Hello Friends,

What a year! 2019 brought us some real highs as we continued to battle water pollution and build a community of clean water advocates throughout the watershed. Over the year, I came to understand better and better the critical role Potomac Riverkeeper Network fills.

Our unique approach – using community engagement, investigation, and enforcement – sets us apart from other organizations with which we share goals. This became ever clearer to me this past year. I discovered that during a time when state and federal enforcement agencies do less and less due to budget cuts or changes in policy direction, we identify sources of pollution through our own investigations and our network of supporting watchdogs, and then work to find ways to stop them. The solutions may be a grassroots campaign to enact legislation, direct engagement with the polluter, or filing a citizen suit under the Clean Water Act. We follow the science to find the solutions.

To accomplish our goals, we stand on many shoulders. Your support has been and will always be key, whether it’s writing a check or joining us on the river to collect water samples. Our small but dedicated staff achieves so much more because of your help, and you can be sure every dollar and every minute you devote to us are appreciated.

We also count on an incredible collection of pro bono legal partners to provide us with the knowledge and horsepower necessary to make our promises of legal action compelling. When we say “We’ll sue,” a polluter knows we mean it.

So read on as we recap our 2019 successes, and know that we couldn’t have done this without you. Share this Annual Report with your friends, and join us as we do great things together in 2020!

Nancy Stoner, President
RARELY DOES AN ORGANIZATION RECEIVE A GIFT WHICH IS A TRUE GAME CHANGER

Thanks to Emily Franc’s hard work and the incredible generosity of Admiral and Mrs. J. Paul Reason, we received such a donation last year – a 42 foot Chesapeake deadrise, **Sea Dog**! And thanks also to the Peterson Family who provides the slip for our new vessel at the National Harbor.

We immediately put the boat to use as a research vessel. With the help of many, we installed a water quality monitoring lab, recruited and trained volunteers, created protocols and systems for water quality sampling, and began testing for E. coli bacteria once a week. We put out the results on SwimGuide so that the public will know when and where it is safe to swim, paddle, or otherwise recreate on the water. Our lab received the highest level of lab certification from the Commonwealth of Virginia, allowing our data to be used by the state and all its agencies to protect the Potomac River. Our Water Quality Monitoring Program will be even bigger and better this year, making room for all who want to participate.

The Water Quality Monitoring Program is a key component of our Swimmable Potomac Campaign, which we kicked off in 2019. We want everyone to be able to swim, paddle, and enjoy the river safely, but because of high bacteria levels from untreated sewage discharges, Washington, DC, has long had a ban on swimming. We are committed to changing that. We want everyone to know when they can safely go in the water – and when there are public health risks – and we want to make it increasingly safe for everyone to use and enjoy the Potomac. The data we collect will also serve as a benchmark to help us understand the health of the river and drive investment in stopping sewer overflows and other pollution that can make people sick.
“What a delightful paddle we had today! With the breeze that kicked up on the water, I think we were all cooler on Mattawoman Creek than we would have been at home. We beat the proverbial heat. Hope to join you on future paddles.”

– Audrey Clement

This year’s successes for Potomac Riverkeeper really show how we work – investigation and assessment, advocacy, and enforcement. We achieved in every category!

Advocacy couldn’t have reached a higher bar. This past year, through Dean’s several years of effort building coalitions and moving legislators, Virginia’s Gov. Ralph Northam signed a bipartisan bill which mandates removal and recycling or safe disposal of Dominion Energy’s 28 million tons of legacy coal ash. When this campaign started in 2015, Dean was the first to document that the coal ash pits were leaking into the Potomac River and contaminating the drinking water of families living nearby. At first, the task of taking on Dominion Energy seemed impossible, but consistent, relentless advocacy over four years resulted in an almost unimaginable degree of success. This campaign, from start to finish, is truly a model for other states to follow! At the bill signing ceremony, Senator Surovell put it best: “Potomac Riverkeeper was on this like a dog on a bone, never letting up!”

GenOn Power in Maryland also felt the power of Dean’s advocacy. In response to our advocacy in the permitting process, the Maryland Department of the Environment put stringent limits on mercury, arsenic, and selenium discharges into GenOn’s permit for discharges from its coal fired power plants into the Potomac. When GenOn sued to overturn the permit, we were delighted to side with the state to defend those health-based limits, which will protect the Potomac River from toxic coal plant wastewater pollution.

Last fall, Potomac Riverkeeper took legal action after an investigation showed that Charles County, Maryland, had been violating Clean Water Act standards by discharging pollutants from its wastewater treatment plant into the beautiful Mattawoman Creek and the Potomac River. Mattawoman is a true gem, and sewage contamination is not compatible with maintaining its pristine nature. As of the time of our writing, the plant was back in compliance since November, and Dean’s hot pursuit of compliance continues.

Dean and Phillip at the Coal Ash bill signing ceremony
2019 featured real achievements on the Shenandoah – we can all be proud of Mark Frondorf’s work!

**SOME HIGHLIGHTS:**

- RioPalooza – Shenandoah Riverkeeper’s signature river recreation event for our Latinx neighbors and supporters

- Documenting and reporting algae blooms – we filed more than 50 reports of algal outbreaks with Virginia authorities, which got the attention of Virginia’s Department of Environmental Quality’s Ann Jennings, Deputy Secretary of Natural Resources for the Chesapeake Bay, who spent a day on the river with Mark Frondorf

- Mid-Atlantic Smallmouth Bass Assessment – Mark hosted a gathering of state fisheries biologists and fishing guides. Together they shared research and findings, intimate knowledge about the state of the population, and brainstormed about how to improve water quality and give these popular fish a better chance to thrive

- Shenandoah Watershed Compact – a unique undertaking to gather together a broad range of community members from all over the Valley – small businesses, farmers, legislators, educators, and residents of all stripes – to identify a shared vision for a clean, healthy river and a path to achieving it together

"Mark works closely with river enthusiasts including farmers to improve the health of the Shenandoah. All of us in the Valley rely on this precious resource, and the progress we see is thanks in large part to him. Well done!"

– Robert Whitescarver

Farmer, conservationist, and author of *Swoope Almanac, Stories of Love, Land, and water in Virginia’s Shenandoah Valley*
Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls achieved much during 2019, and he did it over an incredible geographic span.

Early in the year, Maryland’s Board of Public Works, composed of Governor Hogan, Treasurer Nancy Kopp, and Comptroller Peter Franchot, voted to deny a necessary easement over state parkland for the Potomac Pipeline. Although Columbia Gas Transmission is still fighting this decision, it sure looks like Brent and his terrific coalition have succeeded in stopping this unnecessary, dangerous, and costly pipeline.

Later in the year, after Brent’s drone photos documented harmful runoff from its mining operation in Pennsylvania, Specialty Granules, the owner of the mine, agreed to install far-ranging and state-of-the-art filtration systems to preserve the ecologically unique receiving stream, Tom’s Creek.

And Brent’s drone skills also identified black liquor, a toxic byproduct of paper production, leaking into the Potomac from the Verso paper mill in Luke, Maryland. This material is so dangerous that Brent has filed a notice of intent to file a federal imminent and substantial endangerment suit to clean it up.

These actions stopped pollution and advanced our mission to protect beautiful Upper Potomac streams in Maryland, West Virginia, Virginia, and Pennsylvania.

“Brent, I wanted to relay (from the RiverPalooza repeat trip offenders) that I really appreciate what you guys do. This is my 12th year in the Air Force, I’ve been sent all over defending the nation - and I believe in my heart of hearts you guys defend our nation just as much. Your commitment and mission are sincere and noble. You keep our homeland clean and healthy so we can be truly free - and you protect it/us from people who want to do otherwise.

I’m inspired by both of you and hope to contribute the best I can (and Diana) to the cause.

– Jake
RiverPalooza

Lots of water lovers turned out for this year’s RiverPalooza, a season-long annual event designed to provide families and river enthusiasts with memorable on-the-water experiences that build a deep and enduring appreciation for the Potomac and Shenandoah rivers. RiverPalooza’s camping trips, kayak adventures, snorkeling, and floats for all skill levels make it a popular event for all ages.

Participants had much to choose from – camping and kayaking through beautiful Paw Paw Bends in West Virginia, unique historical perspectives along the Antietam Creek in Maryland, the Ghost Fleet at Mallows Bay on the Potomac, unusual views of our Capital city’s Monuments, and more!

Dean and his comrades heading to see DC’s Monuments

Some whitewater fun at Harpers Ferry
We protect your right to clean water by enforcing the Clean Water Act. Our work would not be possible without the very generous legal support donated on our behalf. Our legal partners include: Earthjustice, Southern Environmental Law Center, Environmental Integrity Project, Arnold and Bailey PLLC, Sidley Austin LLP, the Chesapeake Legal Alliance, Georgetown University, Columbia University, Widener University and the University of Maryland.
Special Thanks to All of Our 2019 Supporters!

The Board of Directors, your Potomac, Shenandoah and Upper Potomac Riverkeepers, and Staff dedicate this space to recognizing our supporters who have given generously in 2019 to support our work, from the watershed headwaters at Fairfax Stone in West Virginia, through the Shenandoah Valley, into Pennsylvania and down the Potomac to its mouth at the Chesapeake Bay. NOTE: Every effort has been made to properly acknowledge donors. Please contact Emily Franc at Emily@prknetwork.org if a listing is in error.

* Indicates 2019 Board Member

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CONTINUED

“Every single day the Potomac Riverkeepers are on the water, making our precious resource available, safe, and protected. We all owe them an enormous debt of gratitude for the work they do on our behalf.”

– John C. Cruden
Former Assistant Attorney General, Environment and Natural Resources Division, US Department of Justice
Principal, Beveridge & Diamond PC
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We greatly appreciate every gift to help protect and celebrate clean, drinkable, swimmable, and fishable water. Please see our online report for a listing of additional 2019 supporters.

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- Baltimore National Aquarium
- Catalogue for Philanthropy
- Sally Davidson, PRKN Office Space at 3070 M Street, NW DC
- Eaton Hotel, Washington, DC
- Front Royal Outdoors, WZRV 95.3, sponsor of Shenandoah Riverkeeper Radio program The River
- Hidden Creek Farm
- Live Nation, Jifty Lube Live
- Mi Vida Restaurant, The Wharf
- Dianne Reason and Admiral J. Paul Reason, USN (Ret.), MV Sea Dog
- Soulfire
- Don Sutherland, Volunteer Pilot, Aerial Survey Missions
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- Virginia Museum of Natural History
- Dave Wortofsky, Pilot

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- Downriver Canoe Company
- Front Royal Outdoors
- Harpers Ferry Adventure Center
- Hispanic Access Foundation
- NorthBay Adventure
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SUPPORT YOUR HOMETOWN RIVERS

MEMBERSHIP MATTERS!
Membership connects you to a passionate community woven together by our streams and rivers that start at your local, hometown waterway and extend all the way to the Chesapeake Bay.

We are a membership organization. Without members, we do not have legal standing in court to sue for your right to clean water.

MEMORIALS & TRIBUTE DONATIONS
Tribute Giving is an opportunity to celebrate a birthday, graduation, wedding, or to honor the memory of a loved one. Friends and family may make donations in honor of an individual and in support of clean water.

MONTHLY GIVING
Setting up a recurring monthly donation enables you to be more generous at a pace that suits you, where less (monthly) is truly more (annually).

SHOP ONLINE
Shopping through Amazon Smile, will direct a portion of the proceeds to Potomac Riverkeeper Network.

WAYS TO GIVE
Ways to Give

LEGACY GIFTS
A legacy gift is more than a donation. It is an expression of your desire to make a difference far into the future. With your legacy gift, you help ensure that our work to protect your right to clean water can continue to benefit your children and grandchildren and the rivers we love.

TRAVEL GIFT Options
Consider starting or joining a matching donation program at your workplace and designate PRKN as your charity of choice using Combined Federal Campaign or EarthShare (PRKN #87828).
This is YOUR watershed, help us protect it!

Learn more at www.potomacriverkeeper.org

Photo courtesy of Kevin McCarthy