

# FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

Exploring Effective Advocacy and  
Collaboration Approaches



The Consultative Group on Biological Diversity  
The Funders Network  
Environmental Grantmakers Association

NOVEMBER 2016



# Freshwater Case Studies

## Exploring Effective Advocacy and Collaboration Approaches

November 2016

### INTRODUCTION

In response to the growing eagerness by local, regional and national funders to engage on freshwater issues in the United States, the Environmental Grantmakers Association (EGA), the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN), and the Consultative Group on Biological Diversity (CGBD) are hosting a funder briefing to share experiences, identify effective advocacy practices on water issues, and explore ways in which freshwater funders might enhance coordination and collaboration – with each other, with grantees, and among grantees.

As background for this briefing, fifteen case studies were developed to explore recent collaborative initiatives related to freshwater issues. These brief case studies each describe the freshwater issue being addressed, the advocacy and collaborative approaches used, and the results achieved. They also extract lessons learned regarding effective advocacy and collaboration approaches. Each case study provides contact information if a reader wishes to explore the initiative in more detail. There are hundreds of impressive initiatives being pursued across the country related to freshwater, and the fifteen case studies by no means capture all of these important efforts. The case studies were selected to provide a representative sampling of national, regional and local initiatives related to a wide variety of freshwater topics. They include NGO-only efforts, funder coordination groups, and initiatives combining funders and NGOs.

Finally, a note about the term *freshwater*: This term is used in the report as shorthand for many different water-related initiatives, including urban water quality efforts, river flow protection projects, freshwater estuary restoration, and prevention of groundwater overdraft and pollution. Water issues are always complex, and the use of the broad term *freshwater* is a small effort to simplify complexity in this report.

**THEMES FROM CASE STUDIES**

Many common themes around advocacy and collaboration emerged from the case studies, several of which are summarized below. Some of these are unique to freshwater initiatives, while others could be relevant to a variety of other issues as well.

**Advocacy Best Practices**

- Being ready for opportunity is critical in the water arena, where droughts, pollution events or other developments can create narrow windows for policy change. Early research, policy analysis and message development can lay the groundwork to enable quick response to a crisis or opportunity.
- Because water issues can be complex, breaking work down into a campaign approach with definable (even if incremental) wins can help ensure long-term success.
- Positions on water issues do not always break down along typical liberal/conservative lines, and thus can often present the opportunity to build common ground among diverse stakeholders and/or craft bipartisan legislative coalitions. Coalitions that have recognized these opportunities often obtain more durable results.
- Water quality and quantity issues both have significant economic implications, presenting the opportunity to appeal to a more diverse set of stakeholders and to present decision-makers with a clear case for action.
- The coordination of state field operations with Washington, DC advocacy can be effective, especially for regional-scale water issues.
- Even though water issues are often local or regional in nature, annual DC lobby days can enhance the ability of local or regional coalitions to garner federal support for their priorities.
- As in other issue areas, collaborative approaches offer the ability to share success stories, best practices, strategies and information, enhancing the effectiveness of each group and of the coalition effort itself.
- Because water decision-making is frequently complex, both “inside” and “outside” games are often critical to success. Close coordination between the two is vital.

**Advocacy Challenges**

- The complexity of some water issues can present advocacy and communications challenges. Breaking the issue into component pieces around which “wins” can be defined can help overcome this challenge.
- As with other environmental issues, there can be tension between functioning as outsider advocates for policy change and insider partners for policy implementation.
- It can be hard to balance between the need for short-term wins to show momentum and attract funding, and the need to maintain work toward long-term reforms.

**Collaboration Best Practices**

- Early engagement, leadership and sustained core funding from a handful of committed funders is often key to success.
- A coalition approach can help to coordinate multiple river interests and perspectives (water quality, water supply, social equity, fishing, boating, biodiversity, etc.). This can both strengthen strategies and ensure groups are speaking with one voice.
- Diverse groups with differing organizational goals can be effective partnering in a coalition, so long as partnership groups are fully invested in the coalition’s mission and that mission is clearly defined.
- Sustained, frequent and substantive communications with and among coalition members and funders is essential.
- Resources for core staffing (including coalition management) and communications, can increase effectiveness.
- Shared fundraising reduces the time organizations spend on competing for funding, allowing more focus on achieving substantive goals.
- Coalitions that maintain a tight focus on doing one thing well are more likely to be effective than those that take on too many issues or approaches simultaneously.
- The ability to engage in coordinated outreach to decision-makers through a coalition can be valuable. Consistency in message from the conservation community (and its partners) is more likely to produce results.
- Coalitions where each partner brings differing core strengths to the initiative can achieve synergies and improve effectiveness.

**Collaboration Challenges**

- It can be a learning process for NGOs to collaborate productively, not only amongst themselves but also with funders that have their own mission and strategies.
- In long-term campaigns, both coalition members and funders can suffer from issue fatigue. This can be countered by a focus on short-term wins that maintain momentum toward longer-term reforms.
- After a big policy victory, it can be challenging to maintain coalition momentum and to shift toward implementation of policy change. A “strategic refresh” can help to explicitly acknowledge and minimize this challenge.
- The strength of a broad network approach to collaboration can come at a cost of clear vision and direction.
- There is always a need to bring new funders into the mix.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

EGA, TFN and CGBD would like to extend a special thank you to the following foundations that sponsored both the funder briefing and the development of this report: the S.D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, the Pisces Foundation, the Wege Foundation, the Turner Foundation, the Agua Fund, and the Park Foundation. We would also like to thank Mary Kelly of Culp & Kelly LLP and Margaret Bowman of Bowman Environmental Consulting for drafting these case studies and organizing the funder briefing. Finally, a big thank you to all of the funders and advocates who provided input into and review of the case studies. We are hopeful that the case studies help shine a light on all of the impressive freshwater work being conducted across the country.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about individual case studies, please contact the individuals listed in the case study. For more information about the funder briefing or this report, please contact Adam Harms at EGA [aharms@ega.org](mailto:aharms@ega.org).

CASE STUDIES

National Initiatives

1. Clean Water Coalition . . . . .	6
2. America’s Great Waters Coalition . . . . .	8
3. Hydropower Reform Coalition . . . . .	10
4. Stormwater Funders’ Group . . . . .	12
5. Urban Waters Learning Network. . . . .	14

Regional Initiatives

6. Water Funder Initiative . . . . .	16
7. Colorado River Collaborative . . . . .	18
8. Klamath River Restoration. . . . .	20
9. Chesapeake Bay Funders Network. . . . .	22
10. Choose Clean Water Coalition . . . . .	24
11. Healing Our Waters - Great Lakes Coalition. . . . .	26
12. Restore the Mississippi River Delta Campaign . . . . .	28

State Initiatives

13. Texas Living Waters Project. . . . .	30
14. California Groundwater Campaign . . . . .	32
15. New Yorkers Against Fracking. . . . .	34

## FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# THE CLEAN WATER COALITION

### SUMMARY

The Clean Water Coalition coordinated the efforts of national, regional and local organizations to support the federal adoption of the Clean Water Rule (CWR). Adopted in June 2015, the CWR restored protections for an estimated 60% of the nation's stream miles, 20 million acres of wetlands, and drinking water supplies for one in three Americans.

### BACKSTORY

Over the past two decades, a series of legal challenges to the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act (CWA) reduced CWA protections for thousands of miles of streams and acres of wetlands. A multi-year effort to pass legislation restoring these protections proved unsuccessful. In roughly 2011, the Obama Administration decided to develop a new administrative rule to clarify CWA jurisdiction. While its members had been informally collaborating for several years, the Clean Water Coalition was organized more formally in late 2013 to advocate for a strong Clean Water Rule and provide policy, legal, and constituent support when the CWR was challenged by opponents.

### APPROACH


The Clean Water Coalition was coordinated by a steering committee of policy, communication, legal, and legislative staff from environmental and sportsmen organizations. The committee was co-chaired by the [National Wildlife Federation](#) and the [Natural Resources Defense Council](#). This pairing of environmental and sportsmen organizations was repeated with co-chairs of the field workgroup ([Trout Unlimited](#) and [Environment America](#)) and the communications workgroup ([Clean Water Fund](#), [American Rivers](#), and [Resource Media](#)). Over 24 organizations were involved in the Coalition. This paired leadership structure supported a key strength of the coalition: its ability to leverage and coordinate environmental voices with the unique and bi-partisan voices of sportsmen organizations and their members. The Coalition initially created an extensive multi-year campaign plan, but funds for the broad effort did not materialize. Instead, incremental funding supported by a coordinated funder effort addressed needs identified through a matrix that set forth each campaign tactic, its cost, the potential grantee and geographic reach. A trusted intermediary helped to generate funding support and coordinate coalition engagement with the funders.

### RESULTS

The Clean Water Rule was signed on May 25 and took effect on August 28, 2015. The next day, 18 states filed federal lawsuits challenging the rule, and on October 9, 2015 a nationwide temporary stay of the CWR was granted. Litigation is still pending on the legal challenges to the Rule. In the meantime, in January 2016, President Obama used his veto power to stop Congressional action to defeat the Clean Water Rule.

### CONTACT

Jan Goldman Carter, NWF, [goldmancarterj@nwf.org](mailto:goldmancarterj@nwf.org); Jon Devine, NRDC, [jdevine@nrdc.org](mailto:jdevine@nrdc.org); [www.protectcleanwater.org](http://www.protectcleanwater.org)

 **CORE TAKEAWAY**

Through modest but coordinated funding support and the assistance of a trusted intermediary, the Clean Water Coalition overcame opposition from agricultural and business interests to ensure the adoption of the Clean Water Rule.

## FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

A report of lessons learned from the Clean Water Rule campaign will be available by request from Verna Harrison ([vharrison@vernaharrison.com](mailto:vharrison@vernaharrison.com)) in January 2017.

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### Advocacy Best Practices

- The Coalition had a strong combination of environmental, sportsmen, faith, health and business voices.
- The coordination of state field operations with Washington, DC advocacy was effective.
- Strong White House interest in the Rule was key to success.
- Trusted relationships with Executive and Congressional branch members was essential for defending the CWR.
- Consistent messaging, delivered to different audiences by different messengers, was effective.

#### Advocacy Challenges

- The lack of dedicated campaign staff was a drain on the time of coalition leaders.
- Field organizing infrastructure on clean water issues is generally lacking, making it hard to “dial it up” on short notice.
- Organizing was weakest with state and local governments.
- It was hard to engage farming organizations, though some progressive farm organizations did provide support for the rule.
- The opportunity to enhance messaging linkage between the Clean Water Rule and the Clean Power Rule was not realized.
- Paid media after legislative votes would have helped build longer term support for the Rule.

#### Collaboration Best Practices

- The Coalition brought together organizations with different strengths (legal, sportsmen, campaigners etc.), resulting in little duplication of effort and a strong sense of collaboration.
- Pre-existing relationships among the advocates accelerated their transition into a campaign execution group.
- The assistance of an intermediary reduced competition between groups and linked specific resource needs with potential funder interest.
- Support from Clean Power Plan funders leveraged the financial resources of water funders.

#### Collaboration Challenges

- Funding was less than hoped and came in bits and pieces over time, inhibiting the opportunity to develop a stronger campaign strategy.
- Financial support for both the intermediary and outside administrative support ended before the rule was adopted, requiring reliance on pro-bono intermediary engagement.
- The segmented approach to funding made reporting of expenditures and impact difficult.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# AMERICA’S GREAT WATERS COALITION

SUMMARY

America's Great Waters Coalition (AGWC) is an alliance of national, regional, state and local organizations working to protect, preserve and restore the nation's Great Waters. By speaking with a united voice, the Coalition works to ensure the restoration of the nation’s Great Waters to protect people, wildlife and the economy.

BACKSTORY


The AGWC was formed as an outcome of the 2009 Great Waters Restoration Summit, where members of the restoration community called for the formation of a national coalition focused on Great Waters restoration. Through collaboration among member organizations, AGWC works to: (1) achieve sustained and sufficient federal funding for large-scale aquatic ecosystem restoration, including establishment of a national “trust fund” for the restoration of Great Waters; (2) network members and build partnerships on critical national restoration policies; and (3) strengthen the capacity of Coalition members and their ability to succeed through mentoring, shared expertise, and ongoing education. The Coalition coordinates an annual Washington, DC “fly in” effort where members educate federal representatives and also organizes webinars on best practices. Core founding organizations are National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), National Wildlife Federation (NWF), and Chesapeake Bay Foundation (CBF). There was not a founding funding partner.

APPROACH

The America's Great Waters Coalition is comprised of over 65 organizations working to restore 21 “Great Waters” in the U.S. (the Gulf of Maine, Lake Champlain, Great Lakes, Narragansett Bay, Long Island Sound, New York/New Jersey Harbor and Hudson Estuary, Delaware River, Chesapeake Bay, Albemarle-Pamlico Sound, St. Johns River, Everglades, Apalachicola-Chattahoochee-Flint River Basin, Ohio River, Mississippi River, Coastal Louisiana, Galveston Bay, Missouri River, Rio Grande, Colorado River, San Francisco Bay, and Puget Sound). There are 17 seats on the Coalition's Steering Committee, representing national, regional and local organizations. The coalition has had a modest budget, with coordination work provided by an NPCA staff member and policy, media and organizing support from other NPCA, NWF and CBF staff. While the annual fly-ins have been supported by the Campbell Foundation and the Code Blue Foundation, the AGWC has struggled to convince largely regional water funders to invest in this coordinated national effort.

RESULTS

With support from America’s Great Waters Coalition members, collective appropriations for restoration of major water bodies in the U.S. have been stable or increasing. AGWC also supported the establishment of the Regional Conservation Partnership Program in the Farm Bill, helped to



CORE TAKEAWAY

Despite early enthusiasm for coordinated national work to restore Great Waters, the lack of core funding has prevented AGWC from having the impact it desires.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

defeat congressional attempts to weaken the federal Clean Water Act, and helped to defend the Total Maximum Daily Load rule in the Chesapeake Bay. AGWC has also educated its members on the federal budget, the Farm Bill, and regional program authorizations through periodic webinars and electronic updates. More broadly, AGWC has substantially reduced the sense of competition among advocacy groups from different restoration efforts and increased coordinated advocacy.

CONTACT

Sarah Gaines Barmeyer, NPCA, sbarmeyer@npca.org; [www.greatwaterscoalition.org](http://www.greatwaterscoalition.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- A “NATO-strategy” that viewed an attack on one Great Waters’ nutrient standards (Chesapeake Bay) as an attack on all Great Waters has been effective in garnering broader support.
- AGWC has strengthened the voice in Washington DC for regional restoration efforts.
- Several regional efforts have experienced public relations value in having their water body identified as one of America’s Great Waters.

Advocacy Challenges

- AGWC has been somewhat duplicative of other national and regional water coalitions.
- AGWC’s fundamental mission of increasing federal funding is challenging in today’s tight budget environment.

Collaboration Best Practices

- Annual DC fly-ins increase attention to and access for Great Waters restoration.
- Regular webinars enabled Coalition members to learn about similar challenges and efforts across watersheds to reduce nutrients, craft legislation or take advantage of federal programs such as the Farm Bill’s RCCP.

Collaboration Challenges

- While many groups joined AGWC, it has lost momentum over the years because of a lack of core funding.
- There is a lack of clarity regarding whether AGWC is a network or an advocacy-driven organization.



## FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# HYDROPOWER REFORM COALITION

### SUMMARY

The Hydropower Reform Coalition (HRC) is a consortium of more than 160 national, regional, and local organizations focused on restoring rivers that are impacted by hydropower dams licensed by the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC).

### BACKSTORY

The HRC was founded in 1992 when a small group of foundations and NGOs recognized the river restoration opportunity presented by the impending expiration of a large suite of hydropower dam operating licenses.

Meeting at a Consultative Group on Biodiversity-convened event, they decided to form a coalition to advocate for dam operation improvements through the relicensing proceedings of those dams. Over the past 25 years, the wave of dam license expirations has spread around the country and the HRC has engaged in these proceedings, with local membership evolving to reflect where re-licensing is occurring. The Pew Charitable Trusts and the C.S. Mott Foundation were early supporters. Early NGO engagement came from American Rivers, Trout Unlimited and American Whitewater. Current core support is from the Hewlett Foundation, with additional support from Resources Legacy Fund and Northwest Fund for the Environment. Several other funders have supported individual projects.

### APPROACH

The HRC currently has 160 national, regional, and local organizations, ranging from environmental groups, fishing groups, whitewater boating advocates and local community groups. The HRC is governed by a 13-organization Steering Committee with one chairperson and has two staff members. The HRC is not a separate legal entity. Core funding for the organization is collaboratively raised, with American Rivers serving as the fiscal sponsor.

### RESULTS

Over the past 25 years, the HRC has protected or restored thousands of river miles and thousands of acres of watershed land, and has created countless opportunities for boating, fishing, and other forms of recreation. HRC members have helped to reform the FERC relicensing process from an adversarial to a more collaborative approach that places environmental values on more equal footing with hydropower values. They have secured policy rulings at FERC and other federal agencies to strengthen environmental protections at dams and enable removal of some particularly harmful dams. The HRC has also trained hundreds of river activists to effectively engage in the federal licensing process to protect rivers and natural resources, and published a number of guidance documents to enable those less familiar with the process to advocate for river restoration through hydropower licensing.



#### CORE TAKEAWAY

The diversity of membership and long term focus of the HRC has enabled restoration of thousands of river miles over 25 years.

## FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

### CONTACT

Rupak Thapaliya, HRC National Coordinator, [rupak@hydroreform.org](mailto:rupak@hydroreform.org); Thomas O'Keefe, HRC Chair, [okeefe@americanwhitewater.org](mailto:okeefe@americanwhitewater.org); [www.hydroreform.org](http://www.hydroreform.org)

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### Advocacy Best Practices

- HRC has maintained a tight focus and does one thing well (FERC re-licensing).
- HRC combines national expertise (on FERC) with local expertise (on local river conditions) to strengthen interventions and advocacy, resulting in restored rivers.
- HRC coordinates multiple river interests (fishing, boating, biodiversity, etc) to ensure they are speaking with one voice.
- HRC provides legal, technical and financial support to member organizations, which allows them to be more effective in their advocacy.

#### Advocacy Challenges

- New hydropower development and weakened controls on existing dams are being promoted under the premise of hydropower as “clean” energy.
- The FERC licensing process is very technical and thus is not accessible to river advocates unfamiliar with the process.
- Sometimes membership interests can compete (e.g. fish vs. boating flow needs) or disagree on the preferred approach to restoration (e.g. fish ladder vs. trap and haul).

#### Collaboration Best Practices

- All members sign on to an HRC platform and thus share the same core mission and values.
- Shared fundraising and relatively stable sources of core support reduces competition.
- HRC staff work on behalf of the entire coalition and are trusted by the membership. This enables HRC to have a coordinated approach to advocacy.
- HRC provides a venue for members to resolve differences and put forth a unified approach.
- Periodic face-to-face meetings build relationships among members.

#### Collaboration Challenges

- Because licensing is a multi-year effort, funding for the work can require a long-term investment.
- HRC work load changes over time, and readjusting membership funding allocations to reflect those changes has been challenging at times.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# STORMWATER FUNDERS' GROUP

SUMMARY

The Stormwater Funders' Group (SFG) serves as a network for national, regional and local funders interested in advancing the role green infrastructure plays in urban water management to benefit the environment, equity and economies of local communities.

BACKSTORY

The Stormwater Funders' Group was formally created as an issue-based working group of the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities (TFN) in 2012 in close coordination with a number of leading national and regional funders interested in sustainable stormwater practices and green infrastructure. Sustainable stormwater and green infrastructure is a relatively new field of practice nationally that funders are seeking to learn about and influence. The interest in this topic was high because of its potential to address a variety of issues, including water quality and quantity, community revitalization, and climate resilience, particularly in communities under federal pressure to address Clean Water Act requirements or with pressing concerns to address flooding or drought. While topics have changed over time, the current topics of learning are: (1) funding and financing green infrastructure; (2) green jobs and community development; (3) communicating benefits of green infrastructure; and (4) reducing the cost and improving performance of green infrastructure. The SFG is national in scope but largely urban in focus. It includes funders interested in water (quality/quantity), community development and climate resilience. Equity and community engagement are strong themes across various topics of interest among the funders.

APPROACH

The SFG is an issue-based working group of TFN and is staffed by a part-time consultant. The SFG holds quarterly learning calls and one in-person meeting per year. Until recently, SFG has served primarily as a learning network with a focus on place-based solutions. While the largest value of the SFG to date has been from its shared learning, recently the SFG has begun to explore ways to align efforts to scale up the use of green infrastructure. Possible topics for alignment include innovative funding and financing and emerging technologies. Several funders are currently collaboratively supporting a practitioner network called the [Green Infrastructure Leadership Exchange](#). Several funders are also exploring the potential for pooled funding. Until 2015, the SFG did not have a formal steering committee. With a new aligned funding approach under consideration, a steering committee of funders was created in late 2015.



CORE TAKEAWAY

By substantially increasing the knowledge and expertise of foundations interested in sustainable stormwater and green infrastructure, the Stormwater Funders' Group has improved grantmaking in the area.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

RESULTS

Since 2011, SFG has convened roughly 17 learning calls or webinars and five in-person meetings. SFG has expanded from six to more than 115 funders on its listserv, reaching beyond water quality funders to now include community development, green jobs, and climate resilience funders.

CONTACT

Diane Schrauth, [dlschrauth@gmail.com](mailto:dlschrauth@gmail.com); [www.fundersnetwork.org](http://www.fundersnetwork.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- The strength of the SFG has been its role as a network. While no advocacy has been supported by the group, some work in this arena has recently been discussed.

Advocacy Challenges

- Before the SFG was formally created, the SFG funders engaged in early coordinated advocacy efforts to promote a federal stormwater rulemaking. When it became clear that national policy opportunities were not available, efforts became focused on shared learning and state and local policy and practice.

Collaboration Best Practices

- SFG has focused on enabling funders to get to know each other; knowledge and trust needs to come before collaboration.
- Funders are all at different stages of engagement. A network structure enables funders to engage at the level they need.
- SFG is financed through small (\$1,000-\$20,000) grants/dues from numerous funders. This has strengthened the egalitarian dynamic of the group.
- Leadership from a handful of committed funders is key to success.
- SFG has enjoyed good leadership, which has evolved over time with a second generation of funders now assuming a leadership role.

Collaboration Challenges

- It takes time for networks to move from learning and connecting to action.
- Forming a steering committee sooner might have enabled more collaborative work to happen earlier.
- Funding a network through numerous small grants is time consuming and can distract SFG staff from coordinating the work.



FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# URBAN WATERS LEARNING NETWORK

SUMMARY

The Urban Waters Learning Network (UWLN) is a peer-to-peer network for sharing practical on-the-ground experiences in order to improve urban waterways and revitalize the neighborhoods around them.

BACKSTORY

The Urban Waters Learning Network was founded in 2010 as a network of ten organizations that received the Environmental Protection Agency’s [Urban Waters](#) funding through a grants program administered by [Groundwork USA](#) and [River Network](#). It was designed as a learning network through which the small grants recipients could receive training and peer support to assist their urban waters efforts. While EPA now administers the Urban Waters small grants program internally, it recognized the significant value of the Learning Network and continues to support it. Over the past six years, the UWLN has grown to include 136 organizations and agencies from 81 different communities. Roughly two-thirds of its members represent community-based organizations, with the remainder representing local, county or state governments and academia. Most recently the UWLN grew to include the 19 urban regions supported through the EPA [Urban Waters Federal Partnership](#) program. While originally funded exclusively by EPA, activities of the Learning Network are now also supported through private foundations, including the Pisces and Kresge Foundations.

APPROACH

The Urban Waters Learning Network is structured as a peer-to-peer network. Learning is accomplished through an annual in-person meeting and regular webinars and peer support calls. Members drive the agenda for the UWLN, learning from each other and sharing challenges and successes. Popular topics for discussion include stormwater management, urban river parkways, water quality monitoring, workforce development and community engagement. River Network and Groundwork USA coordinate activity of the UWLN and elevate successful approaches through webinars, written *Impact Stories* and other communications. They also share tools members have developed throughout the Network. The recent infusion of foundation grant dollars has enabled UWLN to begin moving from a learning network to collaborative work on specific topics. The UWLN is supporting subgroups to receive training and conduct intensive work together with the goal of developing tools and approaches that can be shared with others in the Network and beyond. Initial topics for these cohorts are water management and equity in the context of flooding and drinking water. In 2015, the UWLN developed a public website to share resources and publicize webinars with others outside of the Network.



CORE TAKEAWAY

The UWLN has provided peer support to over 135 member organizations working to improve urban waterways, enhancing the effectiveness of urban rivers.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

RESULTS

Over the past five years, the UWLN has grown from ten to over 135 members and has facilitated the replication of successful member practices in the areas of youth engagement, workforce development and scaling up green infrastructure across various parts of the country.

CONTACT

Diana Toledo, River Network, [dtoledo@rivernetwork.org](mailto:dtoledo@rivernetwork.org); Ann-Marie Mitroff, Groundwork USA, [annmarie@groundworkusa.org](mailto:annmarie@groundworkusa.org); [www.urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org](http://www.urbanwaterslearningnetwork.org), [www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners](http://www.epa.gov/urbanwaterspartners)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- Advocacy is not part of the Urban Waters Learning Network’s mission.

Advocacy Challenges

- Advocacy is not part of the Urban Waters Learning Network’s mission.

Collaboration Best Practices

- EPA’s expectation that grantees participate in the UWLN and share lessons learned has fostered progress in urban waters initiatives and helped launch successful collaboration.
- UWLN’s investment in membership surveys and questionnaires helps to ensure it is responsive to members’ interests.
- Annual, in-person meetings have an open agenda, allowing members who show up to drive the agenda and ensuring that emerging issues are identified for discussion and action.
- Participating communities have a lot in common and much to learn from one another, even if they have different pressures on their urban waters.
- The diversity of UWLN member perspectives has helped identify a broader range of resources, tools and solutions to common challenges encountered by urban waters practitioners.

Collaboration Challenges

- UWLN is addressing challenges associated with its rapid growth and may develop more focused membership criteria to manage future growth.
- With Network growth, UWLN staff need to manage the annual meeting open agenda more closely.
- As the UWLN responds more to members’ technical needs, it has moved away from one of its original goals of providing organizational capacity development support, which remains an ongoing need of the community-based organizations that participate in the UWLN.
- Because of its focus on peer-support and networking, UWLN successes have primarily been captured anecdotally.
- With the upcoming change in federal Administration, there is uncertainty about support for urban waters initiatives and future funding for the UWLN.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# WATER FUNDER INITIATIVE

SUMMARY

The [Water Funder Initiative](#) (WFI) is a collaborative effort of several foundations to identify – and attract philanthropic funding for – solutions to U.S. water problems, starting in the American West where scarcity and reliability of clean water are urgent issues.

BACKSTORY

The Water Funder Initiative was established in 2014 as an informal partnership among [several philanthropies](#) working towards sustainable water management in the American West. These funders recognized that extreme drought, population growth and climate change were clearly exposing the need for reform and that the sustainable water field was under-funded relative to other major environmental issues. The WFI first focused on a solutions blueprint that articulates priority strategies for funders interested in sustainable water management in the West. It then identified six immediate opportunities and developed “funding action plans” for those topics that can be used to guide coordinated grant-making among interested funders. The WFI’s goals are both to improve coordination of existing water funders and to expand the pool of philanthropic funding for sustainable water solutions.

APPROACH

A funder table of foundation representatives guides WFI’s work, which is led by a contract managing director and involves support from a number of expert consultants. Phase I of the project (2014-2016) focused on development of a strategy blueprint and identification of six near-term funding opportunities to implement that blueprint. Phase II (May 2016 – October 2017) is focused on completing strategies (“Funding Action Plans”) and generating funding for them. WFI’s focus is on facilitating aligned funding to implementing organizations for each of its Funding Action Plans. WFI is not intended to be a major re-granting organization.

RESULTS

Since its initiation, the Water Funder Initiative has:

- Developed, released and promoted [Toward Water Sustainability: A Blueprint for Philanthropy](#) that outlines a vision for success in advancing sustainable water solutions across the American West and identifies six priorities for philanthropy and near-term funding opportunities.
- Developed “Funding Action Plans” to guide grant-making on: (1) California Drought; (2) Lower Colorado River Basin; (3) Data; and (4) Impact Investing. Two additional funding action plans on (5) Water Markets and (6) Communications and Political Will-Building are under development.
- Convened nine WFI core funding partners and engaged over 30 additional funders to discuss the Blueprint and Funding Action Plans.
- Coordinated funding to implement these Funding Action Plans.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

CONTACT

Susan Bell, Managing Director, [susan@susanbellassociates.com](mailto:susan@susanbellassociates.com); [www.waterfunder.org](http://www.waterfunder.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- WFI is not an advocacy organization.
- However, the WFI efforts have helped identify “big issues” that are ripe for expanded and coordinated advocacy efforts.

Advocacy Challenges


- It is challenging to narrow down the WFI focus to six priority water strategies, while recognizing that funders have broad interests in the field as a whole.
- It is hard to balance between the need for short-term wins to attract additional funding and the need for reforms that may take longer.

Collaboration Best Practices

- Sustained, frequent and substantive communications with and among involved philanthropies resulted in a common set of priority strategies.
- Maintaining a flexible approach to increasing funding has been a productive approach. (i.e. not focused on pooled funding, but rather coordinated funding using funding action plans as guides).

Collaboration Challenges

- WFI has been able to identify broad funding priorities, but funders will be the ones to take the initiative to execute and to work together with other funders to maximize impact.
- The complexity of water issues requires a fair amount of expertise to ensure strategies and Funding Action Plans are on target.



CORE TAKEAWAY

The Water Funder Initiative has helped to coordinate and expand funding for sustainable water solutions in the American West.



## FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# COLORADO RIVER COLLABORATIVE

### SUMMARY

The Colorado River Collaborative (CRC) is an informal, unbranded partnership of conservation NGOs that uses focused campaigns to move the Colorado River Basin towards balance and resilience for people and the environment in the face of climate change, extended drought and population growth.

### BACKSTORY

The Colorado River Collaborative began to develop in 2008 as a result of the David and Lucile Packard Foundation's desire to coordinate the work of their grantees working on water issues on the Colorado Plateau. The collaborative effort was bolstered and expanded over the next several years with the addition of funding and strategic input from the Walton Family Foundation, as well as the addition of other conservation groups. With assistance from the Water Funder Initiative, the collaborative effort now includes seven conservation organizations and funding support from the S.D. Bechtel, Jr., Rockefeller and Gates Family Foundations. Packard Foundation ended its Colorado River funding in 2014.



### CORE TAKEAWAY

By focusing on coordinated short-term targeted campaigns (a number of which have led to wins), the unbranded CRC has enabled NGOs to make real progress towards complex and long-term basin-wide water sustainability goals.

### APPROACH

Evolving from a loose information network of NGOs and funders, the CRC now focuses work on a series of time-limited campaigns designed to build toward specific longer-term policy goals. The collaborative has a steering committee of one representative of each of the NGOs that decides on near-term (two to three year) campaigns. The Colorado River Sustainability Campaign (CRSC), a separate project with three staff, works with the steering committee and funders to provide support and leadership to the CRC, including management, strategy development and oversight, and coordinated communications work. Funding is provided both through the CRSC and directly to the collaborating organizations.

### RESULTS

Over the past eight years, the Colorado River Collaborative has:

- Contributed significantly to the negotiation of a 2012 agreement between the U.S. and Mexico that establishes flexible water management mechanisms between the two countries and provides for water and habitat restoration in the Colorado River Delta.
- Helped shape a progressive 2015 Colorado State Water Plan that emphasizes water conservation, flexible water management and healthy rivers and discourages new reservoirs for diverting Colorado River water to the Front Range.

## FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

- Ensured that the federal 2012 Colorado River Basin Study recognized the reality of climate change and promoted conservation, re-use and flexible water management instead of costly projects such as importing water from the Missouri River.
- Shaped the public and decision-maker discourse about the Colorado River to focus on a solutions-based “we are all in this together” approach, versus emphasizing conflict between human and environmental needs.
- Facilitated the 2012 denial of a costly and environmentally damaging proposal to build the Flaming Gorge pipeline from Wyoming's Green River to the growing cities in Colorado's Front Range.
- Secured millions of dollars for proof of concept and larger-scale projects to demonstrate how water conservation can work for both agriculture and the environment.

### CONTACT

Sam Tucker, Colorado River Sustainability Campaign, [sam@rivercampaign.org](mailto:sam@rivercampaign.org)

### LESSONS LEARNED

#### Advocacy Best Practices

- Focused, near-term campaign approach to definable wins is the key to moving the ball on complex, basin-wide issues.
- Both the “inside” and “outside” games are critical to success; close coordination between the two is vital.
- Recognizing the values and politics of the West in communications and strategy has been key.

#### Advocacy Challenges

- Some CRC participants are more comfortable than others in cultivating non-traditional allies (e.g., irrigated agriculture, cities).
- The Basin's tradition of multi-stakeholder decision-making, sometimes with no deadlines, can make building advocacy campaigns difficult.
- An informal, unbranded collaborative approach requires close attention to communication strategies.

#### Collaboration Best Practices

- Sustained, frequent and substantive communications with and among NGOs and funders is essential, and has been facilitated by the CRSC management entity.
- Being an unbranded collaborative provides maximum flexibility for a set of conservation organizations with different approaches.

#### Collaboration Challenges

- It is sometimes difficult to match the “outside” game with the “inside” game approach within the context of CRC campaigns.
- It is a learning process for NGOs to collaborate productively with funders that have their own strategic goals and approaches.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# KLAMATH RIVER RESTORATION

SUMMARY

Growing out of work by the [Hydropower Reform Coalition](#), [Trout Unlimited](#), [Cal Trout](#) and [American Rivers](#) have engaged in coordinated efforts and in a strong partnership with tribes and fishermen to address long-standing water allocation, water quality and restoration needs in the bi-state Klamath River Basin.

BACKSTORY

The over-allocated Klamath River has been plagued by toxic algae blooms, fish kills and four large hydropower dams that block passage of salmon and steelhead movement to historic spawning grounds. Trout Unlimited, American Rivers and Cal Trout worked closely with three [tribal nations](#) with historic fishing rights and other interests in the Klamath, as well as with irrigators in the Upper Klamath Basin to develop a set of three comprehensive settlement agreements in 2010 and 2014. The agreements addressed both dam removal and investments needed for irrigation improvements and restoration of habitat and river flows. When the agreements failed to win Congressional approval in 2015, the groups were able to amend the agreement with the dam owner, PacifiCorp, the federal government, and the states of California and Oregon to remove the dams by 2020. The agreement also recommits the parties to address basin-wide solutions for water sharing, water supply infrastructure and restoration.

APPROACH

The groups sustained their work and their partnerships through informal cooperation and close coordination with a substantively engaged core funder, the Hewlett Foundation. While litigation and federal action helped create the opportunity for the original comprehensive settlement agreement, the groups maintained their focus on reaching collaborative solutions, recognizing a variety of stakeholder needs, particularly those of tribes and irrigators.

RESULTS

The coordinated Klamath work:

- Resulted in a set of comprehensive basin-wide settlement agreements between 2010 and 2014 addressing a wide variety of basin issues and stakeholder needs.
- Secured an amended [2016 agreement with PacifiCorp to remove four hydropower dams by 2020](#) when Congress failed to act on the comprehensive settlement agreement, demonstrating an important public/private approach.
- Garnered \$250 million in state funding from California and \$200 million from PacifiCorp to implement the dam removal agreement.
- Continued to partner with ranchers and farmers, particularly in the Upper Klamath Basin, on habitat restoration and irrigation infrastructure improvements.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

CONTACT

Brian Johnson, Trout Unlimited, [bjohnson@tu.org](mailto:bjohnson@tu.org); Amy Cordalis, General Counsel, Yurok Tribe, [acordalis@yuroktribe.nsn.us](mailto:acordalis@yuroktribe.nsn.us)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- The conservation groups recognized that tribal and irrigator interests could be addressed as part of a comprehensive agreement that included dam removal, thereby avoiding prolonged polarization of stakeholder interests.
- The groups worked together to cultivate tribal partnerships.
- The working relationships developed were strong enough to allow the 2016 amendments even after Congress failed to act on the comprehensive agreement.

Advocacy Challenges

- Achieving full consensus in such a large basin with multi-stakeholder interests is a high bar. To enable consensus agreement, several interests were eventually excluded from the 2010 negotiations. As a result, one tribe, some irrigators and some conservation groups did not support the 2010 and 2014 agreements.

Collaboration Best Practices

- The conservation groups did not engage in turf battles over funding.
- Sustained core funding from Hewlett was critical to the staying power of the groups.
- The campaign benefitted from close and frequent communications with the core funder.

Collaboration Challenges

- Issues in the Klamath Basin are diverse and complex and involve a large number of stakeholders. At times, it has been challenging to accommodate this wide range of interests while still moving forward with important steps. The dam removal agreement is precedent-setting and vital to restoration, but it leaves out a number of important agricultural, wildlife refuge management and stream flow issues in the upper part of the basin, which still must be resolved for whole-basin restoration.
- The past disagreements with other conservation NGOs over the negotiation process and ultimate content of the original agreements have made it difficult to reestablish broader NGO collaboration in the region.



FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# CHESAPEAKE BAY FUNDERS NETWORK (CBFN)

SUMMARY

The [Chesapeake Bay Funders Network](#) (CBFN) is a membership organization of foundations from Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia and the District of Columbia dedicated to protecting and restoring the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem.

BACKSTORY

Founded in 2003, the CBFN was initially designed to provide grantmakers with a funders-only setting to exchange information, and review the status of the myriad local, state, and federal efforts to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay. It quickly evolved to a model where, in addition to continuing as a shared practice network, member funders also support core initiatives selected by the CBFN through pooled or coordinated grantmaking.

APPROACH

CBFN has 19 funder members and a steering committee of five funder representatives that review administrative activities and set CBFN’s policies and priorities. Agreed-upon priorities are supported through pooled or collaborative funding. However, decisions for collaboratively funding CBFN initiatives and special projects are handled by the individual member foundations based upon their discrete grantmaking criteria. The Network is staffed by a part-time program director, a part-time administrative assistant and consultant support. The New Venture Fund serves as the fiscal agent for CBFN. CBFN holds an annual retreat to review prior year activities and set new priorities.

RESULTS

CBFN has:

- Helped Chesapeake Bay grantmakers agree on priority strategies for funding, focusing on coordinated capacity building in smaller non-governmental organizations across the region. This has included diverse approaches to reducing agricultural pollution (from policy change to piloting innovative waste disposal technology); development of new low-cost technology to target implementation and enforcement of best management practices; engagement with land conservation organizations; and innovative approaches to stormwater management with local economic benefits.
- Helped establish regional and local coalitions, such as the [Choose Clean Water](#) Coalition, and work collaboratively with them to strengthen and diversify the regional clean water movement.
- Helped expand and focus giving to Chesapeake Bay issues by engaging a diverse range of funders (private foundations, small family foundations, community foundations and corporate giving programs) and assisting them through informed discussion of needs and opportunities.
- Increased the attention to incentive-based approaches to reducing nutrient pollution into the Bay.



CORE TAKEAWAY

The CBFN has connected funders working to protect and restore the Chesapeake Bay, with a focus on implementing collaborative funding priorities and broadening the range of groups involved in Chesapeake Bay work.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

CONTACT

Jamie Baxter, Program Director, [jamie@chesbayfunders.org](mailto:jamie@chesbayfunders.org); [www.chesbayfunders.org](http://www.chesbayfunders.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- CBFN is not itself a direct advocacy organization, but it helps strengthen NGO advocacy efforts by providing grantees technical assistance and developing shared priorities among funders.
- By expanding and sharpening NGO capacity to engage the public and decision-makers, CBFN has helped to increase the effectiveness of Chesapeake Bay groups.

Advocacy Challenges

- Developing the capacity of a variety of smaller groups can sometimes make coordination with larger established groups difficult.
- The dispersed nature and large geographic scope of the Chesapeake Bay problem make designing effective strategies difficult.
- Controversy over strategies such as nutrient trading and the role of the federal government in setting standards have been difficult issues for CBFN to tackle.

Collaboration Best Practices

- CBFN has successfully involved younger generation funders who are eager to see results.
- Each member funder has an equal equivalent vote, independent of the amount of giving to Chesapeake Bay issues.
- Member contributions to support a program director and consulting staff have increased the effectiveness of CBFN.

Collaboration Challenges

- Maintaining funding for CBFN in the face of several larger foundations “spending down” is challenging.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# CHOOSE CLEAN WATER COALITION

SUMMARY

Choose Clean Water Coalition (CCWC) is a coalition of over 200 member groups that serves as a united advocate for protecting and restoring Chesapeake Bay and its rivers and streams.

BACKSTORY

Founded in 2009 with 60 groups, the Choose Clean Water Coalition was designed to develop a broader, unified and effective voice (including in Congress) for protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, including the streams and rivers that flow into the Bay. The Coalition, which now includes over 200 groups, has focused on engaging the membership of its partner groups in grassroots and grasstops actions; promoting local and regional success stories; engaging elected officials to increase funding for Bay protection and restoration at all levels; and sharing best practices across jurisdictions.

APPROACH

The Coalition has a 16-member steering committee that sets annual priority strategies, with members ranging from local to national groups. It has an Executive Director, and three other staff (including communications). The National Wildlife Federation serves as the fiscal agent. The Coalition holds an annual meeting where its members engage with each other and with leaders from the business, local government, farming, environmental justice, and diversity communities to share success stories, best practices, and challenges and to set priorities.

RESULTS

The Choose Clean Water Coalition has:

- Successfully advocated for significantly increased levels of federal and state funding for protection and restoration of the broader Chesapeake Bay ecosystem, including tributary streams and rivers.
- Helped secure the designation of the entire Chesapeake Bay watershed as a priority conservation area for funding under the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Regional Conservation Partnership Program.
- Established a strong, effective and united voice to influence local, state and federal decision-makers, (including Congress) for protecting and restoring the Bay ecosystem.
- Leveraged messaging and accountability actions across the region with a strong “clean water” message.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

CONTACT

Jill Witkowski, Director, [heapsj@nwf.org](mailto:heapsj@nwf.org); [www.choosecleanwater.org](http://www.choosecleanwater.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- The Coalition is able to put forth a united voice of over 200 organizations spread throughout the region on key policy issues.
- The annual lobby day has been successful in garnering Congressional support for increased funding and other measures to help the Bay.
- The ability to share success stories, best practices, strategies and information across jurisdictions and among broad range of groups has bolstered protection and restoration efforts.

Advocacy Challenges

- The large area and dispersed nature of the nutrient problem make success hard to measure.
- The controversy over strategies such as nutrient trading and the role of the federal government in setting standards are difficult issues and thus hard for a broad coalition to tackle.

Collaboration Best Practices

- The Coalition is open to a wide diversity of organizations, helping to promote deeper public engagement and diversity.
- Resources for core staffing, including communications, have been essential.
- The ability to engage in coordinated outreach to decision-makers through the Coalition has been very valuable.

Collaboration Challenges

- The funding for “state leads” goes to one NGO in each state. The NGO staff assigned the responsibility for representing the mission of the CCWC might have to work on an issue that is not a priority of that particular NGO. Ensuring that funding provided is spent to support CCWC priorities can be difficult.
- The ability to have sustainable, multi-year funding could help incentivize NGOs to write CCWC priorities into their work plans.



FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# HEALING OUR WATERS - GREAT LAKES COALITION

SUMMARY

The mission of the Healing Our Waters-Great Lakes (HOW) Coalition is to secure a sustainable [Great Lakes restoration plan](#) and the federal funding needed to implement it. The Coalition seeks to: (1) stop sewage contamination that closes beaches and harms recreational opportunities; (2) clean up toxic sediments that threaten the health of people and wildlife; (3) prevent polluted runoff from cities and farms that harm water quality and lead to toxic algal blooms; (4) restore and protect wetlands and wildlife habitat that filter pollutants, provide a home for fish and wildlife and support the region’s outdoor recreation economy; and (5) prevent the introduction of invasive species, such as Asian carp, that threaten the economy and quality of life for millions of people.

BACKSTORY

Formed in 2004 with seed funding from the Wege Foundation, the HOW Coalition is led by the [National Wildlife Federation](#) (NWF) and the [National Parks Conservation Association](#) (NPCA). The initial focus of the Coalition was to work with scientists to produce a [report](#) on the condition of the Great Lakes, concluding that the region’s ecological food web was reaching a tipping point. The Coalition and its member groups also collaborated with the Environmental Protection Agency in developing a [Great Lakes Restoration Plan](#). Since that Plan was adopted in 2005, the Coalition has been focused on securing federal funding to implement the Plan. The Coalition receives funding from the Erb Family Foundation, Great Lakes Fishery Trust, The Frey Foundation, Joyce Foundation, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, the Wege Foundation, The Brico Fund, and The Brookby Foundation.

APPROACH

The Coalition is made up of [more than 140 member organizations](#), with a [Governance Board of 14](#), and a [core staff of six](#). The staff run the Coalition’s integrated legislative, field and communications arms of the campaign, craft and implement an annual Coalition work plan, and help set long-term vision and strategy of the Coalition. The Governance Board is tasked with providing guidance and long-term planning for the Coalition. The Coalition is also represented by three co-chairs, one representative from either the NWF or NPCA, and two Governance Board members. The role of the co-chairs is to advise the Coalition staff and communicate between the Coalition staff and board. The Coalition holds an annual [Great Lakes Restoration Conference](#), and also educates federal officials about the importance of Great Lakes restoration through events like [Great Lakes Days](#). The Coalition is also active in eight Great Lakes states through [grants](#) for on-the-ground restoration projects.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

RESULTS

- In the past seven years, HOW has:
- Secured adoption of the bi-partisan Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Plan;
  - Secured \$2.2 billion in funding to implement the plan through the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative;
  - Enabled the initiation of over 2,900 projects, with many areas of concern cleaned up and delisted;
  - Restored 152,000 acres of wetlands and fish and wildlife habitat; and
  - Restored 3,800 miles of rivers through dam removal.

CONTACT

Todd Ambs, Campaign Director, [ambst@nwf.org](mailto:ambst@nwf.org); [www.healthylakes.org](http://www.healthylakes.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- An early scientific report helped build urgency for action.
- A restoration plan enabled HOW to articulate specifically what action is needed.
- Regional polling and research fostered message unity in the region and in Congress.
- Making the economic case for restoration helped deepen support for the Great Lakes.
- The bi-partisan nature of the restoration plan helped generate broad support for funding.
- Communicating ecological and community restoration successes has attracted more funding.

Advocacy Challenges

- The status of Great Lakes water quality is not clear; change will take time and monitoring is limited.
- The Coalition will need to educate the new Administration and Congress to maintain federal commitment.

Collaboration Best Practices

- Initial five-year seed funding enabled the Coalition to develop without pressure of early wins.
- A focus only on federal funding has enabled a broad coalition to grow.
- Annual DC lobby days have built community.
- Collaboration with business, industry, mayors, tribes, and other partners broadens appeal.

Collaboration Challenges

- There is not sufficient environmental justice/diversity representation in the membership or on the governance board.
- This is a long-term campaign, and both Coalition members and federal supporters can suffer from issue fatigue.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# RESTORE THE MISSISSIPPI RIVER DELTA CAMPAIGN

SUMMARY

The [Restore the Mississippi River Delta](#) Campaign’s goal is to reconnect the Mississippi River to its delta to protect people, the economy and wildlife.

BACKSTORY

Hurricane Katrina starkly illustrated the linkages between river management, wetland loss and storm surge vulnerability in coastal Louisiana. In response, the Restore Campaign was formed in 2007 by Environmental Defense Fund, National Wildlife Federation and the National Audubon Society, with core support from the Walton Family Foundation. The Coalition to Restore Coastal Louisiana and Lake Pontchartrain Basin Foundation are now also core partners and the Campaign partners with several other organizations. The Campaign has focused on garnering the science to show how reconnecting the river to the Delta through large-scale diversions is vital to coastal restoration, hurricane protection. It also has focused on building broad public support, both in Louisiana and nationally, for the restoration of Louisiana’s vast and deteriorating wetland ecosystem. After the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, the Campaign added a major focus on promoting and then implementing the [RESTORE Act](#) (the Resources and Ecosystems Sustainability, Tourist Opportunities, and Revived Economies of the Gulf Coast States Act). This Act will direct billions of dollars in Clean Water Act penalties to restoration in Louisiana and other Gulf states.

APPROACH

With over ten years of experience, the Campaign has developed a strong working structure, with a campaign director who reports to a steering committee, and with working committees representing all the partners that are focused on science, policy, communications and other areas. With staff in both Louisiana and Washington, D.C., the campaign focuses on providing restoration science to state and federal agencies, influencing federal and state restoration plans to include reconnection of the river through diversions and ensuring maximum available funding for such projects.

RESULTS

The Campaign has:

- Secured the passage of the RESTORE Act in 2012. The Act devotes 80% of the Clean Water Act penalties from the BP Deepwater Horizon oil spill to a Gulf Coast Restoration Fund, much of which can be targeted to wetland restoration and river reconnection projects in coastal Louisiana.



CORE TAKEAWAY

The coalition helped secure the passage of the RESTORE Act, which will devote billions to coastal Louisiana restoration. It has also advanced policy and science on how to effectively restore coastal wetlands for protection against sea level rise and hurricanes.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

- Secured the closure of the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO) and advanced parallel wetland restoration plans for hurricane protection and wildlife and community benefit.
- Succeeded in getting the State of Louisiana to put [larger-scale river diversions](#) for wetland restoration at the center of its 2012 Coastal Master Plan.
- Supported local organizations in implementing projects to protect against sea-level rise and hurricane storm surge.
- Demonstrated the economic benefits of a reconnection-based approach to coastal Louisiana restoration.
- Elevated the restoration of coastal Louisiana as an issue to a national audience of conservationists, sportsmen, and resource dependent businesses.

CONTACT

Steve Cochran, [scochran@edf.org](mailto:scochran@edf.org); Susan Kaderka, [kaderka@nwf.org](mailto:kaderka@nwf.org); [www.mississippiriverdelta.org](http://www.mississippiriverdelta.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- A strong combination of “inside” and “outside” game was necessary to get the bipartisan support needed to pass the RESTORE Act.
- A strong commitment from one foundation to the cause was critical to success on RESTORE.
- The on-going close coordination of a coastal Louisiana ground-game with a strong Washington, D.C. presence continues to serve campaign goals.

Advocacy Challenges

- Reconciling competing priorities and a very diverse range of decision-maker targets is resource-intensive.
- It has been difficult to get short-term on-the-ground project implementation success in the face of gridlock between state and federal agencies.
- The Campaign has had to manage and respond to opposition commercial fishermen and some coastal communities, who could be dislocated or experience short-term economic losses from restoration.

Collaboration Best Practices

- Having a campaign director reporting to a steering committee has been essential to coordination and smooth operation.
- The campaign benefitted from close and frequent communications with the core funder.

Collaboration Challenges

- It is challenging to maintain momentum and focus after the RESTORE Act victory.
- Collaboration was expanded to other Gulf states to secure the RESTORE Act and influence allocation of funds, but that has been difficult to sustain outside of Louisiana.



FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# TEXAS LIVING WATERS PROJECT

SUMMARY

The [Texas Living Waters Project](#) is a partnership of the National Wildlife Federation, Sierra Club and the Galveston Bay Foundation. The effort focuses on protecting healthy rivers and bays, increasing water conservation, and better management of groundwater.

BACKSTORY

The Project was founded in 2000 as a partnership among National Wildlife Federation (NWF), Sierra Club, Environmental Defense Fund and the Texas Center for Policy Studies (TCPS), receiving substantial core support from several Texas foundations, including the Houston Endowment and the Meadows Foundation. Beginning with sustained outreach on water issues, the Project focused primarily on building support for prioritizing water conservation and flow protection at the state and regional levels. Using the statewide water planning process (which was initiated in 1998), annual gatherings of diverse water interests, and policy, economic and science reports, the Project laid a strong base for moving toward more direct advocacy and policy reform. The Project also challenged a few large water development permits to advance strategic goals.


APPROACH

The Project is now a partnership of NWF, the Sierra Club and the Galveston Bay Foundation (TCPS merged water staff into EDF in 2002, but EDF discontinued Texas water work in 2010). There is no single project director, though NWF functions as the lead organization. The groups collaborate on setting priorities, developing work plans, engaging in public communications through their joint [web site](#) and other means, and allocating funding. The Meadows Foundation and Houston Endowment continue to provide core support, along with the Mitchell Foundation and some smaller Texas foundations. Support is provided through grants to NWF, which passes money through to the other groups. Funding supports professional staff at all three organizations, as well as expenses for conferences/workshops, publications, and scientific/technical contracts.

RESULTS

Over the past 16 years, the Texas Living Waters Project has:

- Secured the enactment of a groundbreaking environmental flow protection law in 2007.
- Elevated water conservation to a high priority in state water planning and state water project funding and strengthened state law on water conservation planning and reporting requirements.

 **CORE TAKEAWAY**

With coordinated NGO action and sustained core funding, the Texas Living Waters Project secured a groundbreaking law to protect environmental flows and made water conservation a high priority for the State.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

- Helped secure a collaborative approach to resolving disputes over endangered species in the Edwards Aquifer.
- Supported local organizations in improving regional and local water plans and defeating ill-conceived water development proposals.
- Established important legal precedents in challenges to key water permits.
- Increased the capacity of water utilities and water providers to advance municipal water conservation.

CONTACT

Susan Kaderka, NWF, [kaderka@nwf.org](mailto:kaderka@nwf.org); Elizabeth Love, Houston Endowment; Mike McCoy, Meadows Foundation; [www.texaslivingwaters.org](http://www.texaslivingwaters.org)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- Built credibility on issues before approaching legislative advocacy.
- Helped funders get comfortable with advocacy.
- Focused effort on big wins.
- Willingness to negotiate with water users in a conservative, sometimes environmentally hostile state produced results.
- Built a constituent base throughout the State and with recreational and fishing interests.

Advocacy Challenges

- After big wins on flows and water conservation policy, and with an ever more polarized state, work has shifted to a defensive mode.
- There is some tension between functioning as outsider advocates for policy change and insider partners for policy implementation.

Collaboration Best Practices

- Partnership groups developed shared core mission and values.
- Shared fundraising and relatively stable sources of core support have reduced competition and allowed time to formulate strategy and win change.
- Each partner brings core strengths to the project, achieving synergies and overall greater effectiveness.

Collaboration Challenges

- The partnership has sometimes found it challenging to step back from day-to-day issues and identify the next “big change” idea that can drive partnership efforts.
- The partnership is seeking ways to partner more closely with other organizations now active on water in Texas.
- There is a need to bring new funders into the mix.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# CALIFORNIA GROUNDWATER CAMPAIGN

SUMMARY

Between 2001 and 2014, the California Water Foundation (now known as the [Water Foundation](#)) demonstrated the need for and organized a campaign to achieve reform of groundwater management in California.

BACKSTORY

California has been one of the last western states to adopt a comprehensive approach to groundwater management. Recognizing this challenge, the Water Foundation developed research on the groundwater threats and potential management solutions. As drought gripped the State and reliance on groundwater increased, the lack of State management exposed significant risks to the economy, environment, and public health. Working with progressive local water agencies, and academic, non-governmental and other partners, the Water Foundation sought to take on this challenge, with funding from a number of California foundations.


APPROACH

The Water Foundation is a pooled philanthropic fund, with support from a series of foundations. The Water Foundation used foundation support directly and through re-granting to establish a strong baseline of research and analysis of the groundwater challenges, as well as to develop better communications to build understanding of the threats. The Foundation then worked with partners to separately convene various interest groups to get their perspectives, and identify potential common ground. Subsequently, the Foundation and its partners brought the various parties together to develop a set of policy solutions embodied in the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. The Act was introduced and passed in the middle of one of the deepest droughts in California history, with ongoing support efforts from the Water Foundation.

RESULTS

The Campaign has:

- Elevated the prominence of groundwater and other water issues with a wide range of California decision-makers, academic institutions, stakeholders and the press.
- Secured the passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) in 2014.
- Demonstrated that the State can address a long-standing, difficult water challenge when an established broad and diverse coalition is behind the reforms.

 **CORE TAKEAWAY**

Supported by focused foundation support, the Water Foundation worked with a diverse set of partners to ensure passage of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act in California, addressing a long-ignored water issue.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

CONTACT

Andrew Fahlund, Water Foundation, [afahlund@resourceslegacyfund.org](mailto:afahlund@resourceslegacyfund.org); [groundwater.ca.gov](http://groundwater.ca.gov); [www.waterfoundation.net](http://www.waterfoundation.net)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- Strong preparation (research, policy analysis, messaging, building common ground among stakeholders) was essential to being able to use the drought moment to pass legislation.
- The well-respected Water Foundation leadership helped find common ground and identify messengers from outside the environmental community.
- Resources were available for both strategic “inside” game engagement, advocacy, and public communications.

Advocacy Challenges

- In part because SGMA places most of the implementation authority on local agencies, implementation of SGMA is likely to present difficulties, both from a resource and timeframe perspective.
- The complexity of groundwater issues and the diversity of conditions across the state will make implementation difficult.
- The lack of strong science and good data on groundwater present additional challenges for implementing SGMA.

Collaboration Best Practices

- The Water Foundation had the status and connections to convene various stakeholders and to help develop strong champions among decision-makers.
- Prompt and substantial philanthropic investment to build political support for SGMA was critical for success.

Collaboration Challenges

- Now that SGMA is law, many diverse actors all over the State are involved in implementation. This presents both opportunities for sharing successful approaches, and challenges in ensuring consistent and effective implementation and fending off of potential attempts to undermine the underlying provisions of SGMA.



FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

# NEW YORKERS AGAINST FRACKING

SUMMARY

The New Yorkers Against Fracking (NYAF) was a coalition of diverse organizations that joined together to call for a ban on fracking to keep New York’s water and the state safe.

BACKSTORY


Coordinated work against fracking in New York began in 2009. The State had announced a plan to develop a supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement (sGEIS) that would cover all horizontal fracking permit applications in the state. Local, state and national groups organized to develop comments in opposition to a blanket sGEIS. By the end of the final comment period, the Coalition set a record for the number of submitted comments in the state on an environmental EIS (over 260,000).

APPROACH

The Coalition was staffed by Food & Water Watch and included Frack Action, Catskill Mountainkeeper, and New York Public Interest Research Group on the steering committee. The Coalition held daily organizing and weekly planning conference calls to coordinate statewide work against fracking. Key roles of the Coalition were to coordinate communications and messaging and organize efforts to have rallies and a regular presence at the Governor’s public events. The Coalition also supported local ban efforts and worked with grassroots groups in every region of the state, largely through the Coalition’s staff of regional organizers. Grassroots groups talked weekly, and information was passed between the grassroots and larger groups through Catskill Mountainkeeper (a regional organization). There was disagreement in the environmental community about whether to fight for a total ban or to work to improve regulations (with grassroots groups and those in New Yorkers Against Fracking advocating for a total ban). This debate was contentious in the beginning but faded away by the end of the campaign because the organizing energy was focused on a ban. New Yorkers Against Fracking was primarily funded by the 11<sup>th</sup> Hour Project and the Park Foundation.

RESULTS

In December 2014, New York Governor Cuomo announced that the state would not move forward on a fracking sGEIS. In June 2015, the State Department of Environmental Conservation completed its findings statement. This [document](#) officially prohibited high-volume fracking in New York. Having won this victory, New Yorkers Against Fracking is focused on fighting fracking infrastructure and has already won two victories since the ban on fracking. In 2015, Governor Cuomo stopped the proposed Port Ambrose liquefied natural gas facility off the coast of Long Island. Just a few months later, Governor Cuomo also stopped the proposed Constitution Pipeline that would have brought even more fracked gas to New York State.

**CORE TAKEAWAY**

New Yorkers Against Fracking coordinated efforts resulted in a findings statement by the State of New York prohibiting high-volume hydraulic fracturing in the State.

FRESHWATER CASE STUDIES

CONTACT

Alex Beauchamp, [Food and Water Watch](#), [abeauchamp@fwwatch.org](mailto:abeauchamp@fwwatch.org)  
In New York: [New Yorkers Against Fracking](#)  
At a national level: [Americans Against Fracking](#); [Stop the Frack Attack](#); [Halt the Harm](#)

LESSONS LEARNED

Advocacy Best Practices

- The level of public passion and engaged and sustained grassroots participation on fracking was unheard of in New York.
- Perseverance was key in this effort. The coalition kept moving forward in spite of potential disagreements and setbacks.
- The Coalition demanded what they wanted (a ban) rather than what was deemed politically possible (regulation). This brought energy and eventually success to the campaign.

Advocacy Challenges

- Fracking is ultimately a local/state issue. National coordination on fracking has been limited.

Collaboration Best Practices

- There was strong communication amongst disparate groups; everyone was heard.
- While there was debate about addressing side issues (e.g., water withdrawal), the Coalition maintained its focus on the EIS and the Governor’s role in determining the outcome of this issue.

Collaboration Challenges

- The Coalition was lightly funded; money was always a challenge.
- National, state and grassroots groups originally disagreed on campaign goals and tactics. Good coalition communications helped to resolve this disagreement.

