Clean Water Clear Voices

IMPACT REPORT 2021

WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE

Waterkeeper Alliance is a top-ranked 501(c)(3) charity, with Top-Rated status from Charity Watch, 4 Stars from Charity Navigator, and Platinum Status from Guidestar.

Reflecting on the Past While Keeping Our Focus on the Future.

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

We are so grateful to present this Annual Impact Report for fiscal year 2021. The last year was one of global hardship and challenge. Staying true to our roots as on-the-ground advocates, our movement has not wavered from its mission to protect everyone's right to clean water in communities around the world.

We know that without clean, healthy, and abundant water, we cannot live and thrive. Moreover, the interconnected nature of climate change and water has never been more evident – increasing droughts, storms, and water quality issues continue to affect populations around the world, often the most vulnerable. Despite this global crisis, polluters continue to skirt regulations. Pipelines, dams, and deep-sea mining persist. Climate change continues to be the greatest existential threat of our time. As the recent IPCC report affirms: The outlook is dire, the window in which to act is rapidly closing, and the stakes could not be higher.

But yet I feel optimistic. I continue to be inspired by the progress made in various communities around the world. I have hope because I know change starts at the local level. And I have seen it firsthand through our movement.

A few things in particular stand out to me:

Columbia Riverkeeper used grassroots organizing and legal strategies to defeat another proposed fossil fuel terminal in the Pacific Northwest. Los Angeles Waterkeeper challenged the state to study reusing wastewater rather than dumping it into the ocean. Our Marañón Waterkeeper in Peru fought a slate of proposed dams on the headwaters of the Amazon. Waterkeepers in Senegal worked tirelessly to restore their watershed from years of abuse. We urged the Mexican Supreme Court to not allow a concentrated animal feeding operation to be constructed in an environmentally sensitive area of the Yucatan Peninsula. In the Bahamas, we fought against offshore drilling and exposed myriad flaws in Disney's planned cruise ship terminal.

Now, as the 50th anniversary of the Clean Water Act approaches, we are working diligently to see this landmark legislation fully implemented and enforced. We worked to reverse the previous administration's gutting of water protections, such as Section 401 of the Clean Water Act and the definition of Waters of the United States. Though the country may have a new President, all the threats to water remain. That is why we are keeping the pressure on to go even further in protecting our right to drinkable, fishable, and swimmable water.

Internally, Waterkeeper Alliance welcomed our own new president too. Author, activist, and actress, Gloria Reuben joined us in November 2020. As we fight these crucial battles, we are thrilled to have Gloria's voice, vision, and leadership at the forefront.

As an organization, we have redoubled our efforts to abide by justice, equality, diversity, and inclusion in all that we do, in real and measurable ways. We also launched a new strategic plan that guides our mission to strive for clean and accessible water in countries across the globe, support hundreds of millions of people actively engaged in protecting that water, and increase global awareness that climate change and policy decisions have a dramatic impact on water, people, and the planet.

We have our work cut out for us. Luckily, we also have an incredible global network of Waterkeepers who are united for clean, healthy, and abundant water.

As we review our last fiscal year and embark on a new one, I thank you, from the bottom of my heart, for making this movement a success. We are grateful for your support as we continue our global fight.

To clean water,

Marc Yaggi
Executive Director

Gloria Reuben

We also had an election last November. Gloria Reuben joined as Waterkeeper Alliance's president.

Though she is well known for her work on TV shows, such as *E.R.* and *Mr. Robot,* and films, such as *Lincoln and Admission*, Gloria also has decades of environmental advocacy experience. She previously served as a Trustee with Waterkeeper Alliance from 2007 to 2010, an advisor to Vice President Al Gore's Climate Reality Project, as well as a councilmember for both the National Wildlife Federation and the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Gloria grew up near the shores of Lake Ontario and distinctly remembers when it was forbidden to wade into the waters due to toxicity and high bacteria levels. It was an experience a young child may not fully comprehend, but can never forget. Now, decades later, Gloria lives a few minutes from the Atlantic Ocean. Whether day or night, each visit to the water anchors Gloria in her commitment to do whatever she can to protect drinkable, swimmable, fishable waterways for generations to come.

Gloria's enthusiasm for the cause of clean water is unmatched. Whether it's leading the conversation with op-eds or raising awareness and fundraising through Stars In The House, Gloria is the ideal candidate to lead our movement into these coming years.

"Having been involved with Waterkeeper Alliance for years, I have seen the incredible progress that happens when we support local leaders fighting for their waters and communities. I believe deeply in our ability to save our planet's waterways," says Reuben. "As President of Waterkeeper Alliance, I am looking forward to advancing our advocacy work and engaging with the public to highlight current threats to clean water, as well as celebrating the wins our Waterkeeper groups experience."

"Our world has changed dramatically in a very short amount of time, but one thing that will never change is the fundamental, life-sustaining need for drinkable, fishable, swimmable water."

Waterkeeper groups patrol and protect nearly 3 million square miles of watersheds, which provide water for drinking, fishing, and swimming to more than 700 million people.

Ensuring that every watershed in the world has a dedicated Waterkeeper is central to our movement.

Despite the challenges of the last year, we were still able to expand our impact across the globe.

Where We Focused

The Bahamas - We put the pressure on Disney to rethink their misguided and reckless plans to build a cruise ship terminal at Lighthouse Point. This project on the island of Eleuthera would be constructed in the heart of a proposed Marine Protected Area, a crucial passageway for bonefish and other marine species. The port would include a half-mile-long pier built on top of important marine habitats and would bring up to 20,000 visitors every week to this pristine site. We called on Disney to rethink this flawed Environmental Impact Assessment and look elsewhere for this massive project.

China - Waterkeepers in China practiced an innovative way to monitor their watershed by using drones and hyperspectral remote sensing technologies. These approaches allow the public to better understand the condition of their rivers when unreliable, impassable roads and access to online mapping falls short. These advancements provide Waterkeepers with a new tool in their arsenals to assess the effectiveness of remediation efforts, and protect water around the world.

Colorado - Two of America's largest reservoirs, Lake Powell and Lake Mead, reached historic lows this year. The frightening images of low water levels throughout the west made national news and sent shockwaves throughout the world. However, Waterkeepers in the Western United States have long been warning the world about the conditions of the Colorado River basin, and of water scarcity issues in general. We continue to fight dams, water diversion, and the false promise of hydropower as a clean energy source at every turn.

Florida - Our Waterkeepers urged the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to protect communities from radioactive phosphogypsum stacks, or gypstacks, months before the tragic disaster at Piney Point made national headlines. We continue to urge the EPA to proactively enforce wastewater regulations throughout the country before it poses a threat to waterways and the communities that live near them.

Israel - Waterkeepers on the Jordan River face several obstacles in monitoring their watershed. The vast majority of the water is diverted to help feed this otherwise arid landscape. It leaves the water difficult to navigate in a boat. Other challenges, including landmines and military fencing, make being out on the water nearly impossible. However, thanks to virtual reality technologies, our local Waterkeepers are able to recreate the Jordan River, educate the public, and inspire joint action toward its continued recovery.

North American Great Lakes - Working with Great Lakes Waterkeepers, from the urban centers of Milwaukee and Buffalo to the wilds of Michigan's Upper Peninsula, we developed a collaborative communications campaign focused on the source water protection in the North American Great Lakes — the source of drinking water for more than 40 million people. Central to this was the multi-state Great Lake CleanUP effort led by Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper. This series generated media coverage promoting the vital work of the Great Lakes Waterkeepers, and the need to keep this incredible freshwater source clean for generations to come.

There are 345 Waterkeeper groups in 48 countries.

Recruiting

Despite the challenges of the last year, we added three new Waterkeepers to the movement and an additional 11,000 square miles of preserved and protected watersheds:

United States / Great Basin Waterkeeper (Nevada)

United States / Nantucket Waterkeeeper (Massachusetts)

Guatemala / Lake Atitlán Waterkeeper

We also recruited six Waterkeeper affiliates, including the Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team in Washington, the Upper Colorado River Watershed in Colorado, and the Dnipro River Guardians, our first Waterkeeper group in the Ukraine.

"Waterkeeper Alliance has brought me a wealth of human capital in my first year with the organization. I've been able to network, share information, and gain access to vital information — strengthening an array of efforts to protect our most important resource in the arid west."

Kyle Roerink, Executive Director, Great Basin Waterkeeper, Nevada

"The exchange with organizations from other Latin American countries has been very enriching. I think that has been the most interesting part for us, this exchange of experiences and environmental responses."

Anna D'Appolito, Lake Atitlán Waterkeeper, Guatemala

"By joining Waterkeeper Alliance, we have taken a serious step forward as our community's water quality advocates. We are thrilled to be linked with like-minded organizations from around the world in our shared pursuit of clean water for all."

RJ Turcotte, Nantucket Waterkeeper, Massachusetts

We support frontline communities through alliances, coalitions, and litigation efforts. We are meaningfully engaged with 88 local, regional, national, and global partner organizations in advocacy actions.

Despite the unique logistical challenges presented last year, we were nonetheless able to provide training and resources to our Waterkeepers around the world without jeopardizing anyone's health and safety.

Training and Conferences

Regional Summits

Regional Summits allow for regional coordination to foster collaboration, skill-sharing, resource sharing, networking, and strategic discussions among Waterkeeper Organizations and Affiliates that have geographic and cultural commonalities while facing similar threats and opportunities in their watersheds.

The theme for our 2021 summits was Strengthening Environmental Enforcement, with a focus on legal strategies, digital security, and engaging communities. The lessons learned at the Regional Summits will — travel permitting — culminate in our Global Conference in June 2022 in Washington, D.C., to align with the Clean Water Act's 50th anniversary. The Global Conference will provide additional environmental enforcement training opportunities for Waterkeepers.

With the virtual format — and no registration fees — barriers to participate were removed and more individuals from Waterkeeper groups could attend. The Regional Summits were a huge success, providing 2,373 individual training hours to 454 participants at six Summits.

"Spaces such as the Waterkeeper Regional Summits facilitate the identification of synergies in the search for healthy basins and quality water in Latin America."

Liliana García, Amazonas Perú Waterkeeper

Our advocacy campaigns encouraged over 11,000 of our followers to take nearly 30,000 actions in support of clean water.

Empowering our Waterkeepers to Succeed.

Training and Conferences (continued)

Drones

Aerial monitoring, including photos, videos, and mapping are key advocacy tools, especially when collecting data to hold polluters accountable under the Clean Water Act. We created a virtual five-part online drone training to integrate state-of-the-art technology into existing Waterkeeper programs while also providing new opportunities to engage with frontline communities. In this upcoming year, five Waterkeepers will participate in the training, provide peer-feedback, obtain their license to operate a drone, and integrate it into their existing monitoring programs.

Water Quality Monitoring

We developed an eight-part training series that serves as an introduction to field resources and water quality monitoring. These introductory, on-demand virtual trainings are available in both English and Spanish, and will help participants make informed recommendations on equipment and best practices related to fieldwork, logistics, safety, record keeping, and data tracking for common field operations.

Waterkeeper 101

As our movement continues to grow, it is important to protect the integrity and strength of the Waterkeeper Alliance brand to ensure that we can remain strong advocates. To help onboard new Waterkeeper groups, we have developed a four-part virtual training module that reviews our history, branding requirements, code of conduct, and benefits of being part of our global movement.

Through our website, email, social media, and news media outreach, we reach more than 4 million people each month.

Whether it's rolling back unlawful rulings, taking on polluters, or protecting an endangered amphibian most people have probably never heard of...

Issues

Protecting the Waters of the United States - Waterkeeper Alliance challenged the previous administration's unprecedented and unlawfully narrow definition of 'waters of the United States', or WOTUS. This unscientific and reckless interpretation of the Clean Water Act left American waterways needlessly vulnerable to pollution. It also upended nearly 50 years of settled law, allowing toxic chemicals, radioactive waste, sewage, and other pollutants to be legally dumped into our nation's rivers, streams, lakes, and wetlands.

Restoring Section 401 of the Clean Water Act - In federal court, we challenged the weakening of the Environmental Protection Agency's Section 401 regulations, which for 50 years have allowed states, tribes, and citizens to protect their own drinking water, rivers, streams, and wetlands. This misinterpretation unlawfully limited the ability of citizens to protect their waters from pollution and degradation. We challenged the regulatory rollback in August 2020, and were relieved to see EPA's notice of intent to reconsider and revise the unlawful regulations in June 2021.

Victory for Lake Okeechobee - A federal judge agreed with our claims that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers was not in compliance with the Endangered Species Act with regard to the discharge of high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus, which cause harmful algal blooms, and analysis of the effect of those discharges on endangered species and their habitats. Though significant work remains to address Lake Okeechobee's pollution, this was an important legal victory for the communities and wildlife repeatedly harmed by toxic discharges.

Mexico Supreme Court Victory - We filed a legal brief with Mexico's Supreme Court of Justice supporting constitutional claims raised by Mayan children who oppose approval and operation of an industrial animal operation in the Yucatán Peninsula. This facility would have been home to nearly 50,000 hogs in an ecologically sensitive area near the Mayan town of Homún. In a great victory for clean water, the judges unanimously ruled in favor of the children of the Mayan community of Homún in Yucatán and enjoined the operation of the facility.

Windy Gap Settlement - A settlement was reached in our lawsuit against a dam project on the Colorado River. An environmental mitigation fund of $15 million was secured. Leaders of the Upper Colorado River Watershed Group, a Waterkeeper Alliance affiliate, will sit on the advisory board that will determine how these funds get allocated for the protection of this watershed.

...we are not afraid to fight for clean water.

Saving the Hellbenders - We filed a formal notice of intent to sue the U.S. Fish and WIldlife Service over its decision to deny Endangered Species Act protections to the eastern hellbender, an enormous river-dwelling salamander which has seen much of its historic range diminish. Our lawsuit seeks to not only protect this species and others, but also the aquatic habitats and watersheds they call home.

Fighting for CAFO Neighbors in North Carolina - We challenged state legislation that severely restricts an individual's ability to bring nuisance lawsuits against concentrated animal feeding operations, or CAFOs. These facilities are incredibly destructive to local ecology and disproportionately affect communities of color. We are currently in the appeal process, but will not stop fighting for environmental justice no matter where the battles lie.

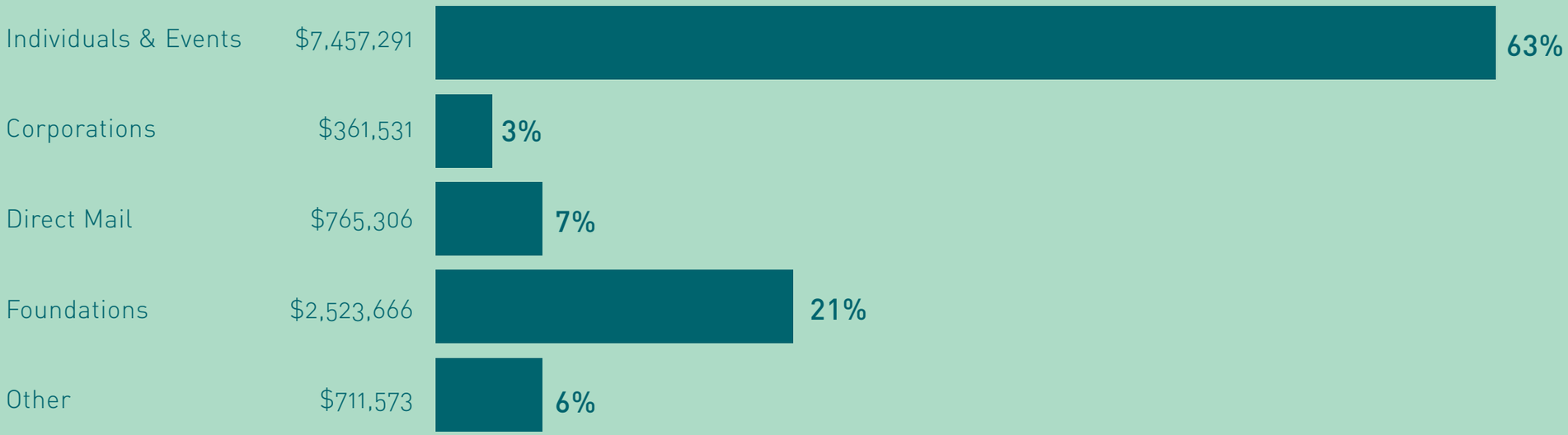
Putting Pressure on Offshore Drilling - When a petroleum company began drilling exploratory wells off the coast of the Bahamas, we urged the public to take action and raise their voices against this reckless exploitation. When the company sealed the well and abandoned their plans to drill, we urged the local governments to enact a permanent moratorium on exploration and extraction.

Fighting Disinformation - We called on Facebook to combat the scourge of climate change disinformation on its platforms. Research shows that this form of false and misleading 'information' runs rampant and often unchecked on Facebook. We implored the company to take simple, easy steps to rein in this dangerous trend among their audience before the problem gets any worse.

Diving Into Democracy - We relaunched our advocacy communications campaign, highlighting important issues where our readers could take action. From plastic pollution to environmental justice to restoring federal water protections, we encouraged our audience to take a dive into the democratic process and raise their voices for clean water. That's exactly what thousands of our readers have subsequently done, in the form of comments to EPA, letters to Members of Congress, and more. We are prepared to keep fighting battles in court, but know that our movement is only made stronger when our supporters take action.

Movement-wide, we have more than 1,000 staff, 1 million volunteers and supporters, and a collective budget of nearly US$75,000,000.

Financials



Total Revenue: $11,819,373

Total Expenses: $9,771,116

INCOME $11,819,373
PROGRAM EXPENSES $8,284,556
FUNDRAISING EXPENSES $1,010,725
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES $475,835
END OF THE YEAR NET ASSETS $5,512,350

Donors

$1,000,000+

Anonymous
Foundation for the Carolinas

$250,000 - $999,999

Anonymous
Paycheck Protection Grant

$100,000-$249,999

Anonymous
The 1111 Foundation
Bloomberg Philanthropies
Marisla Foundation
Orton Foundation
Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors

$50,000-$99,999

Marjie Findlay
The J S & S Michaan Foundation
Mohawk Group
Moore Family Foundation
The Whitehead Foundation

$25,000-$49,999

Anonymous
Ayudar Foundation
Ann and Robert Benson Foundation
Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund
Dancing Tides Foundation
G.A. Fowler Foundation
Ittleson Foundation
Kay Family Foundation
Moore Bahamas Foundation
Overbrook Foundation
Preston-Werner Ventures
Quicksilver Fund
Sperry, Inc.
Estate of Joyce L. Steier

$10,000-$24,999

Accenture
Michele and Gordon Brown
Andrew Cohen
EcoEd Foundation
The Fine and Greenwald Foundation
G.A. Fowler Family Foundation
F. Daniel Gabel
Glencoe Family Foundation
The Guide Foundation
Huron Consulting Group, Inc.
Innovia Foundation
Curtis Jang
Michael Krasny
Leaves of Grass Fund
Loeb & Loeb
JP's Peace, Love & Happiness Foundation
Kris and Ken Moore
Estate of Judi Munn
Mycorrhizal DAF
Mapleside Fund
New York Community Trust
Margaret T. Oyama
Piedmont Trust Company
Anthony and Jeanne Pritzker Family Foundation
Ralph Lauren Corporation
The Scoob Trust Foundation
Shake Shack
William Smith
Solberg Manufacturing Charitable Fund
Chelliah Sundararajan
The Waterwheel Foundation, Inc.
Alexandra and Kent Weed
Weeden Foundation

$5,000-$9,999

Anonymous
CJ Athlete
Ayco Charitable Foundation
The Baltoro Trust Dated June 14, 1979
Blue Sky Foundation
James Cachules
Rafael Fogel
Goldman Environmental Foundation
Barbara Karplus and Rodney Womer
Alexander McKiernan
Morgan Stanley
James Nania
Anthony Pasquariello
Joanne and Cyrus Spurlino
Elizabeth Steele
The Wilson Family Foundation
Penelope and Philip Wright

We are a global movement united for clean, healthy, and abundant water for all people and the planet...

…because we believe water is life.

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