Donor Spotlight: Kati Holland

Kati lives in Cabell County, WV, and is a proud WV Rivers’ Paddling Partner. She gives a little each month to keep WV Rivers’ mission moving forward.

“I am very passionate about water quality and keeping our state safe and clean,” she shares.

“I wish I could do more hands on, but I’m incredibly grateful that I can partner financially with WV Rivers by making a monthly donation. I know that they are doing great work on the front lines and I appreciate their efforts immensely. It’s not an easy fight and I feel honored to play even a tiny role!”

You can join Kati as a WV Rivers’ Paddling Partner for as little as $10/month. Your monthly gift is one of the best ways you can join Kati as a WV Rivers’ Paddling Partner for as little as $10/month. Your monthly gift is one of the best ways you can help prioritize our work.

Note from Our Executive Director: We Want to Hear from You!

It’s been quite a year for WV Rivers. We restructured our organization for growth and are doing more than ever before for clean water. You make this possible.

In this edition of Headwaters, we take a moment to reflect on 2019’s accomplishments — your accomplishments. Think of it as a mini annual report with snapshots of our programming, finances, and membership activity this year.

While it’s been a challenging year for our policy goals, our movement is getting stronger. Now, we have our sights on the new year.

We exist to represent your interests, and we’re here because you aspire for our state to be great. Please take our survey to let us know how we’re doing. And enjoy reading about the work YOU helped make possible.

Thank you, Angie Rosser

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2019 Programming Snapshot
Safer Water, Healthier Streams

Safe Water for West Virginia
This year, our drinking water protection program, Safe Water for WV, helped communities update their source water protection plans to better protect their drinking water supplies. Our pilot projects focused efforts in three regions — Buckhannon, Marlinton, and the Eastern Panhandle. We provided specific recommendations to strengthen drinking water protections to 23 water utilities.

We’ve learned source water protection can’t rest solely with the water utility. It’s public engagement that makes our water safer. We helped people get involved by providing information and fact sheets to guide them through source water protection planning.

We also continued to build partnerships with local land trusts and watershed groups to promote land conservation around water supplies as a powerful way to permanently protect public drinking water sources.

Shale Gas and Regulatory Oversight
Since the start of the shale gas boom, WV Rivers has been speaking up for our streams. Now, with the rush to build massive transmission pipelines, we ramped up our efforts. Weak regulations, lax enforcement, and negligence by construction companies building the pipelines are threatening to harm our streams. So far, we’ve fended off stream crossings by pipelines — the most dangerous stage of construction for our water — by demanding regulatory agencies enforce existing rules forcing pipeline companies to comply with permit conditions. But now, pipeline companies are pressing hard to start in-stream construction.

We know that WVDEP doesn’t have the resources in place to make sure our streams aren’t degraded. That’s why it’s up to WV Rivers and our overnight program to be fierce watchdogs for our streams. Here’s a snapshot of what we’ve done during the past ten months:
• Supported 185 volunteer water quality monitors at 552 locations.
• Submitted 77 pollution reports to WVDEP from our volunteers.
• Helped people submit 1,536 public comments on shale gas related permits.
• Held a monitoring blitz along the Mountain Valley Pipeline with 57 potential violations reported to the WVDEP.
• Hosted a tour of pipeline construction with the Indian Creek Watershed Association for members of the WV Legislature.
• Published a report with Trout Unlimited on water quality violations from pipeline construction in 2019, find it here: wvrivers.org/resources/publications.

Public Lands and Headwater Streams
Healthy headwater streams begin on wild public lands. That’s why advocating for policies that benefit public lands is such an important part of WV Rivers’ work. This year, our West Virginians for Public Lands campaign had a big win when Congress permanently reauthorized the Land & Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), an important program that pays for public lands acquisition and maintenance. All five of WV’s congressional delegations voted in favor of LWCF. Now through the end of the year, we need your help to ask WV’s congressional delegation to allocate the full funding the program deserves. You can take action here: wvrivers.org/our-programs/public-lands/lwcf.

WV Rivers’ Members Getting it Done for Our Water
So far this year, WV Rivers provided citizen advocates 22 advocacy campaigns to raise their voices. Our network of 8,879 citizen advocates took action over 45,500 times through our alerts. That’s 110% more actions than last year. It shows that West Virginians care about science-based environmental policy. And our movement is growing.

Climate Change: This year, we launched a new campaign — organizing action on climate change. As a headwater state, we’re especially vulnerable to the effects of climate change like flooding, drought, and rising temperatures which threaten trout streams. That’s why we’re providing public education and resources on the realities of climate change, and the need for action. We made 8 visits to West Virginia’s congressional members to discuss climate solutions. So far, 923 citizens and 91 organizations have joined us in this call to action. Learn more: wvrivers.org/climate.

Biological Assessment Rule: We helped 272 citizens submit comments on a proposed rule that determines whether a stream meets the state’s water quality standards based on the aquatic life living in it. WVDEP proposed using a less accurate system to quantify stream health; we encouraged WVDEP to adopt a more precise method. We are waiting to see if WVDEP adopts our recommendations.

Ohio River Protections: We advocated for the Ohio River to receive the protections it deserves from its governing body, ORSANCO. After ORSANCO proposed to abandon uniform pollution limits for Ohio, we organized 773 public comments. This fall, ORSANCO agreed to keep the pollution standards in place! SHL we will need to be vigilant to see it, and how, the standards are implemented.

Activist Spotlight: Debbie Naeter
Debbie Naeter lives in Greenbrier Co. and is a dedicated activist. She responds to each of WV Rivers’ action alerts, making her voice heard on important decisions about our water. Debbie shares, “WV Rivers’ action alerts are how I stay informed. I feel like there’s not a lot I can do, but if I can send comments through action alerts, that’s one way I can affect change.”