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Front cover photo of Harrods Creek by Susan Griffin Ward.
Back cover photo: KWA Commonwealth Sweep Cleanup in Warfield, KY, in the Big Sandy River Basin.

NewsStreams

Because Clean Water Can't Wait - Winter 2024



NewsStreams

Winter 2024

PROTECT
RESTORE
CELEBRATE

KENTUCKY WATERWAYS ALLIANCE
KWA
Protecting & Restoring KY Waterways

KWA's Impact | Protecting the Green River | *Driftwood:* An Excerpt

A Message From Michael Washburn

Executive Director, Kentucky Waterways Alliance



Dear Friends,

I want to take a moment to reflect on the meaning of membership with Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA). In a world where membership often feels transactional—where you pay for streaming services or merchandise—we believe our approach is different. At KWA, membership is about belonging, community, and true partnership in our vital mission. When you choose to be a part of KWA, you're joining a movement dedicated to protecting Kentucky's precious waterways. You're becoming a crucial ally in our fight against pollution, habitat loss, and the effects of climate change.

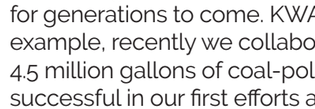
You're aligning yourself with a community of passionate individuals who share a common goal: to ensure the health and sustainability of our rivers, lakes, and streams for generations to come. KWA membership translates into concrete action. For example, recently we collaborated with partners to file a notice of intent to sue to halt the illegal discharge of 4.5 million gallons of coal-polluted wastewater into the Green River. As you will see in these pages, we were successful in our first efforts and were able to avoid a protracted legal fight. This issue required us to be not only nimble and decisive, but to have legal grounds to bring forward a lawsuit, we need the legal standing provided by our membership. Membership support empowers us to take action, advocate for change, and hold polluters accountable. Without our members, much of our critical work would not be possible.

As we move through winter, a season often associated with dormancy, we find ourselves in a reflective phase. We are preparing for new initiatives and community outreach programs that will enable us to expand our impact. Your membership ensures that we have the resources and support needed to pursue these critical goals. In the pages of this magazine, you'll find stories of the work we've accomplished together and a glimpse into what lies ahead.

We are also honored to share an excerpt from *Driftwood: The Life of Harlan Hubbard*, the fascinating and important book written by Jessica K. Whitehead to be released in February of 2025 by the University Press of Kentucky. Harlan Hubbard was a Kentuckian, an artist, author, shantyboater, and sustainability forerunner who was inspired by his beloved Ohio River.

Today, I invite you to consider renewing your membership or joining us for the first time. Together, we can continue to make strides in conservation, advocacy, and community engagement. When you stand with us, you're not just protecting waterways; you're protecting your community, your health, and the natural resources that sustain us all. This sense of belonging is what drives us. It's what motivates our team to work tirelessly on your behalf, even when challenges seem daunting.

Finally, we are in politically uncertain times for conservation. Keep faith in the fact that for more than 30 years and through various administrations in all political climates - KWA has remained steadfast in our commitment to productively execute our mission. Clean Water is a bi-partisan issue, and so is our work, as demonstrated by our collaboration with the co-chairs of the Ohio River Congressional Caucus, Representatives Morgan McGarvey (D, KY-3) and Erin Houchin (R, IN-9). Join the flow. Together, we can ensure that Kentucky's waterways are protected for future generations.





Join us! Become a member of Kentucky Waterways Alliance. Return the enclosed envelope, visit kwalliance.org, or scan the QR code.

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Protecting the Green River

By Michael Washburn



Susan Griffin Ward

Earlier this year, KWA and our partners the Kentucky Resources Council (KRC), Environmental Integrity Project (EIP), and the Kentucky Chapter of the Sierra Club united in swift response to a significant threat: the discharge of 4.5 million gallons of coal-polluted wastewater into Kentucky's Green River, the state's most biodiverse waterway.

The proposed discharge, which would have introduced harmful pollutants into the river, was met with swift opposition from KWA. We learned of this plan on a Thursday with the discharge scheduled for early the next week. KWA and our partners moved quickly, filing a notice of intent to sue the next day, with KWA providing legal standing for any future lawsuit. Before the weekend was out, the Kentucky Division of Water rescinded the "off-permit authorization" for this discharge.

KWA's successful campaign was not just limited to opposing the wastewater discharge; it also brought attention to the Kentucky Division of Water's off-permit authorization program. KWA has been critical of this program, which allows certain discharges without comprehensive review or public input, due to its lack of transparency and accountability.

As a result of our efforts, not only was this discharge halted, but the Kentucky Division of Water has also paused this authorization program, signaling a commitment to more stringent oversight of water quality regulations.

This collective effort underscores the importance of community engagement in environmental decision-making. KWA's victory not only protects the Green River but also sets a precedent for future actions aimed at safeguarding Kentucky's precious water resources. With ongoing advocacy, there is hope for stronger regulations and a renewed focus on preserving the state's natural heritage for generations to come.



Susan Griffin Ward

KWA Welcomes New Director of Water Policy Program

KWA is thrilled to announce the revival of its Water Policy Program, marking a renewed commitment to safeguarding and enhancing the state's water resources. As part of this initiative, we are excited to introduce our new Water Policy Director, Nick Hart, who brings a wealth of experience in environmental advocacy and policy development.

Under Nick's leadership, the program will focus on critical issues affecting Kentucky's waterways, including pollution control, conservation efforts, wetlands protection, and sustainable water management practices. Nick will work collaboratively with stakeholders, communities, and policymakers to promote effective water policies that benefit both the environment and public health.

Meet Nick Hart

Nick Hart joined KWA as the Water Policy Director in October 2024. Prior to KWA, Nick built a career serving vulnerable communities while protecting public health and the environment. He has worked with the Louisville Legal Aid Society's HIV/AIDS Legal Project, served as the Environmental Enforcement Coordinator and Community Compliance Supervisor for Louisville Metro's Air Pollution Control District, and most recently, was the Director of Environmental Health for Louisville Metro Public Health and Wellness. Nick is a native of Kentucky, completed his undergraduate studies at Eastern Kentucky University, followed by the University of Louisville's Brandeis School of Law where he was a founding member of the Environmental Law and Land Use Society.

In addition to volunteering with KWA for many years, Nick Hart also serves on the all-volunteer board of Kentucky Backcountry Hunters and Anglers and is a lifetime member of the League of Kentucky Sportsmen. As a former professional whitewater rafting guide for 10 years, Nick still spends as much time on the water as possible, and is an avid hunter, fisher, and outdoorsman. He resides in Louisville with his wife and beagle hounds.



New Harlan Hubbard Biography to be Published

By Susan Griffin Ward

It is our great honor to share an excerpt from the prologue of *Driftwood: The Life of Harlan Hubbard*, by author Jessica K. Whitehead. This exceptional biography will be released on February 25, 2025, and is available for pre-order at kentuckypress.com.

Harlan Hubbard was an artist, writer, skilled craftsman, and sustainability pioneer who left a record of the remarkable life he created, with his wife Anna, in the form of books (*Shantyboat* and *Payne Hollow: Life on the Fringe of Society*), paintings, and their cabin and studio at Payne Hollow on the edge of the Ohio River in Trimble County, Kentucky. When most of his contemporaries saw the Ohio River as a resource for cheap commerce and manufacturing, or worse, a convenient way to get rid of sewage and chemicals, Hubbard treasured the Ohio River as a life-source and saw it with the eyes of an artist and the heart of an adventurer.

In *Driftwood: The Life of Harlan Hubbard*, Whitehead tells a fascinating story of a man whose life and work have deeply resonated with generations of people drawn to art, adventure, and simpler lifestyles. The biography highlights Hubbard's place in American cultural history, positioning him alongside other iconic thinkers and artists. Through vivid storytelling, she captures the essence of Hubbard's life, the impact of his work, and his enduring contributions to sustainable living in today's ecological landscape.

Jessica K. Whitehead is a writer and curator of collections at the Kentucky Derby Museum in Louisville, Kentucky, coauthor of *The History of the Kentucky Derby in 75 Objects* and a contributor to *The Watercolors of Harlan Hubbard: From the Collection of Bill and Flo Caddell.* She was a founding board member of the non-profit Payne Hollow on the Ohio.

Continued on pages 8-9



Jessica K. Whitehead at Payne Hollow. Credit Susan Griffin Ward



This view of the Ohio River from Payne Hollow looking towards Plowhandle Point served as an inspiration for many of Harlan's paintings. Credit: Susan Griffin Ward

An Excerpt from *Driftwood: The Life of Harlan Hubbard*

By Jessica K. Whitehead

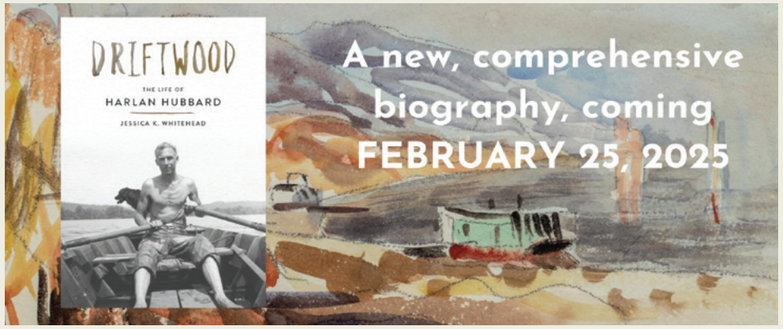


Image credit: Jessica K. Whitehead, Behringer-Crawford Museum, and Caddell Collection.

The following excerpt is reproduced with permission of University Press of Kentucky.

"I still feel sure," Harlan wrote in his journal not long after the 1937 floodwaters receded, "that if I follow the plain, natural course, like water running down a slope, which does not try to climb over the hill, but finally gets to the lowest point, by whatever winding, that I too will reach the proper point at just the right time, in the most fitting conditions and circumstances." There, outdoors, in his personal wilderness—following the example of so many other American artists, writers, and thinkers before him—Harlan worked and waited, allowing the river of time to shape him, to carry him, to deposit him where he belonged.

This book is a study of that journey and a celebration of how Harlan Hubbard, a man who was so uncertain and unfulfilled for the first half of his life, lived out the second half in an ecstatic—if largely unwitnessed—blaze of vision and fulfillment. Ultimately, the forces of time and circumstance shaped him and strengthened him, transforming him into something strangely beautiful and resolutely unique. Harlan's life was an example of formation under the pressures of external forces, his sense of purpose and worth molded and strengthened like a fallen tree limb into drift. As the poet Richard Wilbur observes in his 1948 meditation on driftwood, the living matter was

> **Floated in their singleness,**
> **And in that deep subsumption they were Never dissolved;**
> **But shaped and flowingly fretted by the waves' ever surpassing stress,**
> **With the gnarled swerve and tangle of tides Finely involved.**

Wilbur concludes,

> **In a time of continued dry abdications and of damp complicities,**
> **They are fit to be taken for signs, these emblems Royally sane,**
>
> **Which have ridden to homeless wreck, and long resolved in the lathe of all the seas,**
> **But have saved in spite of it all their dense ingenerate grain.**

So Harlan, in the lathe of his responsibilities, emerged on an unfamiliar shore of understanding his own, "ingenerate grain."

That grain, for those who are willing to trace it, is complex—delicately ribbed with the evidence of Harlan's multidisciplinary career. Within his "second act," Harlan produced hundreds more paintings, prints, and sketches, all of them displaying a sensitivity both to the currents of American art history and to his unique artistic voice. He kept poetic and honest journals, which help illuminate his development into the writer of three published books—unheralded classics that teeter between nature writing and memoir. And perhaps most remarkably, he did all of this in concert with a woman—his wife, Anna Wonder Eikenhout Hubbard—who, unlike his mother, encouraged and nurtured Harlan's desires to live out a radical, countercultural experiment. Together, Harlan and Anna Hubbard built a life, as he would write, "on the fringe of society," perfecting the art of living and carving into every experience the values of simplicity, function, and beauty.

As a reflection of that life, the greatest creative genius of Harlan Hubbard emerged. His art and writing stands as a largely unexplored record of what the poet William Carlos Williams called the "American grain": an ethos of boundless innovation and optimism, fueled by a craving for (and respect of) the American natural landscape. This grain can be observed throughout the nation's cultural history: in artists like Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, John Marin, Georgia O'Keeffe, and Charles Burchfield; in writers like Twain, Cather, Whitman, Wilbur, and Berry; in philosophers like Emerson and Thoreau; in the lives of the earliest Indigenous residents of the continent; in the curiosity and wonder of many subsequent transplants, explorers, and settlers; in the followers of the modern sustainability movement.

But more than any of the individual cultural luminaries listed here, Harlan committed so profoundly to this philosophical ethos—sometimes to a fault—that, alongside the deep joy and satisfaction of a life well-lived, there existed significant professional sacrifice. Harlan's worldview, cultivated in opposition to the greed, exceptionalism, and exploitation he saw in most examples of modern American culture, required the deliberate, often lonely, and always laborious work of challenging modes of convention. It necessitated a certain recognition from Harlan that he would never be— at least during his lifetime—as commercially viable as the quality of his work deserved. Although Harlan exhibited in more than thirty shows during his lifetime and managed to attract the attention of a mainstream New York publishing house with his first literary manuscript, he was never traditionally successful within the confines of a capitalistic society. In some ways, Harlan made peace with this fact, proud to have stayed true to his values against the temptations of financial success or critical acclaim. But it is difficult to learn the details of his biography, see his paintings, read his books and journals, visit the structures he built, and understand the revolutionary life he and Anna led without desiring clarification of the historical record for Harlan, posthumously. Harlan's first biographer, the acclaimed Kentucky thinker, writer, and farmer, Wendell Berry, knew Harlan and Anna personally, but even Berry was astonished, upon casting a more critical eye over their shared life, and over Harlan's work, by the breadth of the Hubbard legacy. Berry writes:

> **As I reread his published books in sequence, and then went on to the man's hundreds of unpublished pages, and looked at the hundreds of watercolors and other works of art that almost nobody had ever seen, I felt Harlan emerging, in my own consciousness of him, into a public stature far larger than I could have expected him to have on the basis of what I knew when he was alive. It became possible for me to imagine a life for Harlan in other, later minds that would know him only from his writing and his pictures. It became possible to imagine that Harlan, who lived so conscientiously apart from what most people consider the history of the modern world, will at last enter that history as a significant part of it and have an influence on it.**

This time has come for Harlan, made only more urgent by the intense relevancy Harlan's life and work can have in our contemporary age of climate crisis and cultural degradation.

Community Engagement in Support of Clean Water

By Susan Griffin Ward

KWA has been working across the Commonwealth to engage communities and individuals in our work to protect, restore, and celebrate our waterways. These are some of the highlights from the last half of 2024.

KWA Commonwealth Sweep

KWA's Commonwealth Sweep cleanups, made possible by funds from Hydro Flask's Parks For All grant, allowed KWA to work with communities in every river basin to address litter removal in local waterways, educate communities on the importance of watershed health, and foster long-last relationships with people interested in waterway preservation.



Bipartisan Support for the Ohio River Restoration Plan Announced

Kentucky Waterways Alliance along with the National Wildlife Federation, helped to organize a press conference and listening session with Representatives Morgan McGarvey (D, KY-3) and Erin Houchin (R, IN-9) for Ohio River Basin stakeholders. Rep. McGarvey and Rep. Houchin serve as co-chairs of the Ohio River Basin Congressional Caucus and are working together to provide bipartisan leadership, advocacy, and support for the Ohio River Restoration Plan. In a world that is often divided, the Ohio River is a great connector—it brings us together.







Red Bird River Environmental Field Day

KWA hosted the annual Red Bird River Environmental Field Day at Big Double Creek Campground in the Red Bird District of the Daniel Boone National Forest. 240 students from four schools attended with twenty-three teachers and chaperones. Presenters from partner organizations – Clay County Extension, Clay County Conservation District, U.S. Forest Service, KY Woodland Owners Association, and more joined KWA for a day of learning and fun focused on water quality. This event is part of KWA's Red Bird River Septic & Education EPA319 funded project in Leslie, Clay, and Bell Counties managed by Lois Smith, KWA's Red Bird River Watershed Coordinator.



River Cowboys Documentary: The Louisville Film Premiere

There was an incredible response to the Louisville premiere of KWA's *River Cowboys* documentary at Gravely Brewing in October. Thank you to our partners in producing the documentary: Wilkinson Visual, who captured the beauty of the Red River that runs through Kentucky's beloved Red River Gorge, and Friends of Red River. This documentary has been accepted into the 2025 Wild & Scenic Film Festival, 2025 Lookout Film Festival, and 2024 Fresh Coast Film Festival! We are working on additional distribution and educational opportunities to further our work addressing the issue of waste tire management in Kentucky's waterways.

Inaugural Participatory Fishing Day

It was a great day at work for 140 Humana employees who spent the day catching fish at the Falls of the Ohio State Park to support research on the presence of pollutants in the Ohio River. The event was organized by KWA and our partners at Christina Lee Brown Environme Institute, Humana, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (Kentucky Chapter), Falls of the Ohio Foundation, Center for Integrative Environmental Health Sciences - CIEHS, and U of L Center for Healthy Air Water and Soil. The fish caught are being tested for PFAS and other pollutants. This data will support ongoing research and advocacy for cleaner water policies helping to ensure the health of the river that serves as the source of drinking water for millions of people. Look for our report and analysis in early 2025.



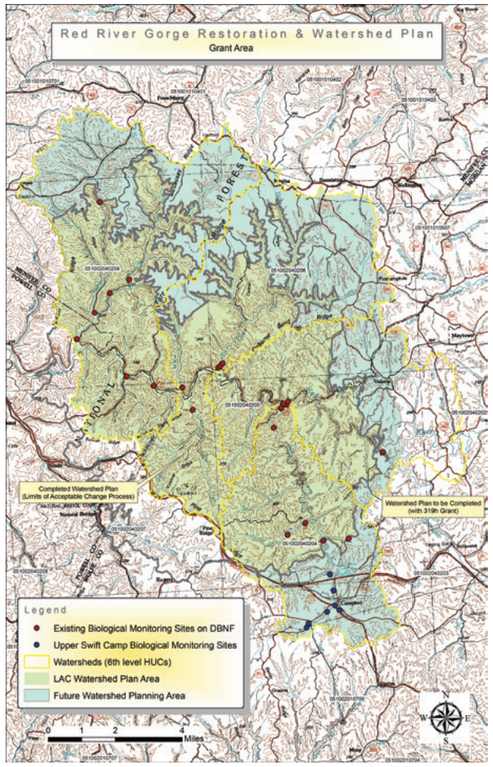


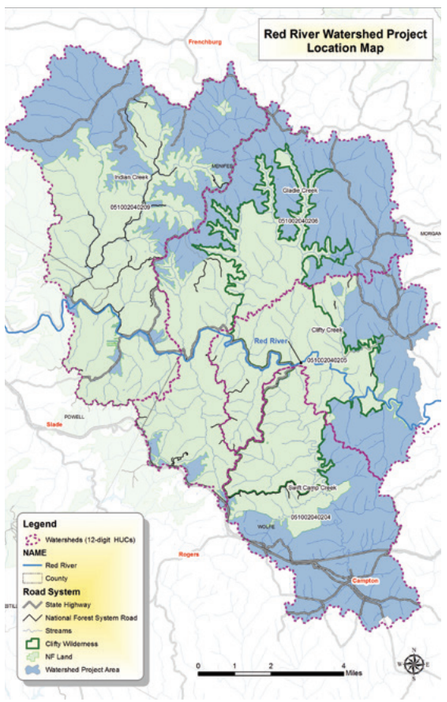
KWA Red River Restoration Work to Continue

By Laura Gregory

KWA has been working with local community and partners at Daniel Boone National Forest (DBNF) and Kentucky Division of Water since 2012 to understand the water quality and the best management practices needed to improve impaired waterways in the Red River Watershed. The Red River Watershed Restoration Plan was completed in 2015 and showed that the top water quality issues were sedimentation due to loss of streamside vegetation, unregulated overuse in the Red River Gorge, illegal dumping, stormwater runoff, and bacteria due to human and livestock wastewater. In 2017, to improve water quality KWA and DBNF began a septic repair or replacement assistance program for low-income families, an environmental education program, organized cleanups, and made stream buffer improvements.

KWA is excited to announce that we will be starting another phase of Red River Watershed Plan implementation with DBNF with a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under §319(h) of the Clean Water Act and additional funds from River Network's Wild & Scenic Stewardship Partnership Grant. This funding also expands our capacity through the hiring of a new, local, Red River Watershed Coordinator who will facilitate new septic installations and repairs in our priority area as well as plan and host our well-established education and outreach programs. As always, individuals who are at or below the 100% poverty rate will get their septic repair or replacement paid for in full. A positive change to our septic project is that we are accepting applications from people with incomes that exceed the 100% poverty rate at an 80/20 cost share.





KWA's 2nd Annual Kentucky Watershed Network Summit

By Laura Gregory

KWA's 2nd Annual Kentucky Watershed Network Summit was a huge success! The theme of this year's two-day summit was "Community Flood Mitigation." Attendees had the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of learning experiences including:

- Planting trees in a hands-on stream buffer planting workshop
- Discussing flood mitigation with a panel of experts
- Participating in a seminar about flood permitting and oversight
- Receiving certification in water sampling
- Visiting Cave Run Lake Dam to learn how it is used for flood mitigation
- Visiting Triplett Creek flood mitigation site
- Touring Minor E Clark Fish Hatchery
- Receiving a legislative update from Kentucky Resources Council

Thank you to our co-host, Kentucky Watershed Watch, and to our sponsors, the Kentucky Colonels and Morehead-Rowan County Tourism. It's an honor to serve Kentucky's watershed management community by providing a space to learn, connect, and collaborate. The strength of the collective was unmistakably energizing for all involved.

This work was funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under §319(h) of the Clean Water Act.



"Because of KY Watershed Network I met watershed people I wouldn't have been able to connect with otherwise. We will accomplish more by sharing ideas than working individually," said a Summit participant.



Expanding KWA's Impact Across the Commonwealth

Last year, KWA's staff and Board of Directors prioritized expanding our reach, impact, and connections across all seven river basins in the Commonwealth. As 2024 draws to a close, we are happy to report the following successes.

Seed Grants

- KWA awarded seed grants to fund projects to reduce nonpoint source pollution in each basin. This work was funded in part by a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency under §319(h) of the Clean Water Act.
- KWA funded Kentucky Rural-Urban Exchange microgrants to support watershed projects that provide education and foster connection to Kentucky's waterways in Campbellsville (Green and Taylor Cos.), Stanton (Powell Co.), and Hyden (Leslie Co.).

Cleanups

- KWA organized Commonwealth Sweep cleanups in all seven river basins in partnership with 28 different organizations, non-profits, city officials, and communities. 208 volunteers contributed 847 hours to remove 253 bags of litter and 34 large objects (such as tires, appliances, and furniture) from our watersheds.
- KWA created a Cleanup Toolkit to guide individuals and organizations in planning their own cleanups.

Restoration, Protection, and Advocacy

- KWA advocacy efforts protected the Green River basin and all their downstream neighbors when we halted the illegal discharge of 4.5M gallons of coal-polluted wastewater into the river.
- KWA advocacy efforts resulted in the suspension of the state authorization program under which this discharge was permitted, which was a clear violation of the Clean Water Act, protecting all river basins across the state.
- KWA advocacy efforts protected an Ohio River State Wildlife Refuge in the Salt River Basin when we helped to halt the construction of a barge repair facility near its shores.
- KWA expanded our restoration work in Eastern Kentucky in both the Red Bird River and Red River watersheds where our efforts are focused on bettering public health through septic repair, replacement, installation, and education.
- KWA hosted a press conference and listening session with members of congress in Louisville in support of the Ohio River Restoration Plan.

Education, Outreach, and Celebration

- KWA expanded the Kentucky Watershed Network to include members from each basin and hosted the 2nd Annual Watershed Network Summit in Morehead, Kentucky.
- KWA produced a documentary, *River Cowboys*, to highlight the need to protect and restore the Red River and to further our work addressing the issue of waste tires pollution in Kentucky's waterways.
- KWA hosted the Wild & Scenic Red RiverFest in Powell County which included a focus on environmental education and a paddle on the Red River to experience the beauty of the river firsthand.
- KWA hosted watershed education workshops in Oldham County.
- KWA hosted an environmental education day for elementary school students in the Red Bird District of Daniel Boone National Forest.
- KWA hosted a rock skipping contest at West Sixth Farm in Frankfort.
- KWA hosted screenings of filmmaker Morgan Atkinson's documentary, *This is The Ohio* in Louisville, Frankfort, Milton, Boone County, and Ashland to engage and build support for the Ohio River Restoration Plan to be introduced in 2025.
- KWA hosted an educational Belle of Louisville cruise focused on Ohio River Restoration.
- KWA Hosted a participatory science fishing day at the Falls of the Ohio to collect fish for testing for PFAS and other pollutants.

