



In May 2026, members of River Network’s nationwide network gathered in San Antonio, Texas—or *yanaguana*, “Land of the Spirit Waters,” to use the language we were gifted by Coahuiltecan community members. It was a week full of learning, inspiration, and renewal as we considered the water challenges heading our way and how we might address them as a connected and empowered movement.

Together, we celebrated a historic moment for Texas water, as the state’s water leaders secured passage of Proposition 4, a \$1 billion-a-year, 20-year investment in statewide water infrastructure. We sought to answer the question on every water advocate’s mind: how can other states replicate this win? Across plenaries, sessions, field trips, and deep dive convenings, attendees found connection and solutions among their peers. We left River Rally 2026 with new tools, collaborators, and renewed inspiration to tackle the work ahead.

RALLY CONNECTED 390
WATER, JUSTICE, AND RIVER ADVOCATES ...

42%
identifying as
Black, Indigenous,
or a person of color

70%
identifying as
female or
non-binary

77%
representing
nonprofit
organizations

44%
receiving
scholarship and/or
travel support

“This work can be lonely and isolating. River Rally provides a unique opportunity to connect with my people. It is inspiring, invigorating, and gives me motivation to continue supporting our rivers, streams, and communities.”
–Emily Vail, Executive Director of the Hudson River Watershed Alliance

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

97%

felt Rally was welcoming and inclusive

90%

felt more connected to peers

85%

likely to apply new knowledge and skills

66 sessions

12 field trips hosted by local organizations

2 plenary panels

4 dedicated affinity spaces for Leaders of Color and LGBTQ+ attendees

8 full- and half-day Deep Dives and Community Convenings

New in 2026: The final day of River Rally introduced Deep Dives and Community Convenings. These full- and half-day sessions were designed for deeper engagement and relationship-building across topics including building and funding the water movement, coalition meetings, film screenings, and a deep dive on the border wall crisis on the Rio Grande.



"I'm very proud of the fact that we have literally changed the water outcome for our state. We are now headed down a different path that has more reasonable and rational solutions." –Jennifer Walker, Director of the Texas Coast and Water Program at the National Wildlife Federation & 2026 Legacy Awardee



Sarah Schlessinger (Texas Water Foundation), Vanessa Puig Williams (Environmental Defense Fund), Guadalupe Fernandez (Bayou City Waterkeeper), and Jennifer Walker (Texas Living Waters Project) speaking on the Prop 4 plenary panel, "The Voice of the Many: Securing Water Funding for Texas."



Monica Lewis-Patrick (Detroit, MI), Brenda Coley (Milwaukee, WI), and Tricia Cortez (Laredo, TX) speaking on the panel, "Community-Led Grantmaking: What's Funded When the Community Leads?"

CELEBRATING RIVER HEROES

On the last night of River Rally, we celebrated **7** astonishing advocates whose dedication and persistence are paving the way toward an equitable water future.



INDICATES
TEXAS
AWARDEE

We recognized **4** River Heroes on the River Rally stage:



Chief Anne Richardson, Chief of the Rappahannock Tribe in Virginia.



Andrea Lubberts, Plaster Creek Stewards in Grand Rapids, Michigan.



Bayou City Waterkeeper in Houston, Texas.



West Atlanta Watershed Alliance in Atlanta, Georgia.



The 2026 Emerging Leader

Kaiya Giuliano-Monroy in Santa Cruz, California.

We recognized **2** Legacy Awardees:



2026 Legacy Awardee

Brenda Coley, Retired Co-Executive Director of Milwaukee Water Commons in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.



2026 Legacy Awardee

Jennifer Walker, Texas Living Waters Project in Austin, Texas.



INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AT RIVER RALLY

Members of the Coahuiltecan intertribal community in San Antonio reminded all River Rally attendees that water is a relative, not a resource. This understanding shaped the week as Indigenous knowledge informed 7 sessions and field trips centering stewardship and creation stories.

Thank you to Ties to la Tierra for serving as the Indigenous Constituent Community Liaison for River Rally 2026, leading outreach, engagement, and cultural care.



The Ah Manam Spiritual Group opened River Rally with a water blessing along San Pedro Creek.

“We consider [water] our relative. I deeply implore each of y’all who will continue to work in spaces where water is a topic to completely disavow that idea that she is a resource. Language is incredibly powerful.”

–Chiara (Sunshine) Do’wal Sehi, Indigenous Resistance Artist, Educator, Language Keeper



The plenary session, “Artists and Advocates: A Water Arts Showcase for a Unified Movement” highlighted local and regional Indigenous artists who spoke on our relationship to water as a friend, relative, nurturer, and healer.



Matilde Torres and Gary Perez, cultural Bearers of the Pakahua Peoples of Northeastern Mexico and Texas, showed Rally attendees how Celestial knowledge and Earthly waterways are central parts of Indigenous Creation Stories, and how they inform cultural and ecological knowledge.

NATIONAL NETWORK, LOCAL LEADERSHIP

Shining a light on our host city is a pillar of the River Rally experience. Local Host Partner and Presenting Sponsor **San Antonio River Authority** subsidized 12 field trips, taking Rally attendees across the Texas Hill Country to learn about groundwater research, litter capture, community science, integrated river management, and so much more.

20 local businesses supported as vendors or caterers.

6 off-site events, encouraging a deeper connection to San Antonio.

THANK YOU TO ALL RIVER RALLY SPONSORS, SUPPORTERS, AND PARTNERS

"Amongst partners, river advocates, community leaders, policy experts, and funders, the week was a rewarding reminder of the clear and unwavering commitment water work has amongst so many diverse people and communities from coast to coast... Despite the range of subject matter, people I connected with were not lamenting the challenges, but driving toward a better future." –Allison Harvey Turner, CEO of The Water Foundation



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LOCAL PLANNING COMMITTEE

Annalisa Peace and Nathan Glavy (Greater Edwards Aquifer Alliance), Nicole Marshall (San Antonio River Authority), Jenna Walker (The Meadows Center for Water and the Environment), Jennifer Walker (Texas Coast & Water Program), Charles Blank (River Aid San Antonio), and Marisa Bruno (Hill Country Alliance)

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VOLUNTEERS

Alyssa Senturk, Tera John, Erin McDermott, La'Tanya Scott, Kat Sawyer, Cara Decker, Ari Holt, David Diaz, Jonathan Silverman, Marisol Vasquez, Layla Farahbakhsh

*River Rally Planning Team