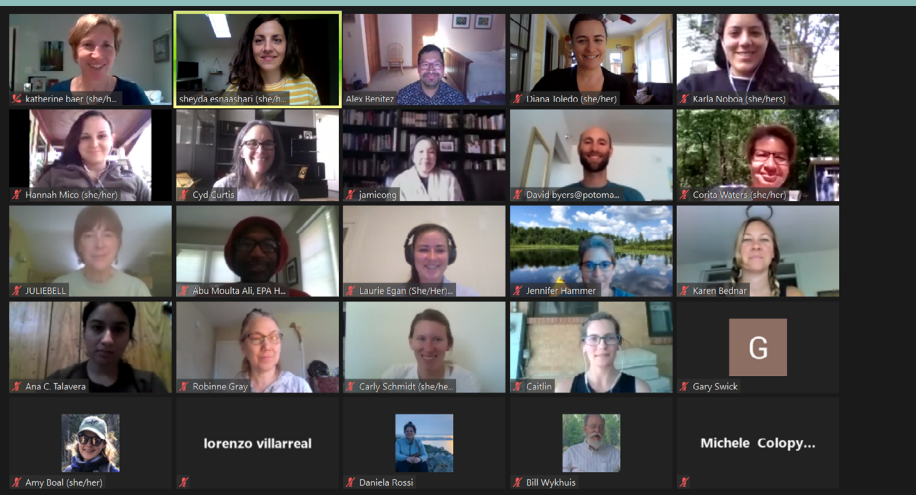




2020 RIVER RALLY IMPACT REPORT



BY THE NUMBERS

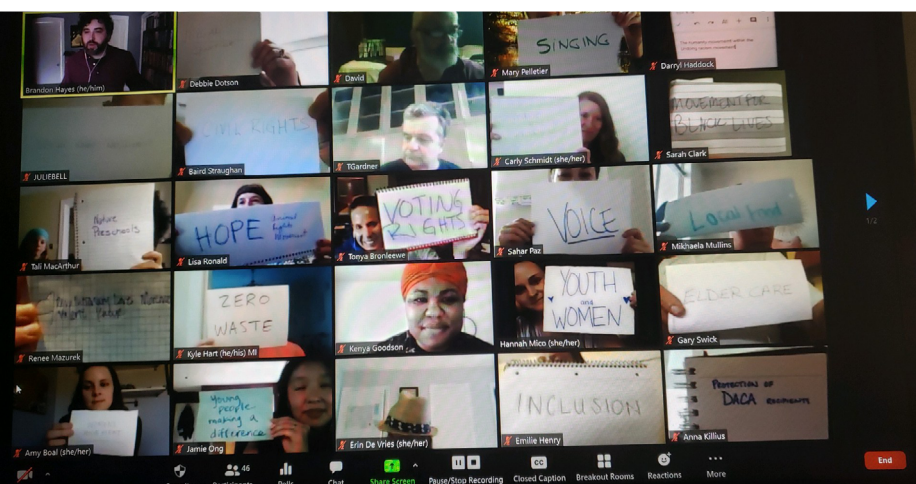
- 538 registrants + presenters from 45 states
 - » 31% identify as racially diverse
 - » 37% use she/her pronouns
 - » 45% first time attendees
- 5 awards—60% Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC)
- 73 learning opportunities
- 100+ hours of programming

PARTICIPANT IMPACT

- 98% gained value
- 95% grew their knowledge
- 94% boosted their confidence
- 60% made new connections
- 89% likely to attend a future Virtual River Rally

HIGH PRAISE

- Resilient Communities, Effective Leadership, and Drinking Water content
- Registration process and virtual event transition
- Plenaries, film festival, award celebrations



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

Recognizing the amplified need for connection and resources during the COVID-19 crisis, we transformed River Rally from a three-day in-person event to a three-week virtual experience.

Virtual River Rally included thought-provoking plenaries related to COVID-19, interactive workshops, peer engagement, happy hours, film nights, young professionals and leaders of color networking, and even offline birdwatching and litter collection.

As one of the first in this space to transition a large-

scale conference to a virtual format, we are proud we could bring high-quality content to our 500+ registrants and presenters, while delivering hope and inspiration. Virtual River Rally connected the national community of water protectors during a turbulent moment in history, through 100+ hours of programming and the space to process important the racial injustice protests happening around the nation. We are grateful to the water leaders who gave of their time and energy, and our fabulous staff and board who worked dilligently to execute this transition.

61 WORKSHOPS in **6** themes (**36** with equity, diversity, and inclusion content)

19 CHAT ROOMS for social and professional connection

5 SOCIAL HOURS including affinity spaces for BIPOC individuals and young professionals

5 PEER CALLS for networking and knowledge sharing on key issues

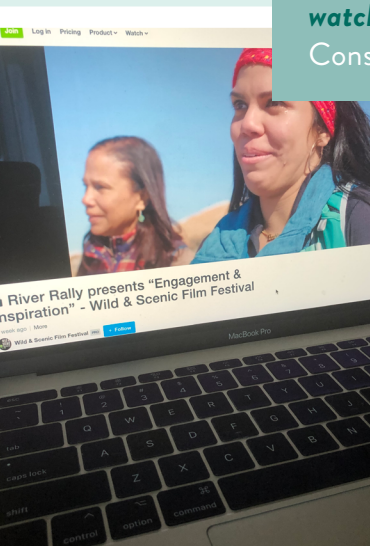
3 FILM NIGHTS thanks to the support of the Wild & Scenic Film Festival

3 ADDITIONAL MONTHS OF ACCESS with over **2,900** viewing hours of on-demand content

934,429 POUNDS OF CARBON DIOXIDE,
18,938 kwh, and **86,798** gallons of water not emitted or used due to no participant travel

"At this time, it is so difficult to feel connected to your colleagues and to your community. [River Rally] offered opportunities not just to learn, but to connect with people, acknowledge the crises impacting our society, and think through ways to incorporate these needs into our work." –Anna Killius, James River Association

"Just watched [the film festival] with my daughter, and had some great conversations about what we were seeing. There are certainly disadvantages to a remote format, but the chance to watch these films with her was a big plus tonight. Thank you!" –Grady McCallie, North Carolina Conservation Network



PLENARY PANEL: FOOD INSECURITY, WATER, & COVID-19 - LESSONS FOR A BETTER FUTURE

As a result of COVID-19, we are facing an unprecedented public health and economic crisis. This crisis is also revealing the fault lines that divide our nation and have prevented us from achieving more equitable solutions. Speakers Robert Bonnie (Nicholas Institute for Environmental Policy Solutions at Duke University), Traci Bruckner (Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Funders), Cecilia Rosacker (Rio Grande Agricultural Land Trust), and Daryl Vigil (Ten Tribes Partnership) explored these topics and how this crisis may shift our relationship to food production and distribution, between rural and urban areas, and regarding water and climate change. Speakers also shared their own lessons for a better future.

"With every delicious bite, eating meals on our porch, we are keenly aware of our precious land and water."

- Cecilia Rosacker



PLENARY PANEL: HELPING OUR NONPROFITS SURVIVE THE PANDEMIC

COVID-19's impacts on the nonprofit sector have been swift and promise to be long-lasting. How can we lead our organizations through these uncharted waters and respond in a way that keeps us mission-focused, responsive, and viable? Julia Blatt (Massachusetts River Alliance) led experts Liz Banse (Resource Media), Jose Luis Marantes (The Management Center), and Andy Robinson (Andy Robinson Consulting) in exploring the most salient issues nonprofits face today: a rapidly changing funding landscape, adaptive programming, and communicating the importance of our work in ways that are both sensitive and compelling.

"Equality means everyone gets the same thing; equity means everyone gets what they need."

-Jose Luis Marantes



PLENARY PANEL: WATER, EQUITY, AND SUSTAINABILITY - COVID-19 & BEYOND

How has COVID-19 impacted our thinking about what we need to do to achieve water equity and sustainability in the near- and long-term? Does it open up new opportunities to move policy reform forward and create new collaborations? What will we all face as policy advocates, community organizers, and water systems looking to provide safe, clean, affordable, and sustainable water into the future? Moderated by Katherine Baer (River Network), panelists Lynn Broadbuss (Broadview Collaborative), Ronda Chapman (PolicyLink), Andy Kricun (Moonshot Missions), and Jonathan Nelson (Community Water Center) brought deep experience acting on these issues and more for an inspiring discussion.

"The very act of denying people access to safe drinking water is a violent act."

-Ronda Chapman



"River Rally opened me up to looking at water conservation through a more diverse lens. For my nonprofit, I hope to include more diverse opinions in our restoration projects. I am excited to bring these ideas to my board members to see what steps can be taken toward achieving these goals!"

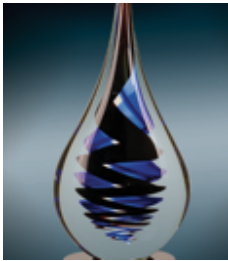
-Abigail Toretzky, Lolo Watershed Group

AWARDS



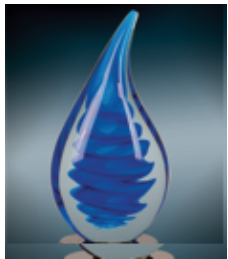
RIVER HEROES:

River Heroes are nominated annually by peers, selected by peers, and celebrated with peers. Recipients of this award are those who bring people together to solve water problems, seek solutions that are inclusive and equitable, go “above & beyond,” never give up, and inspire and help others to make a difference too. Their efforts to protect and restore their local rivers and waters are extraordinary in scope, scale, impact and heart. The award is hand made by River Network staff. Four or five awardees are selected annually.



COMPTON AWARD:

The recipient of this award is determined by River Network’s Board of Directors for their admirable and noteworthy achievements that have benefited multiple communities and rivers over many decades. This award was created in 2001 in honor James “Jim” Compton who inspired thousands of river activists and community members through his personal and professional contributions to river recreation and restoration. One awardee is selected each year.

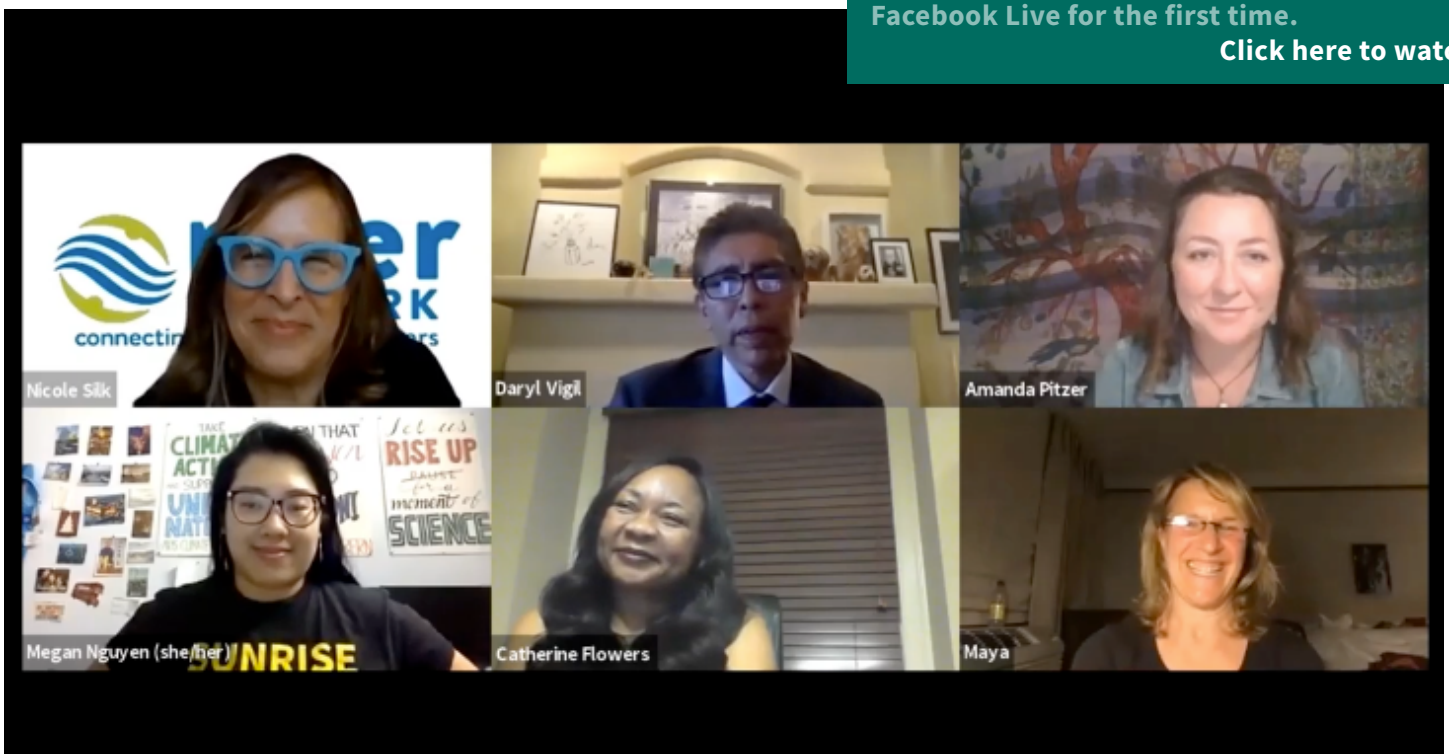


EMERGING LEADER AWARD:

Established in 2019, this award recognizes someone early in their professional career (10 years or less) and in age (35 years or older) who deserves our attention for their work at the intersection of water and equity. This award was inspired by former River Network board member Leslie Lowe. Leslie was a strident supporter of investing in and recognizing new and younger voices and perspectives in the water arena. Candidates self-nominate themselves through the registration process for River Rally. One awardee is selected each year.

The 2020 Awards Panel was streamed on Facebook Live for the first time.

[Click here to watch!](#)





CATHERINE COLEMAN FLOWERS, Founder and Director of Center for Rural Enterprise and Environmental Justice (Montgomery, AL) Coleman Flowers founded the Alabama Center for Rural Enterprise to address the root causes of poverty in Alabama. Now an internationally recognized advocate for the human right to water and sanitation, Coleman Flowers works tirelessly to promote sustainable initiatives that strengthen families in rural and impoverished communities.



AMANDA PITZER, Executive Director of Friends of the Cheat (Kingwood, WV) Pitzer is a tenacious and dedicated educator and water advocate, having initiated many programs that earned her recognition in West Virginia. In her 10-year tenure at Friends of the Cheat, Pitzer has successfully constructed 9 treatment projects to combat acid mine drainage, secured the preservation of 3800 acres of the Cheat River Canyon, and established the Upper Cheat Water Trail with 9 public access sites.



MAYA VAN ROSSUM, Founder of Green Amendments for the Generations (Bristol, PA) For over 25 years, van Rossum has dedicated her life to protecting the Delaware River watershed. Now the founder of Green Amendments for the Generations, van Rossum has secured many legislative victories for the Delaware River Basin and its surrounding communities including a moratorium on fracking and the establishment of the nation's highest water quality standards for PFAS in New Jersey.

"This [awards panel] has been the best, deepest connection with these very special, inspiring leaders that we've ever had as part of Rally. Thank you to all of you."

–Beth Stewart, Cahaba River Society



**COMPTON
AWARD**

DARYL VIGIL, Co-Director, Water & Tribes in the Colorado River Basin Vigil is co-director of Water & Tribes in the Colorado River Basin, Water Administrator for the Jicarilla Apache Nation, official spokesperson for, and past Chairman of, the Colorado River Ten Tribes Partnership.



**EMERGING
LEADER AWARD**

MEGAN NGUYEN, Communications Associate, California Trout Megan is a science communicator who manages both educational content for social media and programming. She believes that uplifting diverse voices in conservation will inspire the next generation of science communicators.

PROGRAM DETAILS

WORKSHOPS

Seventy-three learning opportunities were delivered at Virtual River Rally. Sixty-six of these were workshops spread across six themes, conducted through Zoom. Presenters adapted in-person content for this new format, utilizing interactive features such as live polling, breakout rooms for deeper discussions, and real-time chat empowering increased connection between participants. These workshops provided practical knowledge, tools, and new approaches to participants to help address today's challenges related to people and water:

Water & Agriculture

Learn what it takes for agriculture and healthy rivers to exist side-by-side, what is possible in collaboration with farmers and ranchers toward clean water and healthy rivers, the connection to soil health and crop diversification, challenges of equity and justice in rural America, and examples of communities that have stood-up against bad actors. [8 workshops](#)

Resilient Communities

Explore how rivers can be drivers of the social vitality and economic future of cities and communities, how to help communities become less vulnerable to the impacts of floods and droughts, lessons for avoiding harm to vulnerable populations caused by restoration and recovery, and connections between urban and rural landscapes and perspectives. [11 workshops](#)

Effective Leadership

Gain access to new ideas to help you transform your organization, lead change processes and inspire your team, become the staff or board leader that you aspire to be, identify and sharpen the skills necessary for the road ahead, become a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization, and expand your ability to tell your story and achieve fundraising success. [13 workshops](#)

Science & Climate

Learn about how communities are engaging their residents in data collection, how data can help inform our understanding of both the overall health of rivers

and water and also where harm is occurring (e.g., flood and drought impacts) and the impact of climate change, and opportunities to leverage what we are learning for bigger impact locally, regionally, and nationally. [12 workshops](#)

Drinking Water

Expand your understanding of the challenges faced by water utilities seeking to upgrade their infrastructure and improve their services to deliver greater access to safe drinking water, the unequal implications of rate increases (for service upgrades and other purposes) to low income and racially diverse communities in urban and rural settings, and novel approaches for a more equitable path forward. [7 workshops](#)

Policy & Advocacy

Grow your familiarity with laws and policies that protect healthy rivers and clean water in your community, new laws and policies that could help you strengthen protection for places you care about, how civic engagement for water may be what is missing in your community, and what you can do to enable activism and accountability moving forward.

[12 workshops](#)

Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):

36 workshops across River Rally's six themes included content that intersects with EDI.

"Thank you so much for everything [during my live session]. I felt super supported and comfortable bringing up topics that can sometimes land uncomfortably in the conservation space."

—Brandon Hayes, Bold Bison Communications & Consulting; Virtual River Rally presenter

PROGRAM DETAILS

PEER CALLS

Responding to Racial Injustice During Week 3 of River Rally, the network responded to the racism faced by Christian Cooper, the murder of George Floyd, and the ensuing national movement demanding change. Our staff held space within live programming for reflection, discussion, and response. We gauged interest in further peer connection on these issues post-Rally and will begin these conversations in August 2020.

With the usual in-person networking opportunities found at River Rally off the table, our staff organized Peer Calls, to ensure participants still had way to connect with peers from across the country on relevant topics. Each week of River Rally offered multiple facilitated calls related to the River Rally themes to share knowledge, build attendees' professional networks, and inspire hope.

With five peer calls to choose from, attendees were able to join others on topics specific to their work including:

- **Water & Agriculture** Focused discussions during this call centered on the intersection of equity and environmental justice, agriculture, and water and rivers. Participants made connections in small breakout groups, coming away with new ideas to reinforce their work together at these intersections.
- **How Are We Engaging Community Members and Building Leadership for Climate Resilience?** Network leaders hosted an in-depth discussion and networking opportunity featuring small group breakouts exploring how we can engage community members in climate resilience initiatives.

- **Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Planning** Participants discussed different ways to approach climate adaption in their communities, whether urban, rural, or both.
- **Drinking Water & COVID-19** A continuation of River Network's ongoing Drinking Water & COVID-19 workgroup, participants shared and received pertinent updates on the fight to halt water shutoffs and restore water access during the pandemic.
- **Stay Up to Speed on Water Policy** Beginning with quick updates on the latest federal water policy news, participants then moved into small group discussions for networking and idea exchange on effective water policy development and advocacy.



“There are certainly so many opportunities to collaborate and partner through this network. Thank you.”

“There are a number of individuals that I will follow up with to learn more. Thank you for the opportunity to learn and connect!”

—Water & Agriculture Peer Call participants

THANK YOU!

SPONSORS AND SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTERS

Anheuser-Busch
Bridgestone
C.S. Mott Foundation
EPA
Margo Farnsworth
The Fellows Group
Fresh Sound
Foundation

Land Trust Alliance
National Association of
Clean Water Agencies
Patagonia
Pisces Foundation
Pradco Outdoor Brands
(EBSCO Industries,
Inc.)

The Rain Barrel Depot
Storm Water Systems
Urban Waters Learning
Network
Walton Family
Foundation
Wege Foundation



er
LLY



CONTRACT

Cheryl Fellows, Merix Gustin, Tiffany Harrower, Taylor
Sisters Solutions

RIVER NETWORK STAFF

Leann Arend, Katherine Baer, Amy Boal, Sheyda
Esnaashari, Brenna Goggin, Adam Griggs, April Ingle,
Hannah Mico, Mikhaela Mullins, Katie Murphy, Karla
Noboa, Lisa Runkel, Carly Schmidt, Nicole Seltzer,
Nicole Silk, Diana Toledo, and Colleen Walters