many people as possible.

Strategies For Success

Make clean water simple, relatable, and understandable for everyone.

- Create educational materials based on sound science that make clean water relatable and accessible.
- Inform the public of local activism opportunities, and create a public directory of Kentucky's local watershed groups.
- Provide timely news on developing clean water priorities in the state.

Encourage a robust public dialogue about water in Kentucky.

- Provide targeted social media content that encourages people to share both online and in person.
- Celebrate Kentucky's waterways and their surrounding communities through outreach events.

Expand KWA's audience.

- Refine KWA's outreach materials to clearly reflect our direction and broaden our audience.
- Reach out to communities we believe have a tangential connection to water quality such as the conservation community, wildlife enthusiasts, outdoor recreation enthusiasts, and local businesses.
- Utilize the KWA/NWF (National Wildlife Federation) Backyard Habitat and Pollinator Programs to engage and educate a more diverse audience on the impact they can have on clean water and healthy habitat for local wildlife in their own yards.



Goal 4: Sustain, strengthen, and expand partnerships to empower and engage individuals, communities, businesses, and government in watershed protection and restoration.

We're stronger and more effective when we work with others. We've had strong and effective partnerships over the years and through the work in this plan we will make those partnerships more intentional and better positioned to be successful. Developing new and stronger partnerships with ecologically minded industries, businesses, and groups who depend on clean water strengthens and unifies our voice. We will increase our impact on aquatic ecosystems as trustee for the Kentucky Aquatic Resources Fund, and by expanding our partnership with state and federal Fish and Wildlife Service, businesses, universities, and others. The Kentucky Aquatic Resources Fund is bringing native endangered mussels, fish, and other species back from the brink of extinction in Kentucky.

Strategies For Success

Use KWA resources to build additional capacity for partner organizations.

- Engage, organize, and provide training for local watershed groups.
- Expand partner events to unify the voice for clean water.
- Support cleanups led by partner organizations.
- Collaborate with partner organizations to understand, protect, and enhance aquatic ecosystems through the Kentucky Aquatic Resources Fund.

Expand watershed stewardship initiatives with partner organizations, businesses, and communities.

- Launch the Kentucky Backyard Habitat Program to empower homeowners statewide by providing the knowledge and tools to improve water quality in their watershed.
- Partner with organizations, schools, and businesses to install pollinator gardens, bringing back our pollinators and improving water quality.
- Engage businesses in the Clean Water | Better Bourbon and sister campaigns, unifying the voice of industry and individuals for clean water.
- Expand the *Every Drop* program and mobilize volunteers in the Beargrass Creek watershed to increase residential-scale green infrastructure related to stormwater.
- Support restoration of the Green and Barren Rivers through the removal of obsolete, non-functional locks and dams.

Resources and Implementation

We can accomplish this ambitious plan by building a stronger, more resilient organization through the cultivation of resources such as professional talent, financial resources, and engaged board members.

Diversify funding sources and expand membership.

- Expand current fundraising and membership generating events such as Wild and Scenic Film Festival and Aveda Earth Month.
- Create project and geographic area-specific donor materials and campaigns to reach specific groups of stakeholders and communities.
- Establish fee-for-service revenue producers and new special events linking people to their water resources.
- Provide new philanthropic opportunities such as bequests, planned giving, and donor advised funds.
- Cultivate current donors to increase giving and involvement.

Support and add to our people assets to ensure that we can deliver on our mission.

- Invest in staff development.
- Build the capacity of the board to lead creatively, develop partnerships, secure resources, and shepherd the organization.
- Increase organizational capacity to work with stakeholders in communities across the state and address Ohio River issues and policy concerns.

Sustain, strengthen and expand partnerships.

- Establish common communication strategies and messages to use with partner organizations such as National Wildlife Federation, watershed groups, and governmental agencies.
- Build new relationships with corporations that include opportunities to co-brand on clean-water reliant products and use product tie-ins to generate new revenue.
- Provide administrative and program support to the Kentucky Aquatic Resources Fund helping protect and restore endangered aquatic species and their environments.