



BY THE NUMBERS

- 482** registrants from **43** states
- 33%** identify as racially diverse
- 58%** use she/her pronouns
- 55%** first-time registrants
- 61%** of attendees under age 44
- 7** awards—**2** Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) recipients
- 170** scholarship recipients
- 76** learning opportunities

“River Rally is an incredible opportunity to learn, connect, and be inspired. After a couple years away, 2022’s Rally is even more treasured.”

—RHONDA NORDSTROM, MILWAUKEE WATER COMMONS

ATTENDEE IMPACT

- 91%** felt River Rally 2022 was a welcoming, inclusive, and open space for all participants
- 73%** felt more connected to peers
- 71%** likely to apply their knowledge
- 70%** grew their knowledge

HIGH PRAISE

“Getting Unstuck”
plenary panel

Networking
and connecting
in person

Leaders of Color
spaces and events

Awards Reception

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

AFTER TWO YEARS OF VIRTUAL GATHERINGS, RIVER RALLY RETURNED TO AN IN-PERSON EVENT!

We gathered in the heart of DC, on the ancestral land of the Nacotchtank (or Anacostan) people, in the nation's capital for a program of engaging speakers and interactive workshops that celebrated wins, illuminated today's most urgent challenges, brought voices forward, and centered equity across all topics.

The excitement for a return to an in-person Rally was palpable, and reminded us of the power, resilience, and positivity of the national network of water protectors. Sharing space once again allowed for renewed connections and a deepening of community, moving us all to new levels of excitement for the work ahead. We are grateful to the speakers who shared their insights and knowledge, the water leaders who gave of their time and energy to attend, our committed sponsors who make this event possible, all attendees for their support of our COVID-19 protocols, and our fabulous staff and board who worked diligently to put on another high value and inspiring event.

52 workshops in **6** tracks
(77% with EDI content)

10 field trips to deepen experiences
connected to local waters

5 full audience experiences:
opening remarks, keynote,
plenary panels, and awards

4 local BIPOC-owned
businesses supported
as vendors

2 dedicated spaces
for Leaders of
Color to connect

1 film night with **9**
films from the Wild &
Scenic Film Festival



Everything about the "Getting Unstuck" plenary was an aha moment.



The focus on the Clean Water Act's 50th anniversary remind[ed] me how important it is to communicate the message of its local impact to our audience.

ATTENDEES' AHA MOMENTS

The power of trust-based relationships to create meaningful change.

Working cross-sector, intersectionally, especially with race, social justice, climate, and advocacy.

[This] was by far the most BIPOC inclusive and youngest conservation gathering I've ever attended. Well done. The nurturing of new and younger leaders was a powerful aha moment.



PLENARY PANEL GETTING UNSTUCK: STEPPING INTO POWER WITH PHILANTHROPY

Most of us struggle to adequately resource our dreams, including those that connect equity to water, people to rivers, and safety to our communities. One approach to getting unstuck is to rethink our relationship to wealth and community. Moderator Ronda Chapman led panelists Melanie Allen, Teresa Davis, Mike Harris, Arthur Johnson, and Tyeshia Wilson in sharing inspiring stories about novel approaches that both democratize philanthropy from the ground up and use trust as a vehicle for shifting power.

[Watch the full panel](#) and access additional resources on the River Network website.



“When we shift the power of philanthropy into all of our hands we shift who gives, how we give, and ultimately what gets funded.”

—TYESHIA “TY” WILSON

“I come to Rally and generally know a lot about the content and what the plenaries will cover... but this was completely new; I am so excited to share.”

—ANONYMOUS ATTENDEE

“If you want to know how to do this work, follow the frontlines... If we lose water, we lose everything. That’s why this network is so important. If we change the system changes, it’s time for us to change. We will not win alone; we will only win together.”

“You have to get into one tributary or another in this big river of change.”

KEYNOTE “WE CHOOSE NOW”

Colette Pichon Battle, a generational native of Bayou Liberty, Louisiana, and founder and Executive Director of the Gulf Coast Center for Law & Policy (GCCLP), inspired every corner of the ballroom with her keynote address.

She encouraged us all to honor our waters, and explored the connections between water, climate, energy democracy, the movement for Black lives, and more.




PLENARY PANEL DOING BETTER: CLIMATE, WATER & EQUITY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL



The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act presents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to fix pipes and plumbing and build better infrastructure that delivers clean water, protection from flooding, and climate resiliency in an equitable and just manner. Following prerecorded remarks from Rep. Melanie Stansbury, moderator Andrew Fahlund led panelists Robyn Colosimo, Julian Gonzalez, and Jonathan Nelson in exploring how we avoid the mistakes of the past, how to ensure equitable and sustainable water outcomes, and how you can engage to influence investment near you. Audience members pushed panelists with tough questions on the bureaucracy of government systems and their inherent inequities, encouraging us all to truly ‘do better.’

“Let community partners drive you. The ship is pointed in the right direction but there is more that can be done... This River Rally has made me even more optimistic that we can make a dent here.”

—JULIAN GONZALEZ, EARTHJUSTICE




“I feel like after years of trying to diversify River Rally, the efforts are paying off. I felt like the subject matter of several workshops and panels addressed topics that are not often front and center at environmental conferences, and it felt authentic/intentional.”

—ANONYMOUS ATTENDEE


PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS WORKSHOPS

River Rally 2022 featured 52 workshops in 6 tracks, with 77% incorporating topics of equity, diversity, inclusion, or justice. From a full slate of State Revolving Fund workshops to a hands-on session where participants made a video from start to finish ([watch it here!](#)), participants had a wide range of options. The Clean Water Act featured prominently ahead of this year’s 50th anniversary, and we were lucky to have many local speakers sharing solutions from the Mid-Atlantic region.



“The workshops I’ve signed up for are exactly the kind of knowledge I need for my work to be successful. I’m super excited and so grateful for the opportunity.”

—SERGIO CIRA-REYES



“The ‘Supercharging a New Generation of CWA Advocates to Address 21st Century Challenges’ workshop was very interesting and informative. I also just always love having time to talk with new and familiar clean water professionals.”

—LAURIE EGAN, COASTAL WATERSHED COUNCIL



“My key takeaways regarding DEI happened during conversations networking outside of sessions and plenaries, but those conversations happened because we were all in the same place for River Rally.”

—ANONYMOUS ATTENDEE

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS CONNECTION & CELEBRATION

Gathering again in person, we knew social connection would be a huge highlight for attendees of River Rally 2022. From trivia to Open Mic, hosted by Megan Nguyen and Brandon Hayes, to breakfast table conversations, to spontaneous gatherings at the hotel bar, the energy and passion of attendees was felt from day to night throughout Rally. Whether making professional connections to further one's work, or reconnecting with old friends during a walk to a local monument, connection and celebration abounded, capped off by our annual Awards Reception. River Network's Nicole Seltzer and board member Andrew Fahlund led community celebration with audience participation sharing their successes, ahead of inspiring remarks from awardees. Then, Frank Sirius fired up the crowd with their local go-go sound and the dance party began!

“I have learned so much at my first River Rally. This information and networking has been so refreshing to see. I'm in my first year in this position and have felt a little “siloe” at times, but this event has opened my eyes to the possibilities of my job! Looking to the future of rivers!”

—ANNA WHEELER, DAN RIVER BASIN ASSOCIATION

“As a woman of color, an Iranian, a Kentuckian, I was one of few, but certainly not alone. The individuals, conversations, and thoughts I've had in the last three days will stay with me. I've felt validated and challenged in ways I don't typically experience in my day-to-day.”

—MAHTAAB BAGHERZADEH



AWARDEES



**FOR AWARDS HIGHLIGHTS,
WATCH THIS YEAR'S VIDEO.**



“Water is *THE* issue that bridges the partisan divide.”

BETSY OTTO, LEGACY AWARD
RECIPIENT

“Representation matters... it doesn't matter where you come from, what you look like, what zip code you live in, who you date, how tall you are... everyone deserves access to clean water.”

MARIAH DAVIS, EMERGING LEADER



“It's hard to think of something more important than the care and keeping of water and each other... We need water, but also spirituality and connection. Artists have a special role in fostering that connection.”

MELANIE ARIENS, RIVER HERO

“Our systems have been fractured and compromised, and to make them whole again, to make them work, it takes each and every one of us.”

ARTHUR JOHNSON, RIVER HERO



“The work is constant and I'll never be done with my own backyard, but it's my job to try to make it a little bit better.”

CHRISTINA MCVIE, RIVER HERO

“It's not just believing in things that creates action; it's action that creates believing in things. Water finds its way, not necessarily by power, but by persistence.”

ANN-MARIE MITROFF, RIVER HERO



“This award is a reminder of all that I've done, and also a kick in the butt of how much work there is left to do.”

TREY SHERARD, RIVER HERO



PROGRAM DETAILS ACTION DAY FOR CLEAN WATER & RIVERS

Following River Rally, we partnered with American Rivers and Waterkeeper Alliance to organize Action Day for Clean Water and Rivers on June 8, an opportunity for water advocates to join together and meet with members of Congress, asking them to support policies that will ensure clean water and healthy rivers for all communities. We trained groups of participants from **17 states and Washington, DC**, and helped them schedule virtual and in-person meetings with your members of Congress and key committee staff. These groups headed to the Hill, encouraging lawmakers to strengthen Clean Water Act protections, reduce nutrient pollution, and ensure equitable implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act.



- 89** meetings with lawmakers
- 9** member-level meetings
- 17** states and DC represented

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS AND SUPPORTERS

"Thank you for funding the opportunity to attend River Rally! Had it not been for River Rally's scholarship, I would have missed out on valuable connections and eye-opening learning opportunities from my peers. I am leaving this conference inspired, hopeful, and grateful to continue the fight for clean water and building communities that allow people to not only survive but thrive!!! Looking forward to future opportunities with River Network. Also looking forward to see more BIPOC and frontline community representation at future River Rally conferences!"

—BRENDA SANTOYO, LVEJO

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