We have some really exciting news! In April, after more than a year of discussions and board visits, Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA) became the newest and 49th state affiliate partner of the National Wildlife Federation! What does that mean? It means that KWA and NWF have agreed that there are a number of common priorities we share and will work on together.

Among our shared interests with NWF, KWA already works on water quality and protection goals, aquatic species conservation, reproduction, and habitat issues in Kentucky. We also share concerns about climate change and its effects on water resources and habitat, particularly the impacts of coal - from the extraction and burning processes to the disposal of waste water from power plants and ash ponds.

NWF state affiliates are all independent non-profit organizations - and KWA is no different. We will remain an independent organization focused on protecting Kentucky’s waterways. Although the official partnership is new, KWA has been working with NWF staff and several other state affiliate partners for years. This action will only serve to strengthen those ties. NWF state affiliates are a diverse group of organizations across the country. It’s a big tent, and we feel like KWA will fit in very comfortably.

Through this new partnership, we will have access to more resources and allies. NWF has some amazing programs, including Garden for Wildlife, Great Waters, and other strategic outreach programs. KWA will utilize this new partnership to empower our coal work, focus more on climate change impacts to water quality and quantity, and broaden our audience to include more wildlife conservationists, sportsmen, and recreational enthusiasts across Kentucky.

To kick-off our partnership, Gordon Garner, KWA Board President, and Judy Petersen, KWA Executive Director, recently returned from the 2014 NWF Annual Meeting in Baltimore, MD. This 78th annual meeting was titled “Water: it connects us all.” Afterwards, Petersen remarked, “I felt right at home when I repeatedly heard words like biodiversity, landscape and watershed conservation, ecosystem threats, sustainable, advocacy programs, and protecting habitat. I was also pleased that KWA was assigned to the NWF energy and habitat committees for resolution and platform development.

So you may be asking yourself, how can a water based group strengthen wildlife management?

As we work to protect watersheds we are protecting habitats as well as water quality for people and wildlife! As KWA succeeds, Kentuckians will gain greater protection for clean water and wildlife - regardless of your desire to view, conserve, hunt or fish – you’ll be able to pass that passion for wildlife down to your children and their children.

Since KWA is a water-focused organization, we do put a large emphasis on protecting aquatic life. Our organization is particularly excited about our role in mussel species research and reproduction (which you can learn more about inside this publication). Mussels are like the canary in the coal mine of streams. If KWA can protect this most sensitive indicator species in our ecosystem, then we know that we are doing the same for all of the other organisms across the state.

The NWF has been without a Kentucky affiliate partner organization for several years. Now NWF members in Kentucky have an organization to represent Kentucky’s interests at national meetings and in Federation actions and priorities. KWA is proud to be the newest state affiliate, and we hope that NWF members will take a few minutes to learn more about KWA, become members of our organization, and help us represent your interests and priorities at the national level!

We need to hear from you! Please fill out the survey in your introductory packet or go to www.KWAAlliance.org/NWF to help steer our direction.

Only by working together will we have the influence and resources to make certain we have clean habitat for our children and for wildlife in the coming generations.
Message From the Director

NWF and KWA - a Winning Combination!

I always love to make new friends. As the newest state affiliate for NWF, I hope many of you will soon be new friends of mine and of KWA’s. We would like to use this shortened version of our quarterly newsletter to introduce ourselves to you... please take a moment to review our staff and Board members below.

This is KWA's 21st year of working in Kentucky and we know the new partnership with the NWF is going to be great! This partnership will expand our reach and make us more effective in conservation and thwarting climate change in Kentucky.

We hope that you enjoy meeting us and that this introduction inspires you to become a member of KWA. By becoming a member of KWA, your voice will mold our fight to protect and restore Kentucky's waterways and the abundant habitat it provides for wildlife across the state. We want to hear from you. Enclosed is a survey which you can complete and mail back to us or fill out online at our website: www.KWAlliance.org/NWF

On behalf of a healthier Kentucky,

Judy Petersen

Executive Committee
Gordon Garner, President; Ward Wilson, Vice President; Bruce Scott, Treasurer; Hugh Archer, Secretary; Beverly Juett, Immediate Past-President

Board Members
Kenny Book, Kentucky River; Ouida Meier, Upper Green River; Scott VanderPloeg, Lower Green River; Dave Wimsatt, Salt River; Tom Vierheller, Big Sandy River; Bob Johnson, Jackson Purchase; Barry Tonning, Licking River; At-Large Delegates: Douglas Davis, Ruth Billings, Kay Harker, Virginia Lee

Emeritus Board Member
Frank Elsen

Staff
Judith Petersen, Executive Director; Angela Doyle, Development Director; Will Willis, Communications Director; Jessica Kane, Office Manager; Tessa Edelen, Watershed Program Director; Tim Joice, Water Policy Director; Jim Hays, Rockcastle River Conservation Program Director; Mark Howell, Bacon Creek Agricultural Coordinator

Kentucky Aquatic Resource Fund: Saving Species From Extinction

Written in collaboration with Monte McGregor, Aquatic Scientist and Malacologist at the Center for Mollusk Conservation

In 2009, KWA began an exciting and groundbreaking partnership with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service’s Kentucky Field Office to establish the Kentucky Aquatic Resource Fund (KARF). KWA acts as the financial steward of the fund, providing a way for multiple partners to contribute funding to conservation projects across the state. One of these projects is the Center for Mollusk Conservation (CMC), located in Frankfort, Kentucky.

Mussels play a critically important role in our ecosystems. There are many species of wildlife that depend on mussels as an important source of food, and mussels are one of nature’s most efficient water filtration systems. A single mussel will filter an average of 8 gallons of water a day – and help to eliminate E. coli and many other pollutants from the water.

North America hosts the most diverse freshwater mussel fauna on Earth, with approximately 300 species representing more than a third of the world’s mussel diversity. Kentucky has one of the most diverse mussel populations in North America, with over 100 recognized species. In Kentucky, 12 mussels are already presumed extinct, and another 28 are listed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service as Threatened or Endangered. Kentucky's Green River (ranked fourth highest in aquatic biodiversity in the US) is home to 74 species of freshwater mussels, many of which are listed as endangered. The Green River also supports at least 9 species found nowhere else in the world, including the Kentucky creekshell mussel.

 Facing increased pressure from pollution, habitat destruction, and climate change, the CMC is the only hope for the continued survival of many of our mussel species. To date, the CMC has successfully reproduced more than 40 species of mussels, many of whom are on the brink of extinction. These mussels are cultured at the Center and then released into rivers, where they continue to thrive!

Without concentrated effort to help our imperiled mussel species, more animals are expected to become listed as federally endangered or even extinct. We can all do our part to help protect our rich mussel diversity by supporting habitat restoration, pollution prevention, and the continued advancement of mussel protection by the CMC. In fact, rest assured that you are doing your small part just by being a member of KWA. Through KARF, KWA has been supporting these exciting new mussel projects at the CMC for years and will continue to do so in the future.

So the next time that you see a mussel in your local waterway, know that it is working hard to keep the streams clean, and, by becoming a KWA member, you are helping to keep it that way!
KWA Works Every Day on Behalf of Our Families for Clean Water

POLICY... IN BRIEF: what we’re doing to protect your water resources

By Tim Joice, Water Policy Director

KWA is your voice in the fight for clean water in Kentucky! Below, you will find a few of our directives that perfectly align with NWF initiatives. KWA’s work on behalf of the health of our waterways and communities is why NWF wants our help to shape their direction.

Support the Clean Water Protection Rule

In late April, U.S. EPA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (Corps) proposed a rule designed to clarify protections to streams, wetlands, and other “waters of the U.S.” under the Clean Water Act. U.S. state at roughly 1,100 miles but Kentucky has an estimated 92,000 stream miles in total. This rule would provide clear protections to over 49,000 miles of critical seasonally-flowing headwater streams and countless wetlands areas. These are most often the waters damaged by industry and development, which can endanger water quantity and quality impacts downstream. In Kentucky, EPA has estimated that 3.2 million citizens are served by public drinking water systems that rely in part on these streams.

After years of requests for clarity, the agencies finally felt the time was right to propose a new rule on the matter. As noted in the EPA’s press release, “About 60 percent of stream miles in the U.S. only flow seasonally or after rain, but have considerable impact on the downstream waters. And approximately 117 million people get drinking water from public systems that rely in part on these streams.”

Kentucky has the second most “navigable miles” of any continental

Farm Bill Passed

The Farm Bill has many programs and components that can impact water quality, and we couldn’t go after everything - so we picked our battles. We focused on the critical relationship of water quality and conservation compliance and the need to re-link conservation compliance with taxpayer-subsidized crop insurance. We also advocated for the continuation of conservation programs at existing funding levels.

The result: in February Congress finally agreed on a new Bill, and Obama signed it into law. The new Bill slightly reduced funding in conservation programs, but we scored a major accomplishment by getting conservation compliance measures re-linked to crop insurance.

Pipeline Suspended Indefinitely

First came the news that the Bluegrass Pipeline project partners were delaying the pipeline by one year. At roughly the same time, KWA received the Army Corps of Engineers permit application by the Pipeline Partners that indicated upwards of 750 waterways and wetlands that would be impacted in Kentucky.

NWF has documented that, due to the current lack of oversight by pipeline companies and regulatory agencies, pipelines pose serious threats to our communities, private property, wildlife ecology, recreational resources, our waterways, and all other environmental resources. KWA supports the NWF energy committee resolution on Pipeline Safety.

It was just last year when we were hearing the first bits about the Bluegrass Pipeline cutting across our streams and rivers. Since then, many citizens have mobilized and made a concerted effort to prevent the pipeline company from steamrolling its way through the state. Clearly, the partnering companies involved in the pipeline did not realize how protective and passionate Kentuckians are of our property, our land, and our water. We did not sit idly by while private companies threaten our state.

Ultimately, the Corps determined the permit application was incomplete. Then, in late April came the news that the Pipeline Partners were suspending the project indefinitely!
Winning in Kentucky’s Watersheds
By Tessa Edelen, Watershed Program Director

Kentucky Waterways Alliance is very proud of the work being done in watersheds across the state. This watershed planning work is made possible by the support of KWA members, project partners, and volunteers dedicated to improving the health of their local waterways! Check out our current project work briefs and the current success we are having.

**Bacon Creek** KWA’s long term collaboration with the Bacon Creek Watershed Council in central Kentucky has resulted in a watershed-based plan, educational events and workshops, soil and conservation practices, and septic system repairs with the funding of federal grants and local community support. We recently received additional grant funding to continue our work in the Bacon Creek watershed area. Residents have even reported that fish can be seen in the creek again = win!

**Beargrass Creek** The Beargrass Creek Alliance endeavors to motivate Louisville residents to understand stormwater pollution and to do their part to reduce it. From “The Pledge” to the Storm Drain Marking program, their outreach is creative and thorough. Empowering local citizens to be a part of the solution = win!

**Darby Creek** Four years ago, KWA and local partners finished the first iteration of the Darby Creek Watershed plan. We just won more funding to update the plan and start implementing conservation practices. Using watershed plans to protect and improve water quality = win!

**Harrods Creek** KWA members came to us and asked for a watershed planning project in the Harrods Creek Watershed – and then they raised the money to make it happen. Community members taking charge of their waterways = win!

**Red Bird River** KWA is always looking for ways to improve watershed planning. The EPA has developed a new tool to help prioritize where conservation efforts should be focused. This resource is currently being put to use on the Red Bird River project! KWA projects are on the cutting edge of watershed planning = win!

**Red River** Kentucky’s only Wild and Scenic River, the Red River is a state treasure. KWA is working with private landowners and watershed communities to keep it clean. Protecting valuable resources for future generations = win!

For a lot more in depth look at all of these current projects and completed ones, see the Watershed Planning section of our website: [www.KWAlliance.org](http://www.KWAlliance.org)

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**Upcoming Events**

**July 10 Nature Photography Workshop** Ever wish you could take beautiful nature photos like the ones you see featured in some of our publications by Lucent Dreams Photography? Now’s your chance! Join us at 6:30 pm at Big Rock in Cherokee Park, Louisville, KY to learn some tricks from the pros. Class limited to 10 participants. Register on our website or by calling the office at (502) 589-8008. Must be a current KWA member. Not a member? Join today!

**August 9 Clean The Green** Greensburg, KY. Mark your calendars for another opportunity to help protect one of America’s most biologically diverse rivers.

**September 16-17 Rockcastle River Mussel Workshop** This two day course is designed to provide attendees with an increased level of knowledge on several aspects of freshwater mussel identification and biology.

**October 10 KWA Gala** Join us in celebrating our 21st birthday at BBQ, Bourbon, and Blues! The event will be held at the Gheens Foundation Lodge at Beckley Creek Park in Louisville, overlooking the iconic Floyds Fork. Come out for great food, great music, and great fun!

As always, please refer to our website [www.KWAlliance.org](http://www.KWAlliance.org) for a complete list of events!

Did you know you can become a member of KWA for only $25 a year? Visit [WWW.KWAllIANCE.ORG](http://WWW.KWAllIANCE.ORG) to join us in the pursuit of healthy waterways today.