

# RIVER CURRENTS

A PUBLICATION OF MILWAUKEE RIVERKEEPER



## A CONFLUENCE OF ART & SCIENCE

### 3rd Annual Milwaukee Riverkeeper Boat Parade

Ahoy, matey! River lovers, musicians, boaters and artisans alike are returning to our waters for the 3rd Annual Milwaukee Riverkeeper Boat Parade on Sunday, September 8th!

Inspired by the ever-popular Bosch Parade in Holland, artists will showcase their talents by bringing to life enchanting displays that celebrate our precious natural resources on the water. This unique twist on a traditional community parade is fun for the entire family! Last year's lineup involved giant sea turtles, a writhing sea dragon, butterflies and a colossal snail!

The parade will start at noon during Harbor District's Harbor Fest event at the mouth of the Kinnickinnic River and

will float up the Milwaukee River through downtown. Riverfront restaurants will open their doors to celebrate the waters and watch the parade while viewers enjoy local eats and drinks.

Community members are invited to join the flotilla with their own aquatic vessel or watch from shore! To get involved, read more about the event, and check out updates on viewing locations, visit:

[milwaukeekeeper.org/milwaukee-boat-parade/](http://milwaukeekeeper.org/milwaukee-boat-parade/)

Want to showcase your own artistic talents? Design a float! Applications are reviewed on a rolling basis. Stipends are available for qualifying artists while space is available!

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

### Feature Story:

24th Annual Spring Cleanup  
Thanks & Highlights

Page 4

Riverkeeper Watch

Page 6

Advocates speak up for our  
waters at Lobby Day 2019

Page 7

Advocacy in Action:  
Moving Towards Recovery-  
Milwaukee Area of Concern

Page 7





# WELCOME



Jennifer Bolger Breceda | Executive Director

## Dear Friend of the Rivers,

Another fabulous spring cleanup is in the books! Thanks to the thousands of volunteers who once again, without fail, descended upon our waterways to protect and restore them after a long winter and rainy spring. It was a cold day, but you wouldn't be able to tell from the numbers – over 3,600 volunteers removed close to 90,000 pounds of pollution and trash.

We have a lot of people, groups, partners, agencies, stakeholders and businesses to thank (see page 4 for the whole list). It truly takes a united village to pull off a Basin-wide event like this. Rock the Green and its volunteers and vendors put on a festive, zero-waste, sustainable post-party complete with a pedal powered stage, local artists Chicken Wire Empire and Lex Allen, local food trucks, and Good City supplied the beer.

Evinrude generously tipped the scales with a boat and engine donation to help with our water quality monitoring, restoration, and mission-related work. We cannot say thank you enough to all those who contributed to make this event a huge success. We are humbled by the generosity and support.

Plastics (bottles, wrappers, straws, bags and even cigarette butts – yes there is even plastic in cigarettes!) are the most frequently found items during our cleanups. There are some staggering statistics out there around plastic waste, like, over 140 metric tons of plastic packaging is thrown out every year; the amount of bubble wrap produced every year could wrap around the earth's equator 500 times; 500 billion plastic cups/year are used; 480 billion plastic bottles/year were sold worldwide; one trillion single-use plastic bags are used annually, or 2 million every minute; over half-a-billion plastic straws are used every day; and the statistics go on.

As much as we love our Annual Cleanup and Adopt-a-River Program, we know that the best way to keep plastic pollution out of our waterways is to stop it at its source. I'm excited to say that we are part of larger, local coalition of groups and stakeholders working to address the single-use plastic epidemic in our

world. In July, we will be launching some new initiatives, so please stay tuned for more ways you can make a difference and help us all work for change.

It is hard to believe that Milwaukee Riverkeeper's Annual Spring Cleanup has been going on for 24 years. Next year will mark our 25th anniversary cleanup, which also coincides with another momentous celebration—the 50th anniversary of Earth Day. Plans to celebrate with a larger event and cleanup that makes an even bigger impact on our community are already underway. Just because our event is over does not mean the work stops.

Every day, Milwaukee Riverkeeper works tirelessly to Protect, Restore, Connect and Advocate for our waterways, but we cannot do it alone. Without support from our community, partners and sponsors, our work would not be possible. So please join us at a summer event, help us advocate for change, and back our work through volunteerism, engagement and financial support.

To healthy, free flowing rivers,

**Jennifer Bolger Breceda**  
Executive Director

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chris Daood  
President

Patti McNair  
Vice President

Lilith Fowler  
Treasurer

Catherine Mercuri  
Secretary

Joseph Cincotta  
Michael DiStefano  
Mustafa Emir  
Jessica Ginster

Beth Handle  
Christian Keene  
Demaris Kenwood  
Catherine Mercuri

Mike Sauer  
Heather Schmidt  
Brian Spahn  
Peter Thornquist

# Look what we've been up to...



Level 1 WQ Monitor Training

**Saying Goodbye to Marquette Trinity Fellow Anna Urban.** Our education programs are off to an amazing start in 2019! From on-site cleanups to classroom facilitation, our Education Coordinator spent the last 2 years growing this new program area. We're so proud of her for graduating, and wish her well when she moves on this summer. We'll be welcoming a new fellow this fall.



Barrels & Beer at Lakefront Brewery

**Our May Level 1 Water Quality Monitoring Training was a success!** New volunteers learned how to take samples and document their findings! We're thankful to Fund for Lake Michigan for providing the support to continue these programs, and to Riveredge Nature Center for providing an excellent location for our volunteers to quite literally - get their feet wet!



Patrick Lee Wilson School learns about Water Quality

**Summer event kick-off!** We are diving into the summer river season head-first! We've already held a few events including our Barrels & Beer rainbarrel workshop at Lakefront Brewery. It was fun for the entire family, with so many artistic creations it would be hard to pick a favorite!

Check out the back cover for upcoming events. Be sure to register, they sell out fast: [milwaukeekeeper.org/events](http://milwaukeekeeper.org/events)

## Everyday Deeds: Remembering Rick Frye



We would like to take a moment to honor and recognize the life of Rick Frye. Rick was a passionate environmentalist and dedicated angler. He was a longtime water quality monitor and an active volunteer. We were proud to call him a friend.

Rick gave so much service to the community and very much loved his work with Southeast Wisconsin Trout Unlimited.

A memorial fund at the Hunger Task Force has been set up in Rick's name. Those interested in donating in his memory can reference his name when making a donation. We wish his loved ones peace and thank Rick for his dedication to clean and healthy waterways in Wisconsin.

To honor Rick, we will continue to work to achieve his dream of fishable rivers and waterways for his grandchildren and for all future generations to enjoy.

*- The Milwaukee Riverkeeper Team*

## STAFF

Jennifer Bolger Breceda, J.D.  
Executive Director

Cheryl Nenn, M.S.  
Riverkeeper

Lisa Greco  
Operations Manager

Leah Holloway  
Program Manager

Anne Michalski  
Communications Manager

Rose Alvarez  
Cleanup & Event Coordinator  
Marshfield Clinic Health System  
AmeriCorps Member

Katie Rademacher  
Water Quality Volunteer Coordinator

Anna Urban  
Education Coordinator  
Trinity Fellow



# Spring CLEANUP 2019

## Thanks & Highlights...

Not even the threat of snow could keep the community from restoring our rivers at the 24th Annual Spring Cleanup. **3,600** courageous volunteers gathered at **70** sites along our rivers to restore river habitat and remove more than **85,000** pounds of trash. Every year, the event gets bigger and better, and this year we added 6 new sites and reached further north than ever before. In total, we restored **43** miles of river!

### THANK YOU SPONSORS

We're so thankful for the support we received this year on the ground and in the waters. 39 businesses, organizations, and agencies shared their commitment to our waterways through generous sponsorships of time, talent and treasure!

As an amazing bonus, Evinrude and Alumacraft generously donated a brand new boat and engine to help Milwaukee Riverkeeper protect and monitor our rivers! Without partners like them, our work would not be possible.

### 2019 BUSINESS MEMBERS

Accelity Marketing | American Transmission Co. | Badger ToyotaLift | Baird | The Boldt Company | Boone & Crockett | Bostik, Inc. | BRP Evinrude | Cargill | Clarke Dietz | Downtown Rotary Club | Department of Public Works | EPIC Creative | Gilbane | Good City Brewing | Inter-Fluve | Jacobs | Keep Greater Milwaukee Beautiful | Kuhl Family Foundation | L.L. Bean | LaMacchia Group | Milwaukee Boat Line | Milwaukee Valve | Milwaukee County Parks | Milwaukee Kayak Company | Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District | Monarch Creative | National Business Furniture | Natural Awakenings | O'Brien & Gere | Physicians Realty Trust | Purple Door Ice Cream | raSmith | Rock the Green | Sid Grinker Restoration | Symbiont Science, Engineering and Construction, Inc. | Tower View | Visual Impressions | von Briesen & Roper, s.c. | Waterkeeper Alliance | WE Energies Foundation | Yellowwood Gear

**Become a business member and receive special recognition throughout the year!**

**Contact Rose Alvarez for more info: [rose@milwaukeekeeper.org](mailto:rose@milwaukeekeeper.org)**



The launch of "The Riverkeeper" our new BOAT courtesy of Evinrude & Alumacraft

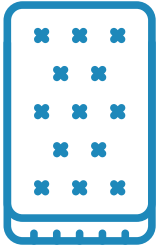


## TALKING TRASH

Every year, we track the wide variety of items found during our annual spring cleanup. This year we uncovered lots of big trash hidden in our waterway. We found:

6

Mattresses



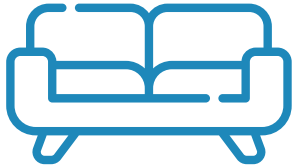
4

Chairs



1

Couch



2

Shopping Carts



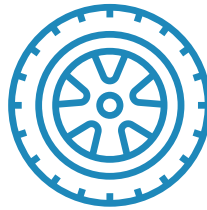
6

Bicycles



16

Tires



You never know what crazy items you'll find during a cleanup!



Find a section of the river in your neighborhood and cleanup all season long!



# Adopt-A-River

A PROGRAM OF MILWAUKEE RIVERKEEPER

**JOIN THE MOVEMENT!** We are entering the third season of the Adopt-A-River Program. The program, sponsored through a generous grant from MMSD, allows individuals, organizations, and community groups to adopt sections of waterways in the Milwaukee River Basin.

Adopters pledge to clean an adopted section of the river at least two times per year for two years! 29 of the 70 Spring Cleanup sites involved an Adopt-A-River participant. So far, we have 92 adopters and 80 sites.

**To learn more, become an adopter, or join a public cleanup in your area, visit: [bit.ly/MRKAadopt](http://bit.ly/MRKAadopt)**



# Riverkeeper Watch



Cheryl Nenn | Riverkeeper

## Milwaukee Riverkeeper joins amicus brief challenging Wisconsin “Lame-Duck Rules”

On May 15, the Wisconsin Supreme Court heard arguments in a lawsuit filed by the League of Women Voters and several other parties on the lame-duck legislation passed last year to restrict the powers of the newly elected Wisconsin Administration. Much of this lawsuit has focused on laws to restrict Medicaid eligibility, early voting, and challenges to the legality of holding a legislative session to constrain the power of a newly elected Governor.

One lesser-known part of Wisconsin's lame-duck package involves a requirement that all state agencies review their entire library of guidance documents, hold public hearings within 6 months, and undergo certification by agency heads, or be rescinded. In addition, the guidance documents—an estimated 200,000—need to be reviewed by the Legislative Reference Bureau and placed in the Administrative Register. Guidance documents are not official rules, but provide important information to businesses and regulated entities about what is required under state rules, and practices and procedures for meeting state rules.

This law is an effort to bind regulatory agencies like the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (WDNR) in red tape, create regulatory uncertainty, and make it harder to protect our natural resources.

No public hearings were held before passing these “fast tracked” bills.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper joined several other partners in a “friends of the court” brief, led by Midwest Environmental Advocates (MEA), in challenging this part of the lame-duck legislation. MRK supporters may remember that we recently won a lawsuit, with the help of MEA, which challenged a settlement agreement between WDNR and the Dairy Business Association that limited DNR's authority to regulate CAFOs through back door negotiations. This lame-duck rule is a similar effort to constrain DNR's work to protect our waters.

## We need a strong Clean Water Act and robust federal funding

Milwaukee Riverkeeper signed onto several comment letters challenging proposed changes to the Clean Water Act that define which waters are protected under the “waters of the United States” (WOTUS) definition. The Trump Administration's proposed changes would remove a wide swath of waters, including ephemeral streams and isolated wetlands, from these protections. These changes threaten our streams, wetlands, and drinking water.

In addition, Milwaukee Riverkeeper and many of our partners worked to advance a strong budget for the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative. The Trump Administration initially zeroed funding out from next year's budget. Thankfully, the Administration changed course after facing widespread bipartisan opposition.

We have also been advocating for strong base funding for agencies that oversee many of our restoration programs including EPA and NOAA, and for farm bill provisions that protect our waters, as well as our working lands.

## Changes to MMSD Stormwater Rules and WDNR Municipal Stormwater Permit

In our last newsletter, we reported on proposed changes to the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District's Chapter 13 rules, which regulate stormwater runoff, help address flooding, reduce flows to the combined sewer system, and encourage good stormwater management. These rule changes passed, and now require green infrastructure for new impervi-

ous surfaces between 5,000 square feet and one-half acre anywhere in the sewer system. Previously, there were no requirements for developments less than one-half acre. An additional change requires runoff management at all sites riparian to rivers over which the District has jurisdiction, including the estuary reaches of these rivers, which was previously not required.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper also submitted several sets of comments, with MEA and Clean Wisconsin, detailing concerns over the new draft General Stormwater Permit for Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems. These comments focused, in part on permit language that seemed to weaken stormwater requirements, as well as on positive changes that incentivize more green infrastructure, require better planning to reduce bacteria sources, and incorporate new pollution reduction requirements for municipalities in the Milwaukee River Basin (as part of new EPA Approved Total Maximum Daily Load Plans). The new general permit was approved by WDNR.

## Kletzsch Park Fish Passage

Milwaukee County Parks and WDNR are proposing a fish passage project at Kletzsch Park Falls. This is a generational opportunity to improve connectivity along the Milwaukee River and pass native fish, such as northern pike and sturgeon, around a significant barrier to access upstream habitat for spawning.

Over a dozen options were considered. The WDNR assessed flow requirements for fish (most native fish can't swim upstream in strong flows) and increased water levels (flood risk for area residents) to find the best option. Significant public opposition followed a public meeting in January where plans for a natural “stream-like” fishway were presented due to impacts to mature trees, river access, and park amenities. Since then, project partners have gone back to the drawing board and are considering alternatives that may work while also reducing impacts to the park. Stay tuned to our website and social media for more information on this project.

**To read full comments, learn more, and sign up for our action alerts please visit our website: [milwaukeekeeperiverkeeper.org](http://milwaukeekeeperiverkeeper.org)**

# Advocates speak up for our rivers at the State Capitol

Milwaukee Riverkeeper and hundreds of other conservation water advocates gathered at the State Capitol in Madison for Conservation Lobby Day 2019.

Milwaukee Riverkeeper, Wisconsin Conservation Voters and Cream City Conservation Corps (CCCC) organized a Milwaukee contingent which included individuals from the Milwaukee Riverkeeper Senior Water Advocacy Network, youth from Alliance for Climate Change, students from Escuela Verde High School and other environmentalists. Participants took part in learning more about the state's water conservation budget, and then met with district legislators.

Governor Tony Evers met with the group and shared his proactive agenda for conservation during his self-proclaimed "Year of Clean Drinking Water!"

In total, 450 conservation voters and 81 organizations asked legislators to support the following four budget priorities.

- Raising CAFO fees to create five new positions at the DNR
- Adding \$70 million in new bonding to replace lead pipes and improve manure management practices
- Creating the Office of Sustainability and Clean Energy
- Reauthorizing the Knowles Nelson Stewardship Program for 10 years



MRK Staff meet with State Representative Evan Goyke

## Advocacy In Action

### Moving Towards Recovery: Milwaukee Area of Concern

The term 'concern' is not usually cause for celebration. However, Milwaukee's designation as a potential 'Priority Area of Concern' in a new Great Lakes Action Plan could be just that. This new 'priority' designation of the Milwaukee Estuary Area of Concern, by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency—expected to be made soon—could bring increased attention and funding to our area, accelerating important restoration work needed to protect our rivers, our wildlife, and drinking water source, Lake Michigan, as well as improve fishing, swimming, and recreational opportunities.

The Milwaukee Estuary was initially designated an Area of Concern (AOC) under the Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement of 1987—one of 31 in the U.S.—because of historical modifications and pollutant loads that contributed toxic contaminants to the AOC and Lake Michigan. Seven AOCs have been delisted after a series of cleanup and restoration projects, and Milwaukee is in the running to become a priority AOC, which could bring new funding to our area for cleanup and restoration activities. While the priority designation is new, the Milwaukee AOC stakeholders have a history of implementing successful projects. This new effort would involve renewed and closer collaboration on the part of stakeholders, including representatives from federal, state, county, and city government agencies as well as community members and groups. The goal of this massive community undertaking is to address legacy contamination and restore beneficial uses in the Milwaukee River Estuary, back to levels similar to other urban areas without the same level of historic industry. Beneficial use impairments that would be addressed include recreational use restrictions, degradation of fish and wildlife habitat and populations, degradation of aesthetics, to name a few.



Traditionally, restoration work of this scale takes generations. This opportunity means ongoing restoration efforts (e.g., dredging of contaminated sediments, stream restoration efforts, habitat improvement projects for aquatic and terrestrial life, etc.) are prioritized and executed faster. In this contest, faster does not mean one river season, rather, about 8 years or so. It has taken decades for the Milwaukee River Estuary to reach its current state, and improvements to water quality will not take place overnight. Improvements will be slow and monitored for many years before we see impairments "officially" removed, and the Milwaukee River Estuary AOC delisted. Nonetheless it is a generational opportunity to make significant gains in water quality.

The success of this effort depends on the community, which means public participation is essential to the process. You can get involved by joining the community advisory committee (Milwaukee Blue Crew), and staying up-to-date with progress by visiting [www.milwaukeeestuaryaoc.com](http://www.milwaukeeestuaryaoc.com) and following along on social media.



Collaborative Office Space:

600 E. Greenfield Avenue  
Milwaukee, WI 53204

[www.milwaukeekeeper.org](http://www.milwaukeekeeper.org)

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Milwaukee, WI  
Permit # 3679

## JOIN US ON THE RIVER

For more information, registration and other events visit:  
[milwaukeekeeper.org/connect/events](http://milwaukeekeeper.org/connect/events)

JUN  
18

### PADDLE & A POUR | MILWAUKEE

Enjoy a guided paddle of the Milwaukee River  
5:30pm - 9:00pm | \$30

JUN  
27

### 2019 RIVER REGALE

Tour our rivers, enjoy drinks, food & fun raffle prizes! 3:00pm - 5:00pm | \$30

JULY  
16

### PADDLE & A POUR | MENOMONEE

Enjoy a guided paddle of the Menomonee River  
5:30pm - 9:00pm | \$30

AUG  
6

### ADOPT-A-RIVER ORIENTATION

Join the movement to restore our rivers  
5:30pm - 6:30pm | Free

AUG  
10

### CREAM CITY CLASSIC

Watch Milwaukee's one and only open river swim!  
Race Start | 8:00am

AUG  
14

### MILKY MOONLIGHT

Marvel at the moon with other river lovers during this twilight paddle 6:15pm | Free

AUG  
20

### PADDLE & A POUR | KINNICKINNIC

Enjoy a guided paddle of the Kinnickinnic River  
5:30pm - 9:00pm | \$30

SEP  
8

### 3RD ANNUAL BOAT PARADE

A fun twist on a family tradition with a floating parade during Harbor Fest! Noon | Free

NOV  
7

### SAVE THE DATE

### FALL MEMBER EVENT

Celebrate the year's progress with other Milwaukee Riverkeeper supporters!

[www.milwaukeekeeper.org](http://www.milwaukeekeeper.org)

