RiverPalooza 2018 almost missed the boat this year. As everybody remembers, heavy spring rains caused severely high water levels on the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. While water is a very good thing, especially high water created unsafe conditions for our paddle trips and to everyone’s dismay several trips had to be rescheduled.

Thanks to the determination of our Riverkeepers and dedicated outfitters, we were able to reschedule most trips. And a special thanks to all the paddlers who “went with the flow” and still got out on the water this summer!

During the course of the events, over 400 fellow river lovers enjoyed what our waterways have to offer. Some folks investigated the World War I Ghost Fleet at Mallows Bay by kayak with Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks. Others saw first hand the underwater side of the Shenandoah River through a fantastic snorkeling trip organized by Mark Frondorf, Shenandoah Riverkeeper.

Fishing, a source of great fun, was highlighted on several of the paddles. For the history buffs, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls, joined forces with the National Park Service to provide a one-of-a-kind tour from land and water of the Civil War battlefield at Antietam.

PRKN’s first ever RioPalooza was a resounding success. This first of its kind festival invited our Latino neighbors in our great watershed to participate in a day of fun and fellowship focused around the river. Mark Frondorf and a remarkable host of partners — US Forest Service, Hispanic Access Foundation, Park RX, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, North Bay Adventure, Downriver Canoe Company and Low Water Bridge Campground – made sure the day was filled with “chispa”! There was fishing, there was snorkeling, there was rafting. Believe it or not, there was a “fish petting zoo”! No Latino festival could do without food and music, so you can be sure we had that, too. Read more about RioPalooza on Page 4.

In July, the RiverPalooza Monuments Paddle brought 22 kayakers onto the Potomac River with Emily Franc, Vice President of Development and Philanthropy, in her official inaugural Potomac Riverkeeper Network paddling excursion! We spotted a bald eagle, egrets, cranes and cormorants as well as turtles and fish. After years as the Anacostia Riverkeeper, Emily said that she was thrilled to have a part in recreation on our Nation’s River and reported, “The best view of the monuments is from the water”.

Campers had a terrific time with Brent Walls, Upper Potomac Riverkeeper, at beautiful Paw Paw Bends for the mid-July float and overnight campout. The event sold out and it’s easy to see why. This third annual iconic float took the participants through the meandering bends on the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail near Paw Paw, WV. The Paw Paw Bends are a classic signature of the Upper Potomac River. The rural, wild-like scenery and sky-high rocky cliffs feel like a walk back in time. The trip began with a special tour of the Paw Paw Tunnel on the C&O Canal with a guest speaker from the National Park Service, followed by a beautiful paddle through Paw Paw Bends. At the end of the day, the campers enjoyed a great BBQ dinner at the Bond’s Landing camp site.

And we never forget our anglers! A group led by Mark Frondorf experienced amazing topwater fishing action on a beautiful 7.5 mile stretch of the Shenandoah River where

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HELLO FRIENDS,

I’ve had the best summer! I started as President of PRKN on June 1. Although I had been working a lot with staff and board members before that date, so that I could be better informed, my first three months have been, well, jam packed and great.

I’ve had the chance to spend a day with each of the Riverkeepers, which has been eye opening. I’ve learned so much more about their watersheds and now seen first hand what they do to protect and defend these precious resources. A real bonus has been getting to know them better in the process. The work they do is remarkable and the people they work with are, too. We have, thanks to them, an incredible base of volunteer support, without which I really don’t think we would be as successful as we are.

I’ve seen also some of PRKN’s wonderful achievements, such as solving sewer overflow problems in Alexandria and observing our great RiverPalooza events, about both of which you’ll read more in this Newsletter.

For me, having grown up on the Shenandoah in Waynesboro, becoming President is such a perfect fit. I’ve devoted my entire career to protecting our sources of clean water – to assure that it’s drinkable, fishable, and swimmable – and there is no better place to make an impact on my home watershed than at PRKN.

Over the next few months, we have a lot to do, both work and fun. I’m eager to increase our membership, of course, and working with Emily Franc, our new Vice President of Development and Philanthropy, we’ve already started that endeavor. I like to think that a lot of what I bring to PRKN is my network of friends and contacts, and I want to see us use that to grow. I’m also hoping that you will help by sharing our successes and our challenges with your own circles of friends and fellow river lovers.

Our programs are also nonstop. As a former water program director, I’ve been delighted to help Phillip Musegaas, PRKN’s Vice President of Programs and Litigation, in his work to address a startlingly bad and dangerous effort at EPA to repeal the Clean Water Rule, on which we rely to clean up the water each one of us needs in our daily life – both for drinking and recreation.

I’m particularly pleased that this year’s Law & Water Gala will feature Bobby Kennedy, Jr., as our keynote speaker. He’s an icon in the environmental movement – without whom there might not even be a Riverkeeper program worldwide. Those of you who have attended past events know what fun it is (and that it’s our major fundraiser of the year), so share the word about it. And, by the way, if you haven’t already done so, get your tickets now!

Finally, I also want to express my thanks to everyone – far too many to name – who have made my first months here exhilarating and productive.

Let’s do great things together!

Sincerely,

Nancy Stoner, President
PROGRESS MADE ON COAL POWER PLANT TOXIC DISCHARGES

A great development and positive evidence of how the squeaky wheel gets the grease! Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) recently issued the new Clean Water Act discharge permits for the Dickerson and Morgantown coal plants which discharge wastewater directly into the Potomac — I’m happy to report that MDE made substantial changes requested by PRKN. Most importantly, MDE now requires compliance with the Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) strict national guidelines for discharges of toxic metals and other pollutants from bottom ash transport and scrubber wastewater into the Potomac River. Each plant must comply by November 1, 2020.

In comments filed jointly with Sierra Club, we called on MDE to strengthen the permits to protect the river and downstream drinking water sources. Here’s the list of those with which MDE agreed:

- MDE agreed that NRG, the operator of the plants, should have to meet the earliest applicable deadline — Nov. 1, 2020 — for ending the discharge of bottom ash transport water.
- MDE agreed that NRG should have to meet the same deadline for limits on arsenic, mercury, selenium, and nitrate from its scrubber wastewater outfall.
- We asked for a compliance schedule to ensure that NRG would not be able to ignore the new requirements while waiting for EPA to relax the ELG rules. MDE did not impose a binding schedule but did require progress reports every six months.
- We asked for weekly monitoring of metals (while NRG had asked for less monitoring). MDE required weekly monitoring for arsenic, mercury and selenium and twice a week for nitrogen.
- At the Dickerson plant, we asked MDE to act on bromide, which can lead to cancer-causing byproducts in drinking water. MDE agreed to impose a monthly monitoring requirement and prohibited the use of any bromine-containing additives. These two changes will help establish the extent to which Dickerson is creating a problem for downstream drinking water and will set the foundation for any future limits.
- We also requested monitoring at Dickerson to identify and stop known discharges of an oily substance. MDE did not add new sampling requirements but did add a twice-daily visual inspection requirement, which will identify the "oily sheen" seen in the plant’s discharge canal, find the source and stop it from continuing.

Some requests were not granted. MDE declined to discontinue the variance for thermal discharges (hot water) into the Potomac, which allows the plants to discharge heated water above regulatory limits. NRG has not supported its variance request with good data. MDE required a new justification from NRG, with newer data, but only commencing a couple of years after the permit renewal becomes effective. MDE also didn’t budge on our request to require biological studies assessing the impact of plant water intake’s impact on aquatic life in the river more frequently than the 3½ years allowed under EPA regulations.

All in all, this is a big success — MDE surprised us by taking a strong stand to reduce toxic coal wastewater discharges into the Potomac. I’m convinced that our efforts – scrutinizing the draft permits, teaming up with Sierra Club, getting our supporters out to public hearings and meeting with MDE — all combined to make this happen. The Potomac River will be cleaner and healthier as a result.

POTOMAC RIVERKEEPER ACHIEVES MAJOR SUCCESS WITH ALEXANDRIA STORMWATER AND SEWER SYSTEM UPGRADES

As your Potomac Riverkeeper, I’m excited to report that the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) has finally approved Alexandria’s plan to resolve stormwater and sewer pollution flowing into the Potomac River from the city’s outdated sewer system. Once the city’s Long-Term Control Plan is implemented, raw sewage flowing into the Potomac River for over a hundred years will largely be a thing of the past. This is good for the river, good for the citizens of Alexandria and downriver communities, and good for the city’s prospects of re-developing its waterfront.

We began working on this issue back in 2015, when no one even knew Alexandria had a sewage problem. Kids from TC Williams High School rowed crew out of Oronoco Bay hundreds of feet away from Alexandria’s largest combined sewage overflow discharge pipe, spewing approximately 70 million gallons per year of combined sewage and stormwater into the Potomac River.

With help from Phillip Musegaas, PRKN’s Vice President of Programs and Litigation, and PRKN Board Chair Nick Kuttner, we worked for three years to educate the EPA, DEQ, and lawmakers to pass a Virginia law in 2017 requiring the city to bring its sewer outfalls into compliance with the Clean Water Act by 2025. We have since worked closely with the Alexandria Renew Enterprises sewer authority and City of Alexandria environmental staff to get the best practicable solution to achieve the mandated reductions of discharges of untreated sewage and polluted stormwater into the Potomac River. The proposed plan will reduce dumping of untreated sewage into the Potomac by 96%, dramatically improving water quality in the Potomac River.

Alexandria’s plan is ambitious — it must be, because it is designed to correct an archaic sewage collection system many cities fixed decades ago. It’s vitally important to remember that this long overdue infrastructure plan will virtually end the practice of raw sewage pouring into the Nation’s River every time it rains. This is a serious public health issue and the public investment undertaken by the City will produce long-term benefits. As the City encourages waterfront development and greater public access to the river, a clean Potomac will create economic benefits to the city whose identity is linked to the river and a better quality of life to its residents.

PRKN and I are proud of this development and we will continue to support the city’s efforts to secure financial support from the Virginia legislature, to help offset the cost to ratepayers.
FIRST EVER RIOPALOOZA A BIG SUCCESS!

In the Shenandoah Valley, most of the work we do is spent first hand protecting and defending the Shenandoah River and its watershed – holding polluters accountable. This is critically important work but it is just one prong of our two-pronged mission. The second prong is the promotion of river access and recreation. How do we accomplish that equally critical component of our mission?

Last July, as part of our RiverPalooza events, we hosted our first ever outreach to the Latino community – RioPalooza – at the Low Water Bridge Campground in Bentonville, Virginia. This was a wonderful opportunity for everyone to come together and demonstrate their enjoyment of nature and passion for conservation, with a special focus on the unique perspectives of Latinos and other diverse communities and cultures of our region. Educational booths and displays helped festival goers engage in our human connection to the environment and shone a spotlight on the commitment of Latino communities in conservation.

None of this would have been possible without our partners – the U.S. Forest Service, NorthBay Adventure, Low Water Bridge Campground, Down River Canoe, Corazon Latino, Hispanic Access Foundation, ParkRX, and the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Dr. Kimberly Winter, U.S. Forest Service NatureWatch National Program Manager, was instrumental in refining our vision and helped link us with their Latino partners in the environmental conservation community. Mr. Felipe Benitez and Corazon Latino promoted the event in the Latino community and we had guests from all three states and heavy participation from Washington, DC. As much as possible, we had dual-language materials on hand and bi-lingual staff and volunteers helped participants with a Spanish-language preference.

The Low Water Bridge Campground graciously donated the use of their facilities to make the event a complete success where over 100 people attended. For many, caring for the environment grows out of joyful, shared experiences in nature. RioPalooza gave everyone the chance to get out on, in, and even under the water of the Shenandoah River.

Folks swam, many fished, and others snorkeled with the help of NorthBay and the USFS teams. We had a large group of attendees that rafted a three-mile stretch of the Shenandoah. Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries set up a fish identification station that somehow got translated into a “fish petting zoo” attracting young and old alike. The Buffalo Soldiers and their horses were a huge hit – not only from their presentations that explained their role in our nation’s history, but also putting many kids on a horse for their very first time. The “kids” ranged in age from four to 74! Everyone enjoyed the food, making new friends, and falling in love with the Shenandoah River.

And that is how we accomplished the second prong of our mission – promoting river access and recreation. We have even bigger plans for next year, so don’t miss it! Hasta luego!
I really love my job. I suppose some of you may think I say that because I lead a life many would pay money to have – I’m outside, I’m on the water, I interact with nature every single day. But I genuinely enjoy building coalitions to protect and defend our watershed, and so I’m embarking on a new collaborative project with the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE). You’re probably wondering why or how I would be motivated to work with the same regulators whom we criticized so strongly for not standing up for the needs of Marylanders regarding the Potomac Pipeline. Still, I believe that where we can find common ground, we should stand on it.

Since April of this year, I’ve been working with MDE and other stakeholders on the newly established Cold/Cool Water Advisory Committee. The Committee’s mission is “To provide policy recommendations to the Maryland Department of the Environment that protect Maryland’s cold and coolwater streams and the aquatic life dependent on these streams.”

Maryland’s environmental regulations categorize certain streams based on their temperature ranges and the fish and other aquatic species that thrive in them. The best example is coldwater streams that provide critical habitat for freshwater trout. However, there are at least 13 streams in Maryland whose average temperatures make it impossible to categorize them in the current structure of cold or warm water designations and thus, valuable trout spawning locations are put at risk from harmful discharges and other pollutants. I applaud MDE for recognizing this deficiency and following through on our request for an advisory committee.

One of those 13 waterways is the North Branch of the Potomac, so the issue is professionally important to me. I’m honored and enthusiastic to be part of this new advisory committee representing all Maryland Riverkeepers. My goal is to help strengthen the standards for coolwater streams throughout Maryland, not just for the North Branch of the Potomac. The work we’re doing is vitally important and I’m eagerly seeking comments and ideas from my fellow Riverkeepers – and from you.

The most challenging scientific issue the Committee faces is identifying portions of the waterways which currently have no protection because they don’t fit into the existing categories. Once that’s done, we will craft criteria to define the optimal temperature and conditions for these streams, based on the best science and monitoring data we have. Finally – and this is the most important – we have to establish permissible levels of discharges for these waterways which will protect trout spawning sites and aquatic life generally to assure those particular ecosystems can maintain their viability.

As we develop an MDE policy for protecting cold water species, we will also propose interim protective measures to ensure that these resources are protected. One such measure is updating MDE’s Water Quality Standards website with the 13 streams already identified as having cold water species, but which are not designated as such. The 13 stream sections would be highlighted as “under review,” to give a heads up to local governments and industry folks who are considering new discharges into those streams that they may have more protective standards soon. We also plan to propose a new “coolwater” use classification, for those portions of rivers and streams which exhibit temperature regimes that fall between classifications and are not currently protected or acknowledged under the current Use Classification system.

The Committee will also propose changes to how Maryland classifies recreational trout waters to improve their identification and protection. Recreational trout waters, or Class IV waters, include some impoundments where the 75°F water temperature criterion is not appropriate. In addition, there are other waters such as “put and grow” trout-stocking locations that are not currently designated as Class IV. A principal goal will be to account for the variety of trout stocking scenarios to apply the most appropriate protective measures.

Finally, as noted, we intend to develop a process for conducting analyses of surface waters that support self-sustaining trout populations but which do not currently attain the necessary water quality criteria for protection. Certain waters of the state which currently support coldwater species may not meet the necessary temperature criteria and we hope to help inform the determination of the designated use class, either indicating that the stream is capable of the required temperature criteria for coldwater designations or under a future “coolwater” designation. The goal is to develop a process by which to make this determination. Either a guidance document or an ad hoc committee will ask: does the science support an existing use? What is the scale of the protection or how big of a stream section? What stream classification will best protect the cold or coolwater species? Seeking answers to these questions will enable us to propose new standards that will strengthen protection of some of our most precious and ecologically valuable Maryland streams.

The health and number of the trout population is a good indicator of river viability.
Our annual Law & Water Gala is always the event of the year for us – we gather scores of our supporters, recognize those in our community who have made the greatest contributions over the last years, and generally have a wonderful night of dinner, drinks, and dancing.

This year’s gala will take place on November 1 at the beautiful Hamilton Live. PRKN’s fourth annual Law & Water Gala will celebrate the work by PRKN to enforce clean water laws that protect the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers. Law & Water brings together more than 250 supporters and partners for an evening to honor those who protect and defend our Nation’s River and the watershed that provides clean drinking water to 6 million people. This is also our major fundraiser for the year. Last year, we hit major new milestones, both in attendance and funds raised and we’re hoping to do even better this year. Help us achieve that goal by registering for yourselves and bring some friends.

This year we are thrilled to announce that we have a terrific guest joining the fun. Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., President of Waterkeeper Alliance and leading environmental advocate has agreed to be our keynote speaker. Bobby is both a tireless and legendary figure in the struggle to protect our right to a clean environment and for social justice around the world. We are truly honored and excited that he will share his perspective on how we can work together to achieve a future of clean water and environmental justice locally and throughout the world.

As staunch advocates for our right to clean water, we can’t imagine anyone better. He is an American environmental attorney, author, activist, clean technology entrepreneur and radio host who cut his legal teeth on tackling the legacy of environmental degradation on the Hudson River and launched the Riverkeeper Movement. Kennedy currently serves as Senior Attorney and President of Waterkeeper Alliance, an international advocacy organization focused on grassroots efforts to preserve and protect waterways worldwide.

Law & Water 2018 is a wonderful opportunity for our friends and supporters to gather for a night of support and celebration. Don’t miss out on a wonderful evening of fun that also helps protect our treasured watershed. It’s sure to be a magical evening and we look forward to seeing you there!
RIVERPALOOZA ALWAYS DELIVERS! (CONT’D)

they were in the eye of the storm when it comes to perfect smallmouth bass conditions. Not only did this trip feature stunning mountain scenery and relaxing contemplative pools, but there were also medium-sized (Class II) rapids and minor riffles to make for an exciting day of fishing. Lots of memories were made as well as many great stories – many of which Mark says are true.

The Kick-Off Paddle at Harper’s Ferry turned into the Goodbye Summer Paddle and was a boatload of fun with folks from across the watershed. The trip was another of those rescheduled from early summer – water levels on the originally scheduled date would have been extremely dangerous. By August 25, the rivers were at their sparkling best for a fun-filled day on the water. Brent, Dean, and Mark, along with our friends at River Riders outfitters, put together a fantastic experience for everyone. Over 50 paddlers of varying thrill-seeking levels enjoyed a day of rafting over class II and III waters, while the more adventurous took to duckies (inflatable single kayaks), to shoot the rapids amid the cheers of encouragement of their fellow paddlers. Our new president Nancy Stoner even took an inaugural dunk into the confluence of the Shenandoah and Potomac rivers much to the delight of all three Riverkeepers!

This was Nancy Stoner’s first paddle with the Riverkeepers since taking the helm as PRKN President - “I am so proud to be a part of a group whose goal is maintaining and improving our watershed, so that we have drinkable, fishable, and swimmable waters for years and generations to come – it was a great day!”

Looking for something more exciting? Try Harpers Ferry with us!

We’re not always on the water — sometimes we’re in it!

A great way to see our beautiful city is from a new perspective – on the water!

A lovely way to spend a day – on the Antietam

A great way to see our beautiful city is from a new perspective – on the water!
A SNEAK PEEK AT A FEW ITEMS COMING UP IN THIS YEAR’S LAW & WATER GALA LIVE AUCTION

EXPERIENCE THE MAGIC OF AFRICA — SAFARI TRIP FOR TWO
Enjoy a six night stay at Zulu Nyala Heritage Safari Lodge with two guided game viewing drives per day. At a privately-owned safari game reserve in one of the largest and most diverse conservation areas in Southern Africa, take extraordinary photographs, enjoy panoramic views, sip on cool beverages and experience the thrill of an up close viewing of spectacular wildlife.

STAY AT PATUXENT RIVER VACATION HOUSE
Donated by Brent Blackwelder
A week or long weekend respite on the Patuxent River, near Hollywood, Maryland, only 60 miles south of Washington, DC and 8 miles from the Chesapeake Bay. The house sleeps 8 and has two kitchens, an enclosed porch, a front yard overlooking the river with breath-taking views. With canoes and a private beach!

WEEK-LONG NEW ORLEANS VACATION
Donated by Avis Ogilvy Moore
Spend a fun-filled week in New Orleans. Built in 1871 just a few miles from the heart of the French Quarter this home features accommodations for 2-4 and is furnished with family heirlooms with convenient access to memorable sightseeing, a lively music scene, eccentric street performances, and infinite opportunities to taste the famous Creole and Cajun cuisines.

PADDLE AND PICNIC WITH PRKN PRESIDENT
Donated by Nancy Stoner
Let PRKN President Nancy Stoner take you and a guest on a memorable and informative half-day adventure on the Potomac or Shenandoah River. Enjoy a sightseeing paddle along with a personalized picnic hand selected and prepared for you.

A WEEK AT HEADWATERS
Donated by Mac Thornton & Molly Carr
Enjoy the rustic feeling of this spacious Rocky Mountain-style luxury log home with first class amenities in beautiful Canaan Valley, WV. An easy 3-hour drive from DC, this spacious escape sleeps thirteen people inside its Montana pine log walls with a soaring great room and free-standing stone chimney. Enjoy a sweeping view to the west towards sunset and large deck with hot tub. Walking access to the famous Dolly Sods Wilderness trail system.

CUSTOMIZED RIVER TRIP WITH A RIVERKEEPER
Donated by Mark Frondorf, Dean Naujoks, and Brent Walls
Create a day-long custom trip with one of our Riverkeepers who will take you and a guest on your choice of a serious fishing trip, a relaxing float, or even help patrol for pollution! Whether you’re an avid fisherman, an experienced whitewater paddler or a casual sightseer, the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers have it all and we’ll match your desires with the right location.