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NewsStreams

Because Clean Water Can't Wait



Summer 2021

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NewsStreams

Because Clean Water Can't Wait - Summer 2021

Wild & Scenic Red RiverFest & Canoe Race

May 15, 2021

By Laura Gregory

Greetings from the Red River Watershed! I am thrilled to report that our 4th annual Wild & Scenic Red RiverFest and the revival of the historic 29-mile Red River Canoe Race (RRCR) was a great success! Our in-person event was a little different this year because of COVID-19 but we were able to adapt by allowing for the

in-person fun paddle and race on May 15 while hosting our festival presentations in a virtual format in July and August. Ultimately, we were able to continue our work to promote clean water and engage more stewards of the land and water.

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A Message From Ward Wilson

Executive Director, Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Dear Friends,

Happy summer! It is a wonderful time of year to enjoy Kentucky waterways. We at KWA have been working on many new initiatives and we have some new staff as you can see in this issue. It's a great time for KWA and we have you, our supporters, to thank for that. Please stay with us and renew your membership – consider a monthly recurring donation if you can, they really sustain us throughout the year.



Kentucky has over 90,000 miles of waterways. More than any state except Alaska, which is 16 times larger than our state. It's part of why we came up with the tag line Kentucky Is Water. The phrase, along with our state map showing the rivers that is so popular on our t-shirts, can mean many things. Besides the number of waterway miles, water is vital to Kentucky's past, present, and future in many ways. People have lived in Kentucky for thousands of years and they relied on the waterways for food and drinking water, transportation, and I'm sure peaceful reflection. We still rely on waterways for all these things, even though it's not as obvious for many of us since our fish come packaged and water from the tap. In the future, climate change and development threaten our waterways. We know more than ever and we can address these issues. KWA will be around to protect, restore, and celebrate waterways as long as Kentuckians care about them.

Have a safe and happy summer,

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Tom Vierheller - Big Sandy River
Bob Johnson -Jackson Purchase
Linda Cowan - Salt River
Caitlin Johnson - Salt River

VIRTUAL Red RiverFest

By Laura Gregory, KWA Red River Watershed Coordinator

The 2021 Red RiverFest VIRTUAL series took place via Zoom during July and August. Excellent experts presented on clean water topics focused around the Red River Watershed. If you missed your chance to attend live, you can watch recorded versions available on KWA and Friends of Red River Facebook pages. See www.kwalliance.org for more information.

Wild & Scenic Red RiverFest & Canoe Race 2021

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On May 15 we hosted 96 paddlers on Red River and over 75 people at the after-party. Both the race and fun paddle started from Copperas Creek Canoe Launch. 61 folks paddled 7 miles to Red River Adventure and the 31 racers continued along the adventurous

route to Powell County Lion's Club Park - 29 miles downstream! We had participants from 10 states - Michigan, Tennessee, Massachusetts, Maryland, Ohio, Florida, South Carolina, Texas, Louisiana and of course numerous local/regional representation from Kentucky. We were thrilled to draw people from around the country, many whom had never been to Kentucky, to the Red River to share our unique, adventurous, & biodiverse Wild & Scenic River. We were thrilled to bring back the historic RRCR that began in 1967 and ran through the 80s: we hope to see the event continue for many years in the future!

This was a complex, multi-county event that utilized many partnerships to accomplish our goals - KWA, Friends of Red River, Explore Kentucky Initiative, Wolfe County Search and Rescue, Powell County Search and Rescue, and Powell County RedSTAR.

We could not have hosted the event without our gracious funders and sponsors. Presented by: Powell County Tourism, Wolfe County Tourism, Kentucky River Authority, & TC Energy. Major Sponsors: Ale-8 and the American Canoe Association/L.L.Bean. Altogether we raised \$12,250.00 in sponsorships for 2021 that paid for the event plus income from registrations that was split between local nonprofit organizations that made the event possible - Friends of Red River, Wolfe County SAR, Powell County SAR, and Powell County RedSTAR.

During the process Friends of Red River created a new logo and website that will help get the word out about the great work being done in Red River Watershed! Soon, the popular FORR logo shirts will be printed again and will be available for sale on the website. Check it out at www.FriendsOfRedRiverKY.org.

Perhaps my favorite thing about this event is seeing the volunteers come together to make it possible. The only way we could pull off this complex event is because of the 60+ volunteers that made it happen! Thank you for your hard work and dedication to keep folks safe and to bring awareness to the beauty of the Red River, and to the amazing communities that surround it and work to protect, restore, and celebrate it so that we have clean water for future generations!



Racers from around the country compete down the Red River



And yes, awards were given!



KWA staff and volunteers coordinate the event

Without Racial Justice There Can Be No Environmental Justice.

By Lauren Neal: KWA Community Engagement Intern



My name is Lauren Neal, and I am a second-year law student at University of Louisville, Brandeis School of Law. I am a Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA) community engagement intern with passion for the environment and how we, as people, are impacted by decisions made pertaining to the environment. Who knew a combination of watching National Geographic and being a girl scout would one day lead to me pursuing a career in environmental law? The importance of protecting and reviving our environment is so important – not only for ourselves, but for future generations to come. Unfortunately, it remains an unjust reality that not all communities are included in conversations concerning the state of our environment. This is especially the case among the most vulnerable communities who so often bear the brunt of each dangerous condition posed by the ongoing climate crisis.

These are the very communities that will be impacted disproportionately. Low-income and communities of color will be impacted the most by climate change. If there is genuinely going to be change – true change – then there must be

constant pressure to include everyone at the table. Historically forgotten groups, are just that, historically forgotten and pushed to the side. Inclusivity requires a continuous and deliberate effort to include low-income Kentucky residents and the communities of color within Kentucky. In 2020, at the height of Covid-19, African Americans were moved to continue to protest against the lingering systematic injustices that persist today and for the right to be heard. Last summer KWA released the following statement the movement for justice last summer:

"All people have a right to life and liberty and health. Black communities and communities of color bear a disproportionate burden from pollution and other environmental harms because racial oppression has never ended in America. KWA commits here to addressing issues of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion within our organization. We will listen, learn, and take action as we work collectively toward a more just and equitable society."

We continue to acknowledge today that these systematic imperfections are not merely confined to our justice system. They exist everywhere. KWA continues to be an active ally, reinforcing the statement of support from last summer and continuing to strive for inclusivity this summer.

I have been fortunate enough to work with Kentucky Waterways Alliance and National Wildlife Federation to help create relationships with underrepresented communities within Kentucky. Our mission is to not only facilitate long-lasting partnerships, but also to help uplift their voices around conversations about our water sources. During my time at Brandeis, I was able to work alongside Professor Tony Arnold, and co-author "Resilience Justice and Community-Based Green and Blue Infrastructure", for which I conducted research and assessed examples of co-governance in low-income neighborhoods of color directly related to the management of land and water infrastructure within those specific communities. Co-governance is the collaborative effort of a government and community organizations or members to work together on issues that impact the community. Uplifting the voices of minority-led organizations here in Kentucky will provide opportunities for these organizations to be genuinely heard in discussions and planning involving environmental injustices that affect these communities. As KWA continues to envision a Kentucky that sustains and celebrates our vast network of healthy waterways for future generations, our goal remains centered on ensuring that everyone can benefit from a thriving healthy environment. Everyone deserves a seat at the table. Everyone deserves to be heard.



KWA's 13th Annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival: Event Recap

by Charlotte Caldwell



At the drive-in there's always popcorn

even one dog attended the Drive-In experience. Our guest emcee, Angie Fenton of Extol Magazine & Media, did a fabulous job introducing the films and sharing her personal connection to our natural world. Thank you to all who came out and showed their support for Kentucky's waterways!

KWA's Artist in Residence, Albertus Gorman, the Artist at Exit 0, was on site constructing a live sculptural exhibit. He had several different works on display, including his Waterfoul or Plastic Quackery Collection. Attendees got to meet the artist and learn about his unique approach to art.

KWA's 13th annual Wild & Scenic Film Festival premiered in-person Thursday, June 17 at the Sauerbeck Family Drive-In in LaGrange, KY. Simultaneously, the virtual festival experience premiered and continued to be streamed through June 22. 120 individuals attended our drive-in experience, and 60 households watched the virtual experience, with a total estimated reach of at least 300 individuals. At the Drive-In we had several different environmental organizations present: Beargrass Creek Alliance, Forecastle Foundation, Quest Outdoors, Kentuckiana Air Education, Louisville Grows, Jefferson County Soil and Water Conservation District, Kentucky Natural Lands Trust, Kentucky Conservation Committee, and Louisville Climate Action Network.

We were thrilled to be able to reconnect with KWA members, both new and old, and to celebrate by watching 10 environmental and adventure films together. Attendees had some creative tailgate setups and



KWA supporters break out the lawn chairs



Albertus Gorman, the Artist at Exit 0, was on site with his Waterfoul Plastic Quackery Collection

Artist's Statement:

My name is Albertus Gorman and I live along the Ohio River in Louisville, KY. For over twenty years I have been the self-designated Artist at Exit 0 at the Falls of the Ohio State Park across the river in Clarksville, IN. I love this small state park, a dynamic environment full of life, history and myth. I am adding my own interpretive and artistic chapter here by using river-altered materials and discarded objects that wash upon the riverbank. I like finding, documenting, collecting, and using materials mostly on site preferring to see what I do framed in a natural context.

Water is the universal solvent and the universal consciousness too. This can be seen in the myriad forms of random, mostly plastic artifacts I find that floated downriver into the park and were made and discarded on our watch. These river-patinated artifacts can reveal much about a culture through what they produced and valued. I try to redeem these often-poor materials by turning them into something aesthetic or life enhancing like art can be. The quality of our water is also an aesthetic choice. Water is at its most life-enhancing when it is clean and full of life.

There is a bit of alchemy at play here in trying to turn base materials into something else worth noticing that is contemporary and relevant. I am also a believer in the value of universal creativity and try to practice this and encourage it in others. I am excited to be working alongside the Kentucky Waterways Alliance in support of all the great work they continue to do.

Albertus Gorman/Artist at Exit 0

To learn more about the Artist at Exit 0, www.artistatexitriverblog.com.

National Wildlife Federation Annual Meeting

by Ward Wilson



NWF-KWA Certified Wildlife Habitat yard sign

In June, KWA Board Member Dr. Tom Vierheller of Prestonsburg was KWA's voting delegate to the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) 85th annual meeting. At this meeting, we joined 52 other affiliates in learning sessions and discussions of policy resolutions ranging from support for the 30x30 Initiative (America the Beautiful Initiative) and the Civilian Climate Corps to plant conservation. We also discussed and supported policies that will assure that communities hurt by the transition to a net-zero carbon economy have socioeconomic support. Most of the issues are national and some are regional, but nearly all affect Kentucky waterways. We learn a lot from our fellow affiliates and the professional staff of NWF at these meetings. We also bring our perspectives to the discussions on behalf of you, our members.

KWA became the Kentucky affiliate of NWF seven years ago. It's a true partnership that works because both sides gain. KWA

is still an independent organization with full control of our work.

We benefit from the strong, science-based, and savvy NWF advocacy team based in Washington, DC that keeps us informed and engaged on national issues. KWA's voice is heard on issues such as

the Farm Bill, appropriations for water resource projects, and the Recovering America's Wildlife Act which could bring millions of dollars to Kentucky to address wildlife species of concern to prevent their further decline and potential listing on the endangered species list.

NWF has shared with us their Certified Wildlife Habitat program that reaches homeowners that want to create habitat in their backyard as well as whole communities that want to show that they are



NWF meeting on policy resolutions

taking action to provide food, cover, water, and a place to raise young for wildlife.

We have received financial support for some KWA programs from NWF, including a current grant that aids our work on climate change and authentic engagement with minority-led organizations.

Our relationships with other affiliates have been valuable as well. We've worked with the West Virginia Rivers Coalition on Appalachian water issues and the Ohio River, for example. The Tennessee Wildlife Federation has generously provided expert advice on communications and fundraising, as well as the fight to control Asian carp.

KWA is a key member of the federation of state organizations that forms the policy for NWF. The resolutions we voted on in June are now the positions of NWF on those issues. NWF is a large and powerful national organization, but they gain state and regional perspectives from affiliates like us. One example is our input on the Just Transition in Appalachia for communities that provided power for this country for decades, but are now



Gordon Garner at the 2014 NWF annual meeting



Ward Wilson on Capitol Hill with NWF



threatened with the loss of well-paying jobs from the changes that are coming in the coal, oil, and gas industries. This is environmental justice, addressing those that are most affected by pollution as well

as market forces that they cannot control alone.

The sign of a good friendship is when you can count on each other and talk openly when you differ. KWA and NWF have that relationship. KWA has that relationship with our fellow affiliates. It makes us all stronger and more effective in our work for healthy waterways for wildlife and people.

Dam 5 Update

Green River Restoration

By Ward Wilson



Green River Dam 5

After years of plotting and planning and permitting, Green River Lock & Dam 5 is coming down! The Aquatic Restoration Team from US Fish & Wildlife Service started breaking concrete in late June and expects the work to be completed in September. KWA is a part of an amazing team that made this happen. Our role is to coordinate contracting and payment to the companies and agencies performing the studies and demolition work.

This is done through the Kentucky Aquatic Resources Fund that we manage in coordination with the US Fish & Wildlife Service, as described in our Spring 2021 newsletter.*

Many of us have been working to make this happen for years, even decades, because the Green River is such a biodiverse and beautiful river and the locks and dams built in the early 1900s are obsolete and dangerous. A key step was the completion of the 2014 Green and Barren Rivers Locks and Dams Disposition Feasibility Study that allowed the US Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) to deauthorize four Green River dams and one on Barren River. This allowed planning to gear up for demolition, but many more steps were required. Sediment studies, water supply studies, archaeological studies, and biological studies were done. Permits were needed and, of course, funding was needed. Al-



KWA's Lauren Neal, Ward Wilson, and Charlotte Caldwell at Dam 5

though many of us wanted to see the dams blown up, the pros told us we needed to take the dams out more safely and carefully. It took a team to make this happen – besides the Corps and US Fish & Wildlife, the Kentucky Department of Fish & Wildlife Resources, Mammoth Cave National Park, and The Nature Conservancy of Kentucky have all played important roles in our efforts to Free the Green.



Demolition of lock chamber, looking downstream

Many of you will remember that we have already removed Lock and Dam 6 on the Green River. This dam failed in late 2016 and was demolished in April 2017. There is a public access area at the former dam site now. At Dam 5, The Nature Conservancy will take the property after the removal and they are working to make it a public river access site as well. Next in our sights is Barren River Lock and Dam 1, which we may remove later this year. Stay tuned to KWA social media and email newsletters for updates.

*To read past editions of our print newsletter, visit: kwalliance.org/newsstream-archive

Staff Spotlight: Harper Zeitz

Clean Waterways Coordinator
harper@kwalliance.org

Harper became the Clean Waterways Coordinator in July of 2021 after being a volunteer with KWA. Harper is a Louisville native and has lived in Lexington for the past 6 years. During that time, she attended Transylvania University where she studied biology, sociology, and environmental studies in hopes of pursuing a position that would allow her to do more for environmental conservation and protection. Harper has been an active participant in the Lexington community through acts of service and ecological research. She is currently volunteering with the University of Kentucky Department of Forestry's research on aquatic animals and freshwater systems. Harper enjoys spending her free time hiking, camping, canoeing, and drinking beer from local breweries, knowing that clean water creates better beer.

With our newest member of the KWA team, we plan on reaching new heights in our efforts toward community outreach and engagement. This will be accomplished through media campaigns, partnerships with local businesses and organizations, and expanding our number of waterways cleanups throughout the Louisville area and the rest of the Commonwealth. If you want to get involved, sign up for our email list or reach out to Harper directly at harper@kwalliance.org. To ensure the integrity of Kentucky's aquatic ecosystems our mission is to further our waterways cleanup efforts and engage community members in water literacy.



Staff Spotlight: Madeline Scarbrough

Office Administrator
madeline@kwalliance.org



As a Louisville, Ky native Madeline grew up exploring Kentucky's waterways and natural areas - finding a particular love for the Cherokee Park portion of Beargrass Creek, the ephemeral streams throughout Jefferson Memorial Forest, and the wild-yet-urban banks of the Ohio River. Her love of the region and continuing curiosity about freshwater ecology led her to earn a B.S. in Aquatic Biology from Eastern Kentucky University where she spent time contributing to a series of biomonitoring studies using the metric of macroinvertebrate diversity found in streams. Madeline and her fiancé Krishna are animal lovers who together care for two dogs named Hektor and Björn, a red-eared slider named Cheese, and a ball python named Liliana. Madeline and friends can most often be found exploring the fossil beds of The Falls of the Ohio, attending the

Kentucky Renaissance Fair in costume, or practicing archery in Iroquois park. Madeline is excited to be working with KWA and its partners in the interest of conservation and to be connecting with others who care for the Earth.

Save the Date: Give for Good September 17, 2021

By Charlotte Caldwell

Give for Good Louisville returns Friday September, 17. Give for Good is Louisville's 24-hour community day of giving - an opportunity to unite our community around causes in which we truly believe and help nonprofit organizations connect to the larger community.

When you donate to KWA on Give for Good, you help to expand our work to more areas of the state and to have a greater impact on water quality throughout Kentucky. We invite you to continue support so we can continue protecting and restoring Kentucky's rivers and streams for the next 25 years...and beyond. Your contribution works on behalf of our rivers, lakes, and streams.

Are you ready to be a part of Louisville's biggest day of philanthropy? On September 17th, starting at 12:00 am EST, visit giveforgoodlouisville.org and make a donation to us and/or to any of the great participating nonprofit organizations in the Louisville community. All giving will end at 11:59PM on September 17, so make sure to get your gift in on time!

Questions? If you have any questions or would like more information, let us know by email (info@kwalliance.org) or phone (502-589-8008). Thank you in advance for your generosity to our organization!

