

WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE

5-YEAR PLAN FOR WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2027 – 2031

SUPPORTING A GLOBAL WATERKEEPER MOVEMENT

BOARD APPROVED JANUARY 28, 2026




# CEO MESSAGE

For more than 25 years, Waterkeeper Alliance and its global network of Waterkeeper groups—now more than 300 strong in 40+ countries—have powered a movement that brings partners, advocates, supporters, and communities together to protect waterways, hold polluters accountable, and advance our right to clean water in a rapidly changing climate.

Together, we have earned hard-fought progress—protecting nearly 6 million square miles of waterways around the world and safeguarding clean water for more than 5 billion people. The impact is personal: for families who rely on local waterways for health, sustenance, and livelihood, this work changes lives. Whether it is a fishing family concerned about offshore drilling in Senegal or a community fighting mining in Colombia, our movement creates vital connections that break the isolation so often felt by those defending their local waterways.

This new strategic plan charts the next stage of our shared journey, reflecting the ambitious 20-year vision of Project Osiris. At a moment when the global water crisis and climate change demand bold advocacy, we are the force that cuts through the darkness of pollution and political delay. Under this roadmap, we will strengthen support for Waterkeeper groups worldwide, deepen connections across the network, enhance our collective advocacy, and expand our capacity. This plan responds to a moment of accelerating threats, shrinking protections, and growing demand for community-driven solutions. Over the next five years, it will guide how we deepen collaboration, grow our impact, and move closer to our shared vision: *a world where water is clean, healthy, safe, and accessible for all people and nature to flourish.*

Marc A. Yaggi

Marc Yaggi
Chief Executive Officer

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This Strategic Plan recognises that the protection of water around the world depends on everyone, with Waterkeeper groups and Waterkeeper Alliance playing a fundamental role in catalysing a clean water movement. This is a dynamic Plan which identifies how we will achieve this goal, centering collaboration and targeted advocacy.



**Theo Thomas**

London Waterkeeper®
Co-Chair, Strategic Planning Committee
Waterkeeper Alliance Board Member

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This refreshed Strategic Plan reflects months of collaboration among Waterkeeper Alliance’s Board, staff, Waterkeeper Council, Trustees, Leadership Circle, Waterkeeper groups, donors and partners. We believe it reflects Waterkeeper Alliance’s current vision, while upholding the core principles and aspirational goals of the organization, with a greater focus on measurable outcomes and results.



**Gordon Brown**

Co-Chair, Strategic Planning Committee
Waterkeeper Alliance Board Member
Co-Chair, Trustees



# OUR COMMITMENT

- We commit to generating the resources required to deliver on this plan, aligning fundraising and investments with its priorities, strategies, and performance measures.
- We will expand Waterkeeper Alliance's capacity to support Waterkeeper groups by:
  - Creating more opportunities for collaboration, training, and peer-to-peer learning
  - Advocating for stronger water policies, laws, and international agreements that advance the work of Waterkeeper groups in their communities
  - Cultivating partnerships that amplify our collective impact
- We will act on a global scale by:
  - Driving change at the national and international levels
  - Ensuring equitable distribution of resources and visibility to Waterkeeper groups worldwide
  - Protecting against political and government actions that undermine clean water protections and community rights

# PURPOSE OF WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE'S NEW PLAN

Driven by a shared sense of urgency and purpose to protect the right to clean, healthy, safe, and accessible water with communities around the world, this plan represents the input of Waterkeeper Alliance staff, Board, Trustees, Waterkeeper Council, Leadership Circle, partners, and Waterkeeper groups from across the globe. While this is a plan for Waterkeeper Alliance, its successful implementation will positively impact all of the Waterkeeper groups we serve. Our new 5-year plan:

- Clearly defines Waterkeeper Alliance's role in supporting a diverse, powerful network of Waterkeeper groups, including a theory of change that shows how our priorities and actions amplify their work worldwide
- Lays out strategic priorities designed to build and enhance Waterkeeper Alliance's capacity, effectiveness, and resources to support a strong, global network of Waterkeeper groups
- Defines success with performance measures that chart a path for growth, sustainability, accountability, and global impact



# ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

To ensure this plan reflects the vision, priorities, and expertise of the entire movement, the Strategic Planning Committee (SPC), representing Waterkeeper Alliance constituents worldwide, led an inclusive process of listening, visioning, and strategy discussions, with staff actively shaping Waterkeeper Alliance's future and how we support Waterkeeper groups.

We began with staff working groups that reviewed the prior plan's progress and recommended priorities for the new one. The Board then held a 3-day retreat to create a draft strategic framework. Building on that draft, we conducted listening sessions and interviews with Waterkeeper groups, staff, Board, Trustees, Waterkeeper Council, Leadership Circle, and partners to refine the framework and build out the full strategic plan. The SPC synthesized feedback, incorporating further staff input, to create a final version of the new plan.




*We then shared and tested the refined plan at six regional summits with Waterkeeper groups, affirming our shared vision and clarifying Waterkeeper Alliance's role in equipping a powerful Waterkeeper Network with the tools and support it needs to protect the right to clean, healthy, safe, and accessible water with communities around the world.*

# ENGAGEMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Throughout the 10-month process, we engaged with a diverse array of constituents to help shape our new Strategic Plan:

**20** PRIORITY WORK GROUP PARTICIPANTS (STAFF)

**7** LISTENING SESSIONS

**143** LISTENING SESSION PARTICIPANTS

**22** STRATEGY SESSION PARTICIPANTS (STAFF)

**112** REGIONAL SUMMIT WATERKEEPER GROUP PARTICIPANTS*

*number is to date, with one Summit remaining in January 2026

**14** KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEWS

**100** SURVEY RESPONDENTS

Waterkeeper Alliance has always sought ways to meaningfully engage the diverse perspectives and experiences of Waterkeeper groups around the world, and this is especially true for its new strategic plan. The resulting collaborative vision sets a strong path forward for clean water, but it will take collective efforts from all of us to fully realize the impact we can have on our planet and communities.



**Jill Jedlicka**

Executive Director and Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper

Seeing such active participation from every “tributary” of the Movement reaffirmed what makes Waterkeeper Alliance unique - our deep sense of connection and shared purpose. This plan reflects that unity and the trust we continue to build together.



**Bart Mihailovich**

Waterkeeper Membership Services Director

# WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE'S FOCUS AND IMPACT

## VISION

A world where water is clean, healthy, safe, and accessible for all people and nature to flourish.



## MISSION

Connect, support, and advocate with Waterkeeper groups to protect the right to clean water with communities worldwide.



## GUIDING PRINCIPLES:

- Recognize water is life and connects us to each other and the world we share
- Uphold clean, healthy, safe, and accessible water as a fundamental right for people, ecosystems, and future generations
- Protect the safety of water defenders, standing firmly with those on the frontlines
- Nurture connection to water to inspire people to protect it
- Honor the unique voices and experiences of all Waterkeeper groups, rooted in their communities and watersheds
- Build trusted relationships and collaborate for greater, collective impact

Industrial and agricultural pollution to our waterways are so rampant that a shared vision for clean, healthy, safe, and accessible water means the survival of all people and nature around the globe. It will help us to accomplish our focused mission to connect, support, and advocate for clean water to ensure good governance and a sustainable future for a climate vulnerable world.



**Sharif Jamil**

Buriganga Riverkeeper and
Waterkeepers Bangladesh
Waterkeeper Council Member
Waterkeeper Alliance Board Member

This Strategic Plan sharpens our focus on what makes Waterkeeper Alliance powerful — our global movement of fierce clean water advocates. By clearly defining how we support, amplify, and unite Waterkeeper groups, we will strengthen our collective power and make it unmistakably clear what Waterkeeper Alliance fights for and why it matters.



**Jacki Esposito**

Advocacy Director,
Waterkeeper Alliance

# URGENT CHALLENGES

**Globally, our water is under attack. Leaders across the world are reversing decades of protections for our oceans, rivers, lakes, wetlands, and drinking water. Clean water is recklessly being opened up to polluters, threatening families, communities, and ecosystems.**

## OUR WATER IS ALREADY IN PERIL

- Every day, 2 million tons of waste are discharged into the world's water. An estimated 200 trillion pieces of plastic float in the oceans, forecasted to triple by 2040 if nothing is done.
- Nearly all humans have detectable levels of PFAS (forever chemicals) in their bloodstreams, and PFAS contamination is widespread in drinking water globally. These colorless, tasteless chemicals have been linked to a variety of serious health outcomes, including cancer.
- By 2030, nearly half the world's population will live in areas of high water stress.

## GOVERNMENTS ARE MAKING IT WORSE

- Across the globe, hard-won clean water protections are being dismantled. Laws are weakened, enforcement ignored, and polluters free to poison rivers, lakes, and drinking water—leaving families and ecosystems to pay the price. Unchecked industry, profit-driven politics, conflict, and climate extremes are fueling drought, scarcity, and human suffering.
- These threats are playing out in local communities everywhere and together form a global emergency demanding urgent, united action.

# MEASURING PROGRESS TO COLLECTIVELY ACHIEVE CRITICAL RESULTS

**To confront the global water crisis, we will spend the next five years working alongside Waterkeeper groups, partners, advocates, supporters, and communities to achieve the foundational milestones necessary to reach our 2040 vision.**

## HUNDREDS OF MILLIONS OF PEOPLE AROUND THE WORLD ACTIVELY ENGAGED IN PROTECTING THEIR WATER

- A strong, connected global network of sustainable and effective Waterkeeper groups
- 20.7 million miles$^2$/53.6 million kilometers$^2$ of watersheds protected by Waterkeeper groups
- 8 billion people supported by clean water protections
- 5 million community members actively engaged with Waterkeeper groups

## POLICIES AND INVESTMENTS PROTECT WATER AND ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE GLOBALLY

- Policy and reforms secure clean, healthy, safe, and accessible water protections in a majority of countries where Waterkeeper groups operate
- Measurable levels of key pollutants (nutrients, pathogens, plastics, PFAS) reduced significantly (targeting 50% by 2040) in Waterkeeper-monitored waterways
- 40% reduction in global emissions
- Communities in regions where Waterkeeper groups operate have access to climate-resilient water infrastructure (drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems) that protects people and ecosystems

## CLEAN, HEALTHY, SAFE, AND ACCESSIBLE WATER IS SECURED AS A RIGHT IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE GLOBE*

- Majority of waterways monitored by Waterkeeper groups meeting water-quality standards (targeting 70% by 2040)
- Majority of countries where Waterkeeper groups operate adopt and enforce legal protections recognizing clean and safe water as a human right
- Communities in regions where Waterkeeper groups operate show measurable gains in safe water access and reduced water-related health risks



*Adapted from metrics provided by UN SDG 2023

# WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE'S THEORY OF CHANGE

Strengthen Waterkeeper groups and support a high-impact global network

Elevate the visibility of Waterkeeper Alliance and amplify the collective voices of Waterkeeper groups

Advance, defend, and enforce clean water policies, laws, and international agreements vital to the communities Waterkeeper groups serve

Enhance Waterkeeper Alliance's capacity, effectiveness, and resources to support a global network of Waterkeeper groups

SUPPORTING A GLOBAL NETWORK OF 300+ WATERKEEPER GROUPS IN 40+ COUNTRIES

## RESULTS FOR PEOPLE AND NATURE TO FLOURISH:

Hundreds of millions of people around the world actively engaged in protecting their water

Policies and investments protect water and address climate change globally

Clean, healthy, safe, and accessible water is secured as a right in communities across the globe

# WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE: 2027 – 2031 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

### Priority 1
Strengthen Waterkeeper groups and support a high-impact global network

### Priority 2
Elevate the visibility of Waterkeeper Alliance and amplify the collective voices of Waterkeeper groups



### Priority 4
Enhance Waterkeeper Alliance's capacity, effectiveness, and resources to support a global network of Waterkeeper groups

### Priority 3
Advance, defend, and enforce clean water policies, laws and international agreements vital to the communities Waterkeeper groups serve

PRIORITY #1

## STRENGTHEN WATERKEEPER GROUPS AND SUPPORT A HIGH-IMPACT GLOBAL NETWORK

In service of a strong global network of Waterkeeper groups, Waterkeeper Alliance will deliver forward-thinking trainings, lift up effective practices, and foster opportunities for Waterkeeper groups to connect. The Alliance will equip Waterkeeper groups with customized tools and learning and data systems to make timely and strategic decisions, track their impact, and build resilient organizations.



PRIORITY #2

## ELEVATE THE VISIBILITY OF WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE AND AMPLIFY THE COLLECTIVE VOICES OF WATERKEEPER GROUPS

As a hub for the network, Waterkeeper Alliance will craft a coordinated communications strategy that positions Waterkeeper groups and Waterkeeper Alliance as leading champions for clean water. The Alliance will elevate compelling stories from communities on the frontlines, bringing local expertise and lived experience to global audiences, while reinforcing a cohesive brand and shared values. Coordinated campaigns will build public and political momentum for science-based solutions worldwide.



PRIORITY #3

## ADVANCE, DEFEND, AND ENFORCE CLEAN WATER POLICIES, LAWS AND INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENTS VITAL TO THE COMMUNITIES WATERKEEPER GROUPS SERVE

Waterkeeper Alliance will collaborate with Waterkeeper groups to identify priority issues and mobilize collective action, while centering community members disproportionately affected by limited access to clean water. In addition to broad action, the Alliance will support Waterkeeper groups with tools to conduct targeted local action and advocacy, including strategic legal action to hold polluters and decision-makers accountable. By supporting the power of grassroots advocacy, we unite local expertise with global influence — ensuring frontline communities drive the policies, enforcement, and solutions that protect their water.



PRIORITY #4

## ENHANCE WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE'S CAPACITY, EFFECTIVENESS, AND RESOURCES TO SUPPORT A GLOBAL NETWORK OF WATERKEEPER GROUPS

In addition to building the capacity of Waterkeeper groups, the Alliance will prioritize its own organizational resilience by expanding and diversifying its funding sources and continuing to invest in staff, systems, and technology that enhance efficiency and impact. These investments support a powerful and sustainable movement in advancing the right to clean water worldwide.



# WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE: 2027 – 2031 STRATEGIC ROADMAP

## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES & STRATEGIES

### Strengthen Waterkeeper groups and support a high-impact global network

- Cultivate meaningful engagement through shared learning, connection, and a strong Waterkeeper identity
- Equip the network to track impact, share knowledge, and make strategic decisions through effective data collection, analysis tools, and learning systems
- Offer flexible and responsive tools, training and capacity-building resources
- Strategically and thoughtfully grow the Waterkeeper network
- Promote the safety, security, and resilience of Waterkeeper groups

### Elevate the visibility of Waterkeeper Alliance and amplify the collective voices of Waterkeeper groups

- Position Waterkeeper Alliance and Waterkeeper groups as leading champions for clean water
- Enhance storytelling and tools to promote Waterkeeper work worldwide
- Support coordinated, advocacy campaigns that build public and political momentum for science-based solutions
- Co-create communications resources that align local, regional, and global perspectives
- Strengthen a cohesive Waterkeeper brand that reflects shared values and global reach

### Advance, defend, and enforce clean water policies, laws and international agreements vital to the communities Waterkeeper groups serve

- Collaborate with Waterkeeper groups to identify priority issues and mobilize collective action
- Provide Waterkeeper groups with effective tools to help enforce the law and advance policy reforms
- Center community members disproportionately impacted by water pollution, climate change, and limited access to clean water in legal and policy actions
- Conduct strategic litigation and legal advocacy with Waterkeeper groups and partners to hold polluters and regulators accountable

### Enhance Waterkeeper Alliance's capacity, effectiveness, and resources to support a global network of Waterkeeper groups

- Expand and diversify Waterkeeper Alliance's funding sources
- Invest in a skilled and resilient staff team
- Continue to invest in systems and technology to enhance coordination, efficiency, and impact

## CROSS CUTTING STRATEGIES

Cultivate a co-created and co-owned culture of community across Waterkeeper groups and Waterkeeper Alliance

Build and nurture partnerships and collaborations to strengthen and expand the Waterkeeper network's reach and collective impact

Strengthen a responsive global structure supporting clear communication, shared decision-making, and equitable distribution of resources

# WATERKEEPER ALLIANCE: 2027 – 2031 PERFORMANCE MEASURES

**Strengthen Waterkeeper groups** and support a high-impact global network

- 5% annual increase in Waterkeeper groups actively engaging in Waterkeeper Alliance-led learning opportunities, with 70% of participants reporting an increased sense of connection to peers and the network*
- Positive net number of active, licensed Waterkeeper groups globally each year, and 10% increase per cycle of groups meeting Quality Standards*
- 5% annual increase in the percentage of groups regularly reporting core data through modernized systems, with at least 70% affirming that reporting strengthens collaboration and collective impact across the network*

Elevate the visibility of Waterkeeper Alliance **and amplify the collective voices of Waterkeeper groups**

- 5% year-over-year increase in representation of Waterkeeper groups and Waterkeeper Alliance through channels and campaigns*
- 5% annual increase in the percentage of Waterkeeper groups using co-created communications resources*
- 5% year-over-year increase in digital reach across platforms and brand name search volume

**Advance, defend, and enforce clean water policies, laws and international agreements** vital to the communities Waterkeeper groups serve

- 80% of Waterkeeper groups engaged and taking action in advocacy campaigns*
- Influence at least 200 clean water policies or legal challenges *
- Achieve an average 30% year-over-year increase in policymaker engagement*
- Mobilize 250,000 people in support of clean water*

**Enhance Waterkeeper Alliance's capacity, effectiveness, and resources** to support a global network of Waterkeeper groups

- 60% of total revenue is unrestricted with 40% from multi-year commitments
- Ensure staff turnover is less than or equal to non-profit industry standards
- 3.75 out of 5 average member survey rating for organizational responsiveness to diverse needs*
- Increase the measurable impact of existing partnerships and establish new high-value, innovative partnerships*



*To ensure equitable distribution of resources, these measures will be tracked domestically and internationally

A co-created, co-owned culture of community means we lead, learn, work, and succeed together—actively supporting one another across the globe. Our strength and impact come from the collective wisdom, lived experience, and leadership of the entire network. This matters now more than ever, as the challenges ahead demand creative solutions rooted in trust, collaboration, and the diverse strengths of our global movement.



**Xavier Cortada**

Waterkeeper Alliance Board Member

Water is essential to all of us. Waterkeeper Alliance's 5-Year Strategic Roadmap is clear and focused and will amplify Waterkeeper group's lasting impact not only in our generation but for the future generations to come.



**Arjan Singh**

Waterkeeper Alliance Leadership Circle

# SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION



# GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Global Network – Our community of 300+ Waterkeeper groups from across the globe united with Waterkeeper Alliance, collaborating to defend clean water, share expertise, and amplify collective impact across six continents.

Waterkeeper Movement – A broad, global grassroots movement of clean water allies, including the Alliance, global network of Waterkeeper groups, local leaders, and communities, working together to protect the world's waterways through science, advocacy, litigation and collective action.

Project Osiris – Waterkeeper Alliance's 20-year long-term business and strategy plan that is designed to expand and strengthen internal systems, clarify roles, and align global operations to better support Waterkeeper groups and advance the shared, global mission for clean water.

Quality Standards – A shared set of criteria that defines excellence in Waterkeeper programs—ensuring consistency, accountability, and effectiveness across the global network while allowing for local adaptation and innovation.

Equity in Every Drop – A guiding principle that commits Waterkeeper Alliance and its global network to advancing environmental justice—ensuring that every community, regardless of race, income, or geography, has access to clean, safe, and healthy water.

Dive Into Democracy – An advocacy campaign and call to action that empowers communities to engage in civic processes, influence policy decisions, and hold leaders accountable for protecting clean water and the environment.

Climate-Resilient Water Infrastructure – Drinking water, wastewater, and stormwater systems designed, built, and upgraded to withstand climate impacts—such as flooding, drought, extreme heat, and sea-level rise—ensuring reliable, safe, and sustainable water services for all communities.

Resources – Curated tools, educational materials, guidance, training, information, and visibility provided by Waterkeeper Alliance to its Waterkeeper groups to support their local work and impact.



WATERKEEPER® ALLIANCE

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