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Conserving and Restoring West Virginia's Exceptional Rivers and Streams



As the year comes to a close, many of us are more than ready to say goodbye to 2020. But before we turn the page, we take a moment to recognize our **top 5 successes for clean water** you helped make possible this year. **And to thank you.** If you responded to an action alert, made a donation, or shared clean-water information with others, you're the reason we're celebrating the accomplishments below!

- ✓ **Great American Outdoors Act** passed with our years of advocacy behind it, securing permanent full funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. This victory means more public lands and better recreational access across the Mountain State.
- ✓ **PFAS Study Resolution** passed the WV Legislature due to our pressure, and will help identify the presence of these toxic chemicals in our drinking water sources.
- ✓ **Industry exemption defeated**, as our citizen advocates rallied to beat back a dangerous effort to exempt oil and gas tanks from the Aboveground Storage Tank Act.
- ✓ **Newly documented trout streams** were identified and reported by our monitors (pictured above) to state agencies for added protections, read more on pg. 3.
- ✓ **Record-setting advocacy**, our clean water advocates sent over 54,650 messages to decision-makers on water policies. That's 17% more messages than last year!

In this newsletter, you'll personally connect with each of WV Rivers' program staff as they reflect on the past year and their work. Full program updates are available at wvrivers.org/2020update.

From left to right clockwise: Angie, Sarah, Autumn, Tanner and Annie, Kathleen and Birdie, and Myia.



Note from our Executive Director

Whew, what a year 2020 is turning out to be! I'm finding in this moment I've never been prouder to be a part of this organization. We're keeping our operations and advocacy strong through major social and economic disruption.



We're learning new ways to be creative in our program delivery and deepening our understanding of the intersections of equity and justice in our work.

We do all of this appreciating that we are part of a big community that loves rivers and cares for each other. Thank you, for being there for us, for each other, and for the rivers!

Thank you, Angie Rosser

Yes! I want to help West Virginia Rivers protect our streams for recreation, wildlife, and for our health and enjoyment.

I'd like to donate:

☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 ☐ \$250 ☐ Other \$ _____

Frequency of gift: ☐ One time ☐ Monthly

☐ I do not want to receive public acknowledgment of my donation

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You can also donate online at WVRivers.org.

Conserving and Restoring West Virginia's
Exceptional Rivers and Streams

West Virginia Rivers Coalition

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Teamwork Makes the Dream Work for West Virginia's Public Lands

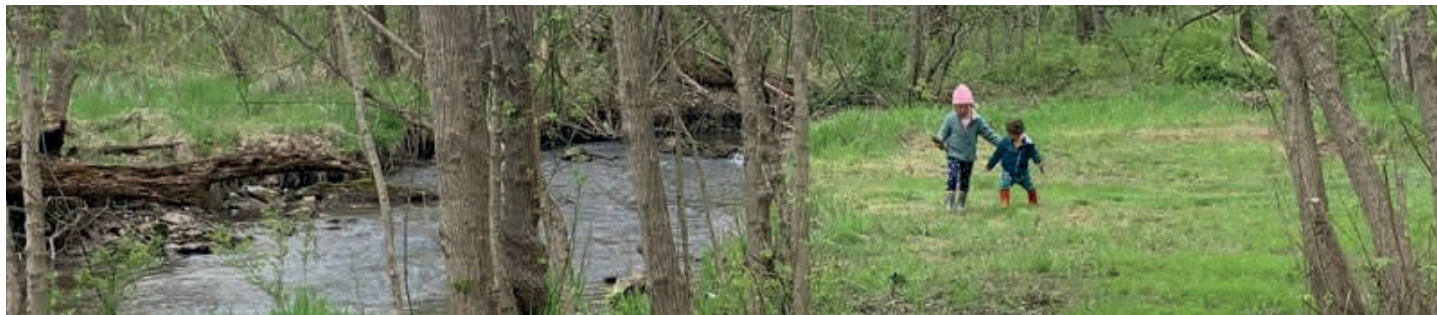
Sarah Cross, Campaigns Coordinator

I am a West Virginia native that has left the state a few times, but I keep coming back. It's not just the wild and wonderful places that draw me home, it's the people. West Virginians have so many wonderful qualities. We are hard workers and are resilient. We care deeply for our communities and appreciate our wild places.

As the newest member of the staff, I coordinate our public lands and climate change initiatives.

When I joined the team, WV Rivers and our partners in the West Virginians for Public Lands alliance were culminating a multi-year campaign to secure permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund which has finally been achieved through the passage of the Great American Outdoors Act. I am blown away by the network of advocates that worked so hard to get LWCF funding across the finish line. Your actions and your voices made the difference. The fact that all of West Virginia's congressional delegation co-sponsored the legislation is a true testament to efficacy and power of citizen advocacy.

Teamwork really does make the dream work. Cheers to fighting the good fight! Learn more about the WVPL alliance: wvrivers.org/our-programs/public-lands



Finding Peace in Nature

Tanner Haid, eastern panhandle field coordinator

Tanner's daughters exploring Evitts Run in Jefferson County.

My job in the Eastern Panhandle brings people together to rally around our mission. When COVID-19 hit the pause button on many of our best-laid plans, life as we knew it seemed to be put on hold. Our in-person meetings and events changed to Zoom webinars, and then more Zoom webinars, and then more...

But these changes led to opportunity for creativity. In my search to escape the digital doldrums, I rediscovered the great outdoors with my family in ways that I'd forgotten. In ways that I missed. And most definitely, in ways that I needed.

I shared these adventures in a blog series called "Finding Peace in Nature" to connect special places and our relationships with them to WV Rivers' mission.

I've heard from many of you that these stories brought you hope and excitement. They started a new conversation where we could talk about our favorite places in West Virginia, exchange travel tips, celebrate successes, and get to know each other on a deeper level.

I hope reading these stories inspires you as much as writing them inspired me. You can read my "Finding Peace in Nature" series at: wvrivers.org/category/peaceinnature

Documenting Trout Streams for Tomorrow's Fishermen and Women

Autumn Crowe, staff scientist

West Virginia's rivers saw record numbers of visitors this year. We flocked to our favorite creeks and rivers to find comfort, and to get out of the house!

This year, one of my highlights was working with volunteers to test streams for trout DNA. With the help of DNA monitoring, we are able to identify undocumented and unprotected trout streams to help make sure they receive the protection they deserve. So far we've been able to document trout in 20 streams that were not in the state's trout stream database. With this new information, state agencies can begin the process of providing the newly documented trout streams additional protections.

This work is so special to me because I grew up fishing the streams of Greenbrier County with my dad. Now as a mother, I am teaching my son, Ridge, to fish on these same streams.



Autumn's son, Ridge, learning to fish on Howard's Creek in Greenbrier County.

It's so important to me to make sure that one day my son can share the love of fishing with his children and grandchildren. That is the legacy I want to leave for not only my children, but for all West Virginians.

It's so satisfying to know that our work is helping to preserve West Virginia's state fish and protect our sporting heritage. Learn more about our efforts to document trout DNA here:

wvrivers.org/2019/12/troutdna



Sunset in the New River Gorge by Melvin Hartley.

Grit and Creativity Get Things Done

Myia Welsh, program director

At the start of the pandemic, I was worried about how we could push our mission forward amid so much uncertainty. Our team pulled together to figure things out quickly.

While there were no obvious answers, what emerged was the best in us: creativity, collaboration, and compassion. We tried new things, and adjusted as we went. And you were right there with us.

Thinking back, one project stands out. Over the summer we put together a webinar series on climate change in West Virginia. We didn't know how it would be received, but soon it became exceedingly evident that West Virginians are hungry to learn the facts about climate science. Since the series premiered, more than 2,000 of you have watched the recordings. Seeing your passion for clean water never wane has inspired me and our staff to do our best, even when things are hard.

It's clear to me that our work this year has been accomplished through incredible creativity and grit – not only among our staff, but among our WV Rivers advocates and supporters. Thank you for continuing to carry our mission forward.

P.S. Looking for WV-focused climate science? Check out our new *Citizen's Guide to Climate Change*: bit.ly/wvclimate