



POTOMAC
RIVERKEEPER®
NETWORK

Photo by Roy Sewell

Strategic Plan

2020-2022

“Our mission is to protect the public’s right to clean water in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and their tributaries.

We stop pollution to enhance the safety of our drinking water, protect healthy river habitats, and enhance public use and enjoyment.”



Introduction

The Potomac Riverkeeper Network (PRKN) stops pollution and restores clean water in the Potomac and Shenandoah Rivers and their tributaries through community engagement, advocacy and enforcement. Since its founding in 2000, no other organization in the watershed has been better at stopping pollution using the full range of legal, grassroots and policy actions.

Our 2020–22 Strategic Plan is guided by, and ever committed to, our mission.

In 2000, when the Potomac Riverkeeper was founded, the principals recognized the need for a strong advocacy group to ensure clean water protection along the length and breadth of the watershed, encompassing 14,700 square miles in 4 states and the District of Columbia, through grassroots advocacy and legal action. Since 2003 when the first Riverkeeper was hired, the increasing complexity and the proliferation of pollution and river access challenges led to rapid organizational growth. This resulted in the addition of two more Riverkeepers, one for the Shenandoah River in 2005 and another in the Upper Potomac in 2009. With the addition of those two Riverkeepers, the organization was renamed the Potomac Riverkeeper Network in 2014.

All three PRKN Riverkeepers are recognized for their expertise and knowledge of the watershed as well as their strong local connections with the community. PRKN and its Riverkeepers work tirelessly and aggressively to hold polluters accountable by enforcing federal directives in the Clean Water Act as well as state and local laws and regulations. PRKN's hard work and recognized expertise in environmental enforcement have attracted pro bono legal assistance in excess of \$1.5 million annually and led to multiple legal victories promoting clean water throughout the watershed.

The strategic planning committee interviewed a wide range of external stakeholders, including government officials, river users, partner organizations, and funders. These discussions led to a better understanding of the work we need to do and the role we need to play in the community. Based on those inputs, the strategic plan was prepared.



Programmatic Goals and Actions

PRKN has set specific clean water and pollution mitigation goals to achieve our mission. The strategic plan defines three basic approaches to meeting those goals:

Assessment: finding pollution, identifying the source and developing solutions.

Advocacy: persuading the polluter and/or government to take action to stop the pollution.

Enforcement: compelling polluters and/or government to comply with or enforce the law through legal action.

The strategic plan presents programmatic goals for the entire watershed and the three subwatersheds.

WATERSHED-WIDE GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Enhance our rapid response capability so we can be the most effective first responders investigating suspicious discharges and spills
- Deploy new technological tools in identifying and assessing pollution in the watershed.
- Educate, motivate and assist waterfront communities in supporting clean water
- Ensure that PRKNs work benefits the broadest possible constituency in the watershed by reaching out to community leaders, understanding their needs and interests, and building long-term relationships with underserved communities
- Expand our partnerships with those whose legal and technical expertise strengthens our work



A PRKN water quality monitoring volunteer testing pH of a Potomac River tributary.



Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls launches a drone to identify and assess pollution.



Shenandoah Riverkeeper Mark Frondorf discussing nuisance algal outbreaks in the river with community leaders.



Programmatic Goals and Actions

POTOMAC RIVER GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Increase public knowledge of bacterial contamination in the Potomac
- Support infrastructure investments to reduce sources of bacteria
- Launch the Swimmable Potomac Campaign for the DC area to drive public knowledge, make swimming safer, and ultimately, bring about the removal of the DC government restrictions on swimming
- Expand our existing bacteria monitoring program, adding more sites, using volunteers to collect and test samples, and sharing the results with regulators and the public
- Partner with local communities and watershed groups to expand our work in underserved communities



Shenandoah Riverkeeper Mark Frondorf taking a water sample from a local stream.

UPPER POTOMAC RIVER GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Address PFAS¹ contamination, by identifying sources, determining pollution levels, and seeking state and local regulatory action
- Implement the “Keep the Cacapon Clean” Campaign to drive water quality improvements, ensure safe recreation and increase public access to this American Heritage River
- Advocate for regulatory protections for the river and connected ground water sources from contamination in karst areas where they are particularly vulnerable

¹ PFAS is a broad group of manmade perfluoroalkyl and polyfluoroalkyl substances that have a range of adverse impacts on humans and aquatic species and are difficult to destroy or remove.



Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks aboard the Research Vessel Sea Dog.

SHENANDOAH RIVER GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Achieve measurable reductions in algal outbreaks in the Shenandoah and its tributaries
- Launch a public campaign to track and report algal outbreaks in the Shenandoah watershed
- Educate policymakers on the algal outbreak problem and its causes
- Obtain policies and cost share funding to reduce agriculture pollution
- Reorient PRKN efforts to keep the cattle out of the river from the main stem of the Shenandoah River to its tributaries, the North, South, and Middle Rivers and Cedar Creek



Upper Potomac Riverkeeper Brent Walls sharing goals and approaches with partners to leverage support.

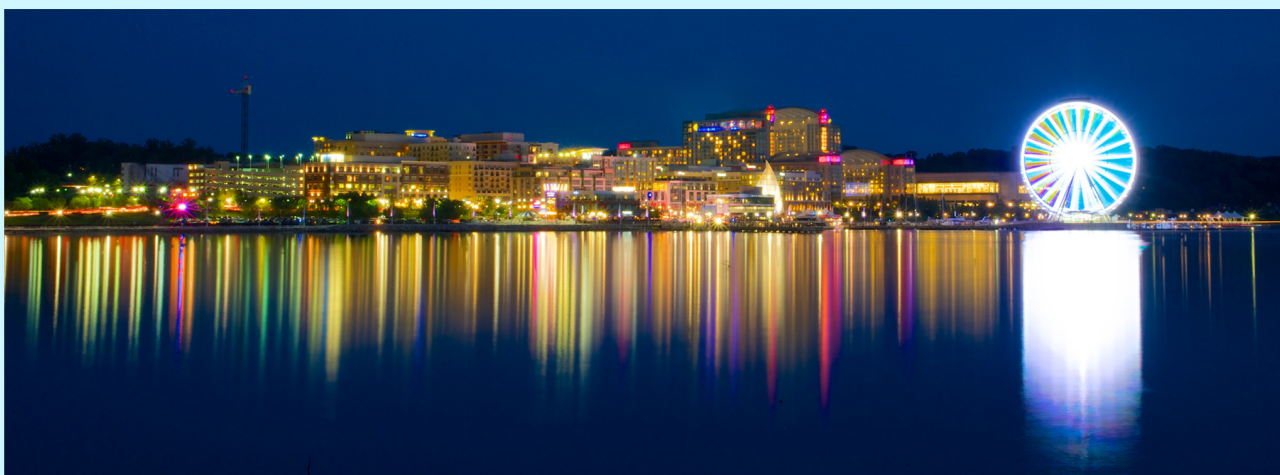


Organizational Goals and Actions

The strategic plan establishes organizational goals and actions designed to maintain and strengthen governance, staffing, communications and fundraising in order to better achieve our programmatic goals.

DEVELOPMENT GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Increase revenue to provide adequate staffing and resources to implement the Strategic Plan and maintain cash reserves
- Grow the number of individual and business donors by offering a range of engagement opportunities designed to increase their understanding and appreciation for the organization, its mission, its Board and staff; and inspire them to increase their support
- Implement an outreach strategy for DC area waterfront businesses and individual residents that emphasizes the value provided by the river and PRKN's efforts to protect it



The newly revitalized National Harbor waterfront, where the PRKN research vessel *Sea Dog* is docked.



Vice President of Development & Philanthropy Emily Franc showing off our National Harbor mussels.



A Potomac River sunset over the Key Bridge & DC waterfront. Photo credit to Robin Kent.



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DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION AND JUSTICE GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Bring into the organization and its activities those from diverse backgrounds to enable PRKN to identify new opportunities for pollution reduction, obtain support from a broader range of elected and agency officials, find new partnerships that will increase PRKN visibility and donor base, and introduce a broader perspective on clean water issues
- Create an organization (programs, staff and board) that is more representationally diverse to better serve a broader constituency of the watershed
- Take actions to make clean, safe water resources available to those most impacted by pollution in the watershed, to ensure that everyone can enjoy the benefits of access to a safe, clean river



Above: A group of participants enjoying RioPalooza, our hispanic heritage river celebration..

Below: Participants of our bilingual Snorkel the Shenandoah event hosted in partnership with USFS.



PRKN volunteer A.J. Bostic at a river cleanup in Alexandria's waterfront park.



Organizational Goals and Actions

BOARD OF DIRECTORS GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Continue to maintain an engaged Board, committed to the mission and providing strategic direction and assistance to the staff in carrying out the mission
- Add Board members who can advance financial, watershed coverage, expertise, visibility and DEIJ goals
- Energize and engage Board members in development to expand our ability to raise funds from businesses and individuals
- Maximize both the satisfaction of serving on the Board and the value of Board members to the organization



Board Members and Staff at the 2019 Strategic Planning Retreat.

STAFF GOALS AND ACTIONS:

- Support and appreciate the dedicated, talented, and hardworking staff
- Build on the strengths of our staff and provide additional support to them with no or low cost resources, such as partnerships or volunteers.
- Establish a legal fellow fund and/or apply to legal fellowship programs of law firms and law schools
- Increase diversity in the staff as new hires are made



The Potomac Riverkeeper staff aboard the Sea Dog.



Potomac Riverkeeper Dean Naujoks discussing water quality monitoring with his team of volunteers.



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