Defining River Network’s Path Forward on Healthy Rivers in Agricultural Landscapes

2022-2025 PLAN
By increasing knowledge, leveraging financial resources and technical aid, and promoting policy solutions that support healthy rivers in agricultural landscapes, River Network can strengthen the capacity of our network to forge partnerships with agricultural stakeholders and support approaches to ensure that productive agriculture and healthy rivers co-exist side by side.

Overview

The nexus between agriculture and water is a critical one: farms, ranches and rangelands occupy almost half of our land in the U.S., use significant amounts of water, and contribute to pollution of our waterways. Supporting members of our network that work directly with agricultural partners is a relatively new strategic priority for River Network. Our primary audience is our network, who are the conservation and community organizations, land management agencies, and early adopters and progressive trade groups that work with agricultural partners to collaboratively develop and implement on-the-ground solutions.

This plan builds on our agricultural work in the Colorado River Basin and is informed by a nationwide survey, focus group, and interviews in 2020–2021, where network members shared the needs and challenges they face when working with an agricultural audience.

Existing Barriers

Network members are unaware of what work is being done at the intersection of healthy rivers in agricultural landscapes and where there are opportunities for collaboration and complimentary work.

BUILDING TRUST

The agricultural community is challenging to connect with; it takes a significant amount of time, often years, to build trust. Staff turnover disrupts the trust building process, delaying project implementation.

FUNDING

Network members experience a lack of funding related to agricultural issues, including: to support staff who work to build relationships and trust; for infrastructure improvement projects; and for follow-up monitoring of restoration projects.

INFORMATION SHARING

Network members have difficulty disseminating data and information related to river health within agricultural landscapes to the agricultural community and need support in conducting outreach to this community to foster buy-in on the importance of agricultural practices that protect or improve river health.

A SEAT AT THE TABLE

Network members have difficulty getting a seat at the table for federal and state policymaking and need support in advocating at the federal and state levels, particularly on policies relating to the regulation of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs).
**Desired Impact**

By 2030, a larger percentage of our network will work alongside their agricultural community to improve the health of rivers and watersheds within agricultural landscapes throughout the US. Specifically, River Network will have:

**Objectives for 2022-2025**

Based on our research and interviews, we believe the following are the key ingredients for our network to successfully work with agricultural partners to support and improve the health of rivers in agricultural landscapes. River Network will:

1. Support connections among network members and agricultural partners to increase technical aid and sharing of information, resources, best practices, and collective problem solving for working with agriculture to collaboratively design strategies that support healthy rivers in agricultural landscapes.

2. Deepen the network’s understanding of funding sources, including federal (Farm Bill and non-Farm Bill), state, local and private sources, and how to leverage funding to build capacity and partnerships and implement multi-benefit projects;

3. Increase network knowledge of how to utilize and influence federal and state policies, regulatory tools, and programs that support healthy rivers in agricultural landscapes.

For more information, please see: [https://www.rivernetwork.org/our-priorities-healthy-rivers-in-agricultural-landscapes/](https://www.rivernetwork.org/our-priorities-healthy-rivers-in-agricultural-landscapes/)

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