



# River Network

*Connecting People, Saving Rivers*

**2008 National River Rally  
FINAL REPORT  
Huron, Ohio  
on the Shore of Lake Erie  
May 2-5, 2008**



## **Summary**

The ninth annual National River Rally held at the edge of Lake Erie proved once again that this event truly inspires, celebrates and educates the watershed community better than any other. More than 400 watershed stewards from 42 states and beyond including non-profit organizations, Native American tribal members, municipalities, state and federal agencies, foundations, businesses and individuals gathered together to find solutions for our nation's water issues. River Rally 2008 offered participants a rich learning experience featuring 78 workshops, 8 field trips, 6 films (*part of the Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Fest*), one-on-one mentoring and coaching, Funders' Office Hours, National River Heroes Awards Banquet, and the first-ever Rally Holympics, where attendees gained valuable team building skills through friendly competition in any of 8 different events.

## **History and Purpose of River Rally**

River Network organized the first River Rally in 1995 in Seabeck, Washington to try and meet the needs of approximately a dozen leaders of river conservation groups. Since then, the River Rally has become a national-level event held in Minnesota, California, North Carolina, Washington (twice), Virginia, Colorado, New Hampshire and Ohio. Growing in size and scope each year, River Rally is designed to provide equal parts information, inspiration and celebration. Community-based watershed protection and restoration group representatives attend River Rally to learn from and offer support to their colleagues working at the grassroots, state, regional, national and international levels across North America. Those who are new to River Rally, as well as seasoned participants, say that the event provides unprecedented opportunities for professional development, networking, rejuvenation and celebration, and that the National River Rally continues to be the single most important annual event for anyone working to protect our nations waters.

## **Partners/Funders/Volunteers**

It is only with the generous support and participation of our partners, funders and volunteers that River Rally can be successful. The collaborative nature of our work is what makes the River Rally such a great success year after year.

## **River Rally Cooperating Groups**

The following *River Rally Cooperating Groups* contributed staff time to plan, promote and help us deliver a very successful event:

- *American Rivers*
- *Conservation Impact Cuyahoga River Community Planning Organization*
- *Earthforce*
- *Erie Soil and Water Conservation District*
- *Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed*
- *Friends of the Ravines*
- *Freshwater Future*
- *Great Lakes United*
- *Indigenous Waters Network*
- *Institute for Conservation Leadership*
- *Little Miami River Partnership*
- *Miami Conservancy District*
- *Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission*
- *National Wildlife Federation*
- *Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources*
- *Ohio Environmental Council*
- *Ohio Lake Erie Commission*
- *Ohio Nature Conservancy*
- *Ohio State University Extension*
- *Raccoon Creek Partnership*
- *Rural Action*
- *Sandusky River Watershed Coalition*
- *Sustainability Network*
- *Trout Unlimited*
- *Waterkeeper Alliance*
- *Western Lake Erie Waterkeeper*



## **Sponsors and Supporters**

The following foundation, agency, corporate and nonprofit sponsors and supporters provided essential financial and in-kind support, helping us cover expenses and keep River Rally affordable for smaller grassroots organizations. In addition, more than \$114,000 was raised for the River Rally Scholarship Fund. As a result of this generosity, 288 participants who might not otherwise have been able to attend received scholarships for travel, lodging and workshop training.

- *American Rivers*
- *Anheuser Busch Companies*
- *Aubrey Organics*
- *Calvert*
- *The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment*
- *Cedar Tree Foundation*
- *Chesapeake Bay Trust*
- *CleanWaterOutreach.com*
- *The Coca-Cola Company*
- *Coca-Cola Enterprises, Inc.*
- *Earth Force*
- *EarthWatch Ohio*
- *Emiliana*
- *Filtrexx*
- *The George Gund Foundation*
- *Great Lakes United*
- *Heron Dance Art Studio*
- *Jack's Plastic Welding, Inc.*
- *LaMotte Company*
- *Marpat Foundationm*
- *Miami Conservancy District*
- *MION Footwear*
- *David and Katherine Moore Family Foundation*
- *Charles Stewart Mott Foundation*
- *Curtis & Edith Munson Foundation*
- *National Wildlife Federation*
- *Ohio Department of Natural Resources*
- *Ohio Environmental Council*
- *Patagonia, Inc.*
- *Planet Inc.*
- *The Peter J. Sharp Foundation*
- *Teledyne Isco*
- *Tom's of Maine*
- *Town Creek Foundation*
- *True North Foundation*
- *T.S. Designs*
- *Vulcan Materials Company*
- *Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources*
- *YSI, Inc. Foundation*
- *Zurich American Insurance Group*

## Participants

River Rally 2008 again brought together a highly diverse group of watershed leaders with widely varying skills and needs. A total of 408 people were in attendance. The following illustrates participation from across the country and abroad:

Alaska 10	Alabama 5	California 12	Colorado 6
Connecticut 8	Washington, D.C. 25	Florida 2	Georgia 6
Idaho 1	Illinois 11	Indiana 11	Iowa 1
Kentucky 7	Louisiana 4	Massachusetts 1	Maryland 23
Maine 7	Michigan 17	Minnesota 2	Mississippi 1
Missouri 1	Montana 2	Nebraska 1	New Jersey 10
New Mexico 5	North Carolina 8	New York 20	Ohio 89
Oklahoma 1	Oregon 22	Pennsylvania 4	Rhode Island 4
South Carolina 4	Tennessee 12	Texas 1	Utah 2
Virginia 22	Vermont 3	Washington 2	Wisconsin 16
West Virginia 7	Wyoming 2	British Columbia 1	Ontario 8
South Korea 1			

These participants represented 167 nonprofit organizations, 28 local, state and federal public agencies, 11 companies and 9 universities from 42 states and three countries. For more than 50% of participants, this was their first River Rally.

## Workshops

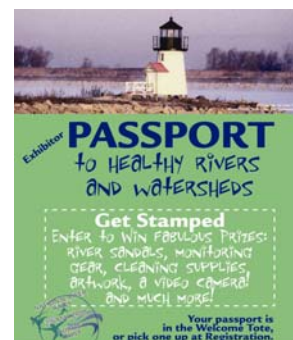
In order to diversify the learning opportunities at River Rally, this year we took the opportunity to invite presentations from the watershed community through an open call for workshops. More than 180 workshop presentations were received (78 were ultimately selected), which demonstrates the extent to which natural resource professionals are eager to share their knowledge, skills and experience.

As in previous years, a good mix of introductory and advanced sessions was presented. Topics covered all manner of organizational capacity building, watershed protection work, and economic, social and environmental issues. The enclosed River Rally Program provides details about each workshop; also available online at [www.rivernetwork.org/rn/rally/workshops](http://www.rivernetwork.org/rn/rally/workshops).



## Exhibitors

A wide variety of companies have discovered the unique value offered by exhibiting at River Rally. This highly focused event provides product exposure and networking to both organizational and individual customers. This year's all-new Exhibitor Passport was a huge success, and we are also grateful to those exhibitors who provided prizes. We thank the following for exhibiting at River Rally 2008: Great Lakes United; Wildlife Supply Company; Calvert; Tom's of Maine; EarthWatch Ohio; Heron Dance Art Studio; Riverworks Discovery; Teledyne Isco; Planet, Inc.; LaMotte Company; Water Words That Work; Filtrexx; and US EPA-OWOW.



## Plenaries

The 2008 Rally featured three outstanding plenary speakers including:

- Todd Ambs who welcomed us on Saturday morning with an insider's perspective of the Great Lakes region. Todd serves as a River Network board member and Administrator of the Division of Water for the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.
- Sean Logan, Director of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.
- Chris Brown, Director of Wilderness and Wild & Scenic Rivers-USDA-Forest Service, who gave a wonderful presentation about River Evolution/Revolution and the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act.

## National River Heroes and James R. Compton Lifetime Achievement Award

The River Heroes Banquet is always the highlight of the Rally every year. Laughter and tears are shared as we honor those who have demonstrated passion, enthusiasm, tenacity, creativity and courage in their watershed protection work. River Heroes are nominated by their peers and selected by committee.

The 2008 National River Heroes are:



**Robert Hutsel**, Executive Director, The San Diego River Park Foundation (California);

**John Tippett**, Executive Director, Friends of the Rappahannock (Virginia);

**Robert Ruffner**, Executive Director, Kenai River Watershed Forum (Alaska);

**Dr. David Baker**, Director Emeritus, National Center for Water Quality Research, Heidelberg College, (Ohio); and

**Bernie Dahl**, Associate Professor of Landscape Architecture and Chair of the Landscape Architecture Program, Purdue University (Indiana).

In addition, **Dr. JoAnn Burkholder**, Director at the Center for Applied Aquatic Ecology at North Carolina State University, received River Network's *James R. Compton Lifetime Achievement Award* for her many years of dedication and commitment to ground-breaking research which ultimately linked *Pfiesteria* to massive fish kills, nutrient pollution and human illness. Bios on each River Hero are available on a PDF link from River Network's website homepage.

## Special Meetings

River Rally also featured a number of special meetings designed to provide more in-depth coverage of issues not found in the major workshop trainings, including: *Freshwater Future's 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Grassroots Symposium* for groups and individuals working in the Great lakes Basin; *Water, Energy & Climate Change*, a well attended, intensive session focusing on making the connections between water, energy and climate change issues and solutions; *Great Lakes United Annual Membership Meeting* for coalition members and interested individuals working to protect the Great Lakes; and *GREEN Environmental Education Networking Meeting* to establish and train a nationwide network of Watershed Educators.

We especially thank the following for volunteering their time to answer fundraising and grant making questions through Funder's Office Hours: Vernice Miller Travis-Environmental Support Center; Julie Hester-The Keith Campbell Foundation for the Environment; Johanna Laderman and Erica George-FishAmerica Foundation; Molly Flanagan- The Joyce Foundation; Rob Robinson-Tom's of Maine; and Curt Richardson-Laird Norton Foundation.

## **Special Events**

A big part of River Rally is also celebration and networking, and nothing highlights these two goals like fun, crowd pleasing extracurricular events. This year we hosted the inaugural River Rally Holympics, featuring a series of friendly competitions and activities challenging mind, body and spirit. Nothing says Holympics like Cornhole, Quiz Bowl and Throw-bag Toss during a torrential windstorm. Gold, silver and bronze winners were awarded official Ohio Buckeye Necklaces for their winning efforts.



The fifth annual *Wild and Scenic Environmental Film Festival* presented by the South Yuba River Citizens League (SYRCL) and Patagonia, Inc. featured a solid lineup of inspiring films, including a special showing of the just released, award-winning PBS documentary *The Return of the Cuyahoga*.

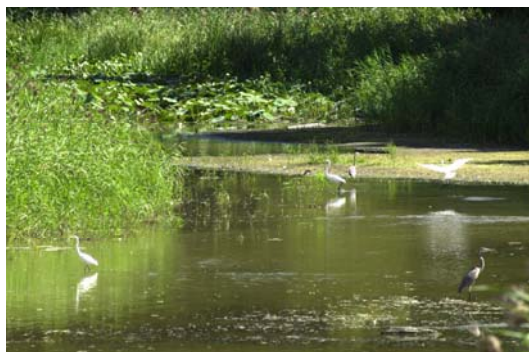


And what's a River Rally without a River Jam; musicians of all stripes and talents played the night away, with a bonus feature this year of the first ever River Idol (video available on YouTube).



## **Field Trips**

The Buckeye State offered numerous opportunities to get out the classroom and explore our natural environment. Many special thanks to the Ohio Environmental Council and Erie Soil & Water Conservation District for arranging the trips, which included: Bird Banding at Old Woman Creek, one of the few remaining tidewater estuaries on Lake Erie; Canoeing the East Sandusky Bay Water Trail, a 15-mile loop through seven preserves and wildlife areas; Fly fishing for trout on Ohio's legendary Cold Creek; and Hiking at Edison Woods Preserve, one of the few remaining large woodland areas in Northern Ohio, and major stopover for migratory birds, and at Sheldon's Marsh, a 465-acre coastal wetland.



Much more detailed information about the National River Rally can be found on our website at [www.rivernetwork.org/rn/rally](http://www.rivernetwork.org/rn/rally).

## **Feedback/Evaluations**

Workshop and event evaluations play a major role in the outcome of Rally each year. We do our best to gather scored rankings for each participant at each workshop, as well as anecdotal evaluation about Rally as a whole. The following best describe the 2008 National River Rally:

*“A wonderful, rejuvenating experience! Rally affords tremendous opportunity for shared learning, networking and momentum building. It's terrific to return to the home watershed with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and lots of great ideas.”*

*“The River Hero and Jim Compton Awards were again the highlight of the inspirational experience. The expanded networking was also super valuable - thanks for keeping Rally fluid and allowing for us to learn from one another.”*

*“River Rally has yet again renewed my passion for the work I do. Everyone there inspires, keep the people coming and nothing else will matter.”*

*“I hope you all left Rally feeling the fabulousness you deserve to feel after being the entity that brings such outstanding individuals with such good energy into a place where they can stretch themselves, rejuvenate, and interact in a way that only enhances the work they create back home. You have earned my deep, deep gratitude for another worthwhile River Rally.”*

## **Looking Ahead**

Planning for the 2009 National River Rally in the Chesapeake Bay Region is already underway. Mark your calendar for **May 29 – June 1** at the Hyatt Regency Baltimore, downtown on the harbor. ([www.baltimore.hyatt.com](http://www.baltimore.hyatt.com)).

*The 2010 National River Rally will be held at Snowbird Resort in Salt Lake City, Utah.*

While the River Rally is our major annual event, River Network provides services and support to the watershed community year-round. For more information about all our programs, please call us at 503-241-3506 or visit our website at [www.rivernet.org](http://www.rivernet.org).

