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## **RIVER NETWORK LAUNCHES DRINKING WATER GUIDE: A RESOURCE FOR ADVOCATES**

April 22, 2019 [Boulder, Colorado] – River Network’s interactive online *Drinking Water Guide: A Resource for Advocates* launches this month at [rivernetwork.org/drinking-water-guide](http://rivernetwork.org/drinking-water-guide). Supported by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and developed in partnership with a Great Lakes–based advisory committee, the guide is a first step in galvanizing a national network of local advocates for safe, clean, affordable, and sustainable drinking water. The *Drinking Water Guide* provides in-depth information and resources, and answers these fundamental questions:

1. Where does drinking water come from? How can we protect our drinking water?
2. What does a drinking water system do?
3. How do we ensure water is safe to drink?
4. How is drinking water cost calculated? What do water bills pay for?
5. How will climate change affect our water? What can we do about it?
6. How can we support community advocacy and engagement on drinking water issues?

“Drinking water issues are complex and difficult to understand,” says Alliance for the Great Lakes Policy Director Crystal Davis. “This new guide is a valuable resource to educate and inspire action on drinking water issues.”

### **Why River Network Created the Drinking Water Guide**

Challenges to drinking water are increasing in the U.S. due to aging infrastructure, active and legacy pollution, climate change, mismanagement, a dysfunctional regulatory framework, attacks on federal safeguards, and a shortage of funding to address these problems. Water suppliers continue to invest billions of dollars annually, mostly at the local level, to keep water safe to drink; and yet water crises continue to cause contamination of drinking water resulting in business closures and public health issues every year.

Crises in communities such as Toledo, Ohio, Charleston, West Virginia, and Flint and Detroit, Michigan point to wide-spread vulnerabilities of our drinking water systems and contamination threats. These include lead, nutrient runoff, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), and chemical spills. An estimated [63 million Americans were exposed to potentially unsafe water](#) over a 10-year period, according to a News.21 analysis.

What’s more, water affordability is a growing concern. For example, Food and Water Watch estimates that, in 2016, [15 million U.S. residents experienced a water shutoff](#). Cities with higher rates of poverty and unemployment had the highest number of homes with water shutoffs.

“River Network believes that everyone should have access to clean and safe drinking water at a cost that does not interfere with other essentials, such as food, health care, housing, transportation, and education,” says Katherine Baer, Director of Science and Policy for River Network. “A philosophy of water equity—the idea that all people deserve access to safe, affordable water—grounds the *Drinking Water Guide*.”

“For community groups working on drinking water issues, it is invaluable to have a resource that not only describes how drinking water regulations work, but also explains how individuals and groups can navigate them to achieve safer, more affordable water,” says Oday Salim, Staff Attorney at the National Wildlife Federation.

The Drinking Water Guide is available for download at [rivernetwork.org/drinking-water-guide](http://rivernetwork.org/drinking-water-guide).

### **About River Network**

River Network is the foremost nonprofit connecting 6,000+ NGOs, agencies, tribal groups, and utilities for greater local impact and healthier rivers across the U.S. Learn more at [www.rivernetwork.org](http://www.rivernetwork.org).

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