



Ushering in a **new era**
of **stewardship**
for America's **rivers,**
wetlands,
and **coasts**

Water
Protection
Network

901 E Street NW, Suite 400
Washington, DC 20004

Phone: (202) 797-6617

www.WaterProtectionNetwork.org

5-Year Strategic Plan

Adopted March 2009. Updated April 2011

a new era of **stewardship**



The Federal Government's investments in water projects have a profound impact on our rivers, wetlands and coasts. Federally-subsidized projects all too often harm the natural environment, waste taxpayer dollars, and put the public at greater risk from natural disasters.



The *Water Protection Network* helps organizations and individuals understand and influence federal water laws, policies, projects and permits. We assist organizations like yours to become more effective by providing technical, legal and other support, and by creating opportunities to participate in federal policy decision-making.



This partnership is creating the force necessary to shift the focus of water planning so it benefits society by protecting and restoring the environment. Thriving wetlands, rivers and coasts feed our economic growth and act as natural buffers for our communities which are becoming exposed to ever-increasing threats from global climate change.

Vision

We envision a new era of stewardship for our rivers, wetlands and coasts brought about through collaborative advocacy among organizations and individuals from around the country who believe a protected and restored environment is necessary for the health and sustainability of our natural and human communities. Healthy and thriving ecosystems are essential for making these communities more resilient to the impacts of global climate change.

Mission

The Water Protection Network works to ensure that water policies and projects are environmentally and economically sound.

“The **strength** of the conservation movement depends on our **relationships** and how well we work together to **achieve** our shared vision of a **sustainable** environment.”



~ George Sorvalis, *WPN Coordinator*

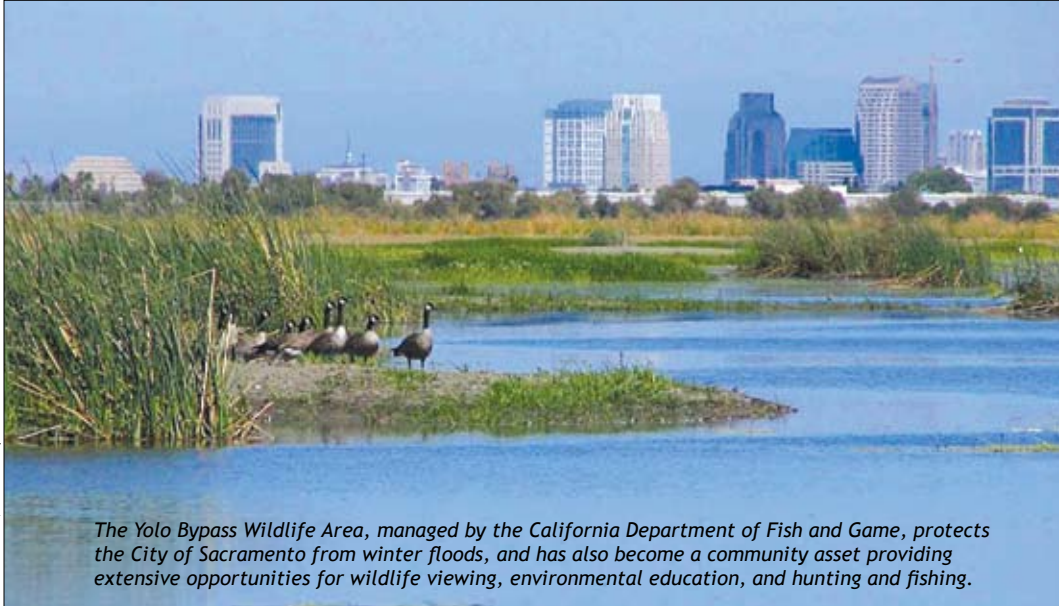
Moving Us Beyond Traditional, Structural Projects

The Federal Government is our nation's largest water manager and plays a pivotal role in determining the health of our nation's waters. Unfortunately, current federal water policies favor large-scale structural projects like dams and levees, deepening and expanding river channels, hardening shorelines with bulkheads, and dredging and pumping sand onto beaches. These traditional, structural approaches fail to work in concert with natural processes, alter entire river systems and coastlines, harm our aquatic ecosystems, waste our taxpayer dollars, and put public health and safety at risk.

Advocating for Healthy Ecosystems to Protect People and Property

Restoration projects and other non-structural solutions help fish and wildlife thrive, improve economies, and help communities withstand the more severe weather linked to global warming. Healthy, functioning natural systems absorb flood waters, protect homes and people from storm surges, provide clean water, store global warming pollution, recharge ground water, and provide critical wildlife habitat. However, federal, state, and local officials often overlook non-structural measures and restoration approaches as solutions to water challenges.

preparing
America
for a changing
climate



The Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area, managed by the California Department of Fish and Game, protects the City of Sacramento from winter floods, and has also become a community asset providing extensive opportunities for wildlife viewing, environmental education, and hunting and fishing.

Credit: Dave Feliz, California Department of Fish and Game

Changing Federal Water Policies to Adapt to Global Climate Change

Concerns with traditional structural approaches continue to mount as we see increasing changes in climate and water cycles. The nation is facing increased storms, floods, droughts and rising sea levels along our coasts and estuaries resulting from global climate change. The majority of large federally-sponsored civil works projects do not factor in the latest global warming science. As a result, too many federal water projects put people in harm's way, and other federal policies actually incentivize residential and industrial development in risky areas along our coasts and in our floodplains.

Ensuring that Water Planning Serves the Public

To meet America's 21st century water challenges, we, as a nation, must make water resources decisions based on the latest forward-looking science and forecasts, project merit, national interests, public safety and watershed benefits. However, poor decision-making and undue political influence leads to congressional authorization of projects that do not serve the public interest.

Leading the Movement to Modernize Our Water Planning

The Water Protection Network has made tremendous progress in improving our country's federal water policies to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We formed in 2002 out of the recognition that we must *act together* if we are to modernize federal water policy to protect and restore our nation's rivers, wetlands and coasts. We have grown to more than 185 organizations from around the country.

Working alongside organizations like yours, we have:

- ~ Worked with Congress to modernize our country's federal water planning process in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA).
- ~ Defeated highly destructive Corps of Engineers projects and prevented many other controversial projects from moving forward, saving hundreds of thousands of acres of critical habitat.
- ~ Turned the notion of *Corps Reform* into a reality, and brought it into the mainstream of the water community and decision-makers.

Despite the progress made to date, we need your help to overcome the many hurdles that remain to ensuring that all federal water projects are environmentally and economically sound.



Credit: Kelly Wagner, National Wildlife Federation

Through the National Water Policy and Grassroots Strategic Initiatives outlined in this plan, the Water Protection Network will ensure that our members have the tools they need to successfully advocate for sustainable solutions to America’s 21st century water challenges. This plan is designed with the clear understanding that we will work together to implement the strategies and tactics outlined below.

Achieving these goals will help ensure that federal water policies and projects ensure resiliency in the face of global warming, protect public safety, build a sustainable economy, reduce wasteful government spending and restore vital fish and wildlife habitat.

strategic national policy initiatives

2-YEAR STRATEGIC INITIATIVES

Ensure Resiliency to a Changing Climate by Requiring the Use of Non-Structural and Restoration Approaches to Solving Water Resource Challenges

Climate change is putting more stress on our natural systems and creating more frequent and severe weather events and natural disasters. Federally-subsidized water projects all too often harm the natural systems that help mitigate global warming’s impacts to people and wildlife. The Water Protection Network will work to ensure that our federal water policies compel the use of non-structural and restoration solutions that preserve our natural systems. Only when non-structural solutions are not feasible should we consider traditional structural approaches.

Ensure Better Management of America’s Floodplains and Coastlines

Inadequate federal policies continue to promote floodplain and coastal development, putting more people in harm’s way and destroying ecosystems needed to protect communities from flood damages and mitigate the impacts of climate change. As a result, national flood damages and catastrophes continue to rise at alarming rates. The Water Protection Network will work to reform the National Flood Insurance Program and engage FEMA and communities to reduce flood risk and protect ecosystems and natural floodplain functions.

Fully Implement the Corps Reforms Passed in the Water Resources Development Act of 2007

The Water Resources Development Act of 2007 (WRDA 2007) requires the Corps of Engineers to modernize its project planning, strengthen its wetlands mitigation, and independently review certain projects. The Water Protection Network will work to ensure that the Corps of Engineers implements these reforms in a meaningful way, to ensure that projects are better designed and constructed, environmental impacts are adequately mitigated, and the latest science and forecasts are used in planning.



The removal of Savage Rapids Dam from Oregon's Rogue River.

Credit: WaterWatch of Oregon, www.waterwatch.org

4-YEAR INITIATIVES

Institute Regular Reassessment of Operations for Existing Projects

Many water civil works projects are decades-old and, in many cases, no longer serving their intended purpose while still causing significant harm to the environment, wildlife, public safety and the economy. The Water Protection Network will seek to institute a process requiring periodic re-evaluation of the operation of projects, and the deauthorization or reformulation of projects that are no longer necessary.

Prioritize Projects and Abandon Outdated Legacy Projects

Legacy projects - projects that were authorized decades ago but never constructed due to unacceptable environmental or economic impacts - remain major threats and compete for limited federal resources. The Water Protection Network will push for legislation or other measures to systematically prioritize new projects and deauthorize legacy projects that fail to meet current planning requirements and criteria.

SUPPORT-ROLE INITIATIVES

Support Proposals to Steer More Federal Resources Towards Ecosystem Restoration

Federal policies must shift our government's investments away from constructing large structural water projects that harm the environment, to ones that play a greater role in protecting and restoring our rivers, wetlands and coasts. The Water Protection Network will work to steer more federal resources towards restoration, keep its members up to date on these projects, and provide more opportunities for members to engage.

Support Clean Water Act Improvement Efforts

The Clean Water Act Section 404 program regulates development in wetlands, streams and other sensitive waters. Many Water Protection Network members are working to improve the effectiveness of the Clean Water Act's regulatory program. The Network will help its members to engage in these regulatory reform efforts.

strategic grassroots initiatives

STRENGTHEN PROGRAM AND OUTREACH EFFORTS

Provide Technical Assistance and Financial Resources to Water Protection Network Members

The Water Protection Network will continue to provide resources for partner organizations by creating a members-only section of www.WaterProtectionNetwork.org; drafting Press Releases, Opinion Editorials and other Templates members can utilize; and serving as a clearing house for 'how-to manuals' and other reports that deal with influencing water resource decisions.

Serve as the Eyes and Ears in D.C. to Network Members on National Administrative and Legislative Issues

The Water Protection Network will continue to act as the 'eyes and ears in DC' for our partner organizations to help local groups and community leaders stay abreast of national and regional water policy developments, and of the federal appropriations process.



NETWORK DEVELOPMENT

Strengthen Relationships with Water Protection Network Member Groups

To strengthen relationships among our nearly 200 member organizations, the Water Protection Network will hold network-wide conference calls, create work groups and provide opportunities for members to network with each other through other meetings and conferences.

Engage Existing Members and Attract New Members

To be as strong and effective as possible, the Water Protection Network will increase our membership and inspire greater participation. To accomplish this we will ensure transparency of our operations, inclusiveness in the decision-making process, and will continue to provide opportunities and incentives for working closely together on campaigns of mutual interest.

member groups

- Ala Wai Watershed Association
- Alabama Environmental Council
- Alabama Rivers Alliance
- Alameda Creek Alliance
- Altamaha Riverkeeper
- American Bottom Conservancy
- American Rivers
- American Whitewater
- Amigos Bravos
- Amigos de Bolsa Chica
- Apalachicola Riverkeeper
- Appalachian Center for the Economy and the Environment
- Arizona Wildlife Federation
- Arkansas Nature Alliance
- Arkansas River Coalition, Inc.
- Arkansas Wildlife Federation
- Assateague Coastal Trust
- Association of Northwest Steelheaders
- Atchafalaya Basinkeeper
- Audubon Arkansas
- Blue Planet Projects
- Butte Environmental Council
- The Calumet Project
- Center for Biological Diversity
- Choctawhatchee Riverkeeper
- Citizens Against Toxic Substances
- Citizens Against Widening the Industrial Canal
- Citizens for a Clean Environment
- Clarendon Chamber of Commerce
- Clean Up the River Environment
- Clean Water Network
- Coalition to Close the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet
- Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana
- Coast Alliance
- Columbia River Crab Fisherman's Association
- Columbia River Estuary Study Taskforce
- Columbia River Fishermen's Protective Union
- Columbia Riverkeeper
- Community Clean Water Institute
- Conservation Council for Hawaii
- Conservation Council of North Carolina
- Cry of the Water
- Delaware Nature Society
- Delaware Riverkeeper Network
- Detroit Peoples' Water Board
- Door County Environmental Council
- Duke University Program for the Study of Developed Shorelines
- Earthjustice
- Ecological Conservation Organization
- Endangered Habitats League
- Environmental Action Committee of West Marin
- Environmental Advocates of New York
- Environmental Defense
- Environmental Defense Center
- Environmental Law and Policy Center
- Federation of Fly Fishers
- Florida Surfrider
- Florida Wildlife Federation
- Freshwater Future
- Friends of Black Bayou
- Friends of Clear Creek
- Friends of San Lorenzo Creek
- Friends of the Crooked River
- Friends of Blackwater
- Friends of the Earth
- Friends of the Kaw
- Friends of the Mississippi River
- Friends of the Rivers of Virginia
- Friends of the Santa Clara River
- Friends of the North Fork and White Rivers
- Galveston Bay Conservation and Preservation Association
- Georgia River Network
- Georgia Wildlife Federation
- Glynn Environmental Coalition
- Great Egg Harbor Watershed Association
- Great Lakes United
- Great Rivers Environmental Law Center
- Great Rivers Habitat Alliance
- Gulf Restoration Network
- Help Save the Apalachicola River Group
- Holy Cross Neighborhood Association
- Hoosier Environmental Council
- Humboldt North Coast Land Trust
- Idaho Rivers United
- Indian Riverkeeper
- Indiana Wildlife Federation
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
- Izaak Walton League of America
- Kansas Wildlife Federation
- Kentucky Resources Council
- Kentucky Waterways Alliance
- Kootenai Environmental Alliance
- LA River Council Committee
- Lake Erie Region Conservancy
- Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation
- League of Ohio Sportsmen
- Levees.Org
- Lone Tree Council
- Louisiana Audubon Council
- Louisiana Environmental Action Network
- Louisiana Wildlife Federation
- Lower Neuse Riverkeeper
- Matilija Coalition
- Michigan Environmental Council
- Michigan United Conservation Clubs Inc.
- Mid South Fly Fishers
- Minnesota Conservation Federation
- Mississippi River Revival
- Mississippi Wildlife Federation
- Missouri Coalition for the Environment
- National Audubon Society
- National Committee for the New River
- National Wildlife Federation
- Natural Heritage Institute
- Natural Resources Defense Council
- Nebraska Wildlife Federation
- New River Foundation
- New York/New Jersey Baykeeper
- NoPort Southport NC, Inc.
- North Carolina Coastal Federation
- North Carolina Wildlife Federation
- North Greenville Community Development Corporation
- North Swell
- Northwest Environmental Advocates
- Ogeechee-Canochee Riverkeeper
- Ohio Environmental Council
- Ohio PIRG
- Ohio River Foundation
- The Ohio Smallmouth Alliance
- Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition
- Oklahoma Wildlife Federation
- Old Arabi Neighborhood Association
- Ouachita River Foundation
- Pacific Marine Conservation Council
- Partners for Clean Streams
- Passaic River Coalition
- Penna. Federation of Sportsmens Clubs
- People to Save the Sheyenne
- Planning and Conservation League
- Potomac River Association
- Prairie Rivers Network
- Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility
- Quadcities Citizens Against Triumph
- Raritan Riverkeeper
- River Alliance of Wisconsin
- River Network
- The River Project
- River Valley Wildlife Federation
- Rivers Alliance of Connecticut
- Rivers Unlimited
- Salmon For All
- Satilla Riverkeeper
- Savannah Riverkeeper
- Save Our Farmland Coalition
- Save Our Wild Salmon Coalition
- Save the Bay
- Save the Cape, Inc.
- Save The River
- Sea Turtle Survival League
- Sierra Club
- South Carolina Coastal Conservation League
- South Carolina Wildlife Federation
- South Dakota Wildlife Federation
- South Yuba River Citizens League
- Southern Environmental Law Center
- Spokane Riverkeeper
- St. Louis Intercommunity Environmental Council of Women Religious
- Surfers' Environmental Alliance
- Surfrider Foundation
- Taxpayers for Common Sense
- Tennessee Clean Water Network
- Tennessee Environmental Council
- Texas Committee on Natural Resources
- The Green School
- The Open Space Council
- The Ozark Society
- Tip of the Mitt Watershed Council
- Tualatin Riverkeepers
- Tujunga Watershed Council and Stakeholders
- Upper Chattahoochee Riverkeeper
- Virgin Islands Conservation Society
- Vermont Natural Resources Council
- Waterkeeper Alliance
- West Virginia Rivers Coalition
- Western Pennsylvania Conservancy
- Wetlands Alert
- Wisconsin Wildlife Federation
- Yell County Wildlife Federation

get involved

Become Part of the Movement

Join the *Water Protection Network* and be eligible to receive technical assistance grants, attend our membership meetings, and receive our WPN eNewsletter. Subscribe to the WPN Listserv to share information and request guidance or assistance from water policy and natural resource experts.

Join by contacting *Water Protection Network* Coordinator George Sorvalis at (202) 797-6617, sorvalisg@nwf.org or visiting www.WaterProtectionNetwork.org.



2010 WPN Member Meeting: *Washington, DC*

From March 14 - 16, 2010, 80 Water Protection Network members and partners joined with scientists, economists, and high-level Obama Administration officials to help meet the challenges of climate change and improve floodplain management at the WPN's Annual Meeting. The event featured one-on-one trainings, a cruise on the Potomac River and our members telling their stories to the Assistant Secretary of the Army for Civil Works Jo-Ellen Darcy and top-ranking White House Council on Environmental Quality officials.

Major Water Protection Network Victory: *For a Healthy Delta, We Dumped the Pumps!*

In one of the greatest water-related conservation victories of our time, EPA on August 31, 2008, issued a Clean Water Act Veto of the Corps' controversial Yazoo Backwater Pumps and stopped this project for good. This project would have drained and damaged more than 200,000 acres (or 314 sq. miles) of hemispherically critical wet-lands in the Mississippi Delta. The Water Protection Network led local and national outreach efforts for this victory.



STEERING COMMITTEE

Cyn Sarthou - *Co-Chair*
New Orleans, LA
Gulf Restoration Network

Tim Guilfoile - *Co-Chair*
Edgewood, KY
Sierra Club

George Sorvalis - *Coordinator*
Washington, DC
National Wildlife Federation

Steve Ellis, *Washington, DC*
Taxpayers for Common Sense

Natalie Roy, *Washington, DC*
Clean Water Network

Andrew Smith, *Apalachicola, FL*
Apalachicola Riverkeeper

Shana Udvardy, *Washington, DC*
American Rivers

Maya van Rossum, *Bristol, PA*
Delaware Riverkeeper Network

Jim Wood, *Dardanelle, AR*
Arkansas Wildlife Federation

Planning assistance provided by
Institute for Conservation Leadership

Layout by SerendipityDesign.com

WaterProtectionNetwork

901 E Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20004
Phone: (202) 797-6617 • www.WaterProtectionNetwork.org