



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



Photo courtesy of Rivers Are Life

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

CUMULATIVE GARBAGE STATS

Dear Friends,

What a fantastic year 2023 has been, we had cleanups on the Mississippi River and 4 of its tributaries, beginning in Memphis, visiting Nashville for the first time in many years, to Cincinnati, and we ended our season in Paducah, Kentucky.

In 2023, we celebrated the 13th year of our Alternative Spring Break program. For three weeks in March, **124 college students** from **12 universities** collected **80,614 lbs. of garbage** from McKellar Lake in Memphis, Tennessee. We also surpassed 13 million total pounds of garbage, with a student volunteer snagging the **13 millionth pound** during ASB! We were lucky to have the opportunity to be featured in a short film produced by **Rivers Are Life** this year, and all the filming took place during ASB. This gave us a chance to reflect on the impact of this 3-week annual program over the years - **2,426 students** from all over the country have removed **1,584,811 pounds** of garbage. But the impacts have spread even beyond those few weeks, with students who have gone back to their campuses to start clubs, become student leaders, change their majors to pursue careers in conservation, and even an LLW crew member or two who connected with us through ASB and continued to pursue the work of preserving and protecting America's rivers. If you'd like to see a beautiful and powerful tribute to this program and the work LLW has done in Memphis with college students over the years, it is definitely worth 15 minutes of your time to watch "**Study Aboard**".

2023 was our biggest year yet with our MillionTrees Project, with **185,327 trees** planted and distributed across **25 states**. We are already making plans for the exciting milestone we'll reach in 2024 - planting our 2 millionth tree!

We completed the renovations on our new floating classroom barge, the **Mississippi River Institute**, hosting our first classes in the first week of October. The focus of this new classroom is on river-related careers in addition to our watershed education programs, and we have enjoyed introducing high school students to the many career possibilities available to them along the Mississippi River while providing a unique, hands-on experience on the river.

We also purchased the **Beacon Harbor** building in East Moline, which will become our new headquarters. It is a perfect riverside location for us to dock the Mississippi River Institute classroom when it is in the Quad Cities for one semester each year. We are looking forward to hosting workshops at this new location, and we are thrilled to be able to provide access to the river for thousands of students who will have the opportunity to participate in our free education programs.

I'm so proud of the crew and the incredible hard work they put in year after year to produce results, create connections with the river for thousands of students and volunteers, and to show up day after day to make an impact. 2023 brought changes in our operation, new growth, expanded programming, and some tough scheduling and staffing challenges that required everyone to bring their best 110% every day - and every day, the LLW crew brought it. The volunteers and students brought it, too. I am always moved by the passion and work ethic we see at cleanups, and this year was no exception.

We hope to continue to exceed your expectations, as your continued support means the world to us. The more we have, the more we can do, and as I always say, "**No matter how you choose to contribute, you're always in the boat with us.**"

Sincerely,

Chad

Chad Pregracke
Founder & President
Living Lands & Waters

Bags	153,393	Mattresses	141	Portable Toilets	43
Tires	96,840	Boats	158	Tractors	20
Styrofoam (sq ft)	105,138	Duck Decoys	374	Aquariums	1
Barge Line (ft)	68,937	Big Wheels / Kid's Bikes	97	Truck Toppers	3
Balls	25,332	Sunken Barges	4	Oxygen Tanks	8
Milk Crates	1,903	Hot Water Heaters	412	Outboard Boat Engines	9
Mannequin Parts	18	Washing Machines	176	Campers	5
Cars/Trucks/Vans	50	Bowling Balls	124	Sinks	158
Refrigerators	956	Clown Shoes	2	Pianos	4
BBQ Grills	184	Toilets	143	Bath Tubs	39
5-Gallon Buckets	9,324	Hot Water Heaters	412	Ammunition (lbs)	5
Stoves	198	Baby Dolls	771	Guns	3
55-Gallon Barrels	11,854	Bags of Police Riot Gear	6	Couches	94
Messages in Bottles	105	Computer Printers	2	Motorcycles	12
Patio Chairs	599	Navigational Buoys	833	Shower Stalls	2
Air Conditioners	74	John Deere Combine	1	Ping Pong Table	1
Trash Cans	1,160	Propane Tanks	1,138	Trampoline	1
Shopping Carts	78	5th Wheel Trailers	1	Typewriter	1
Car Engines	21	Tops of School Buses	1	20th Century	
Computer Monitors	146	Windmills	1	Steam Boat Boiler	1
Lawn Mowers	61	Fire Extinguishers	157	Electric Scooters	5
Televisions	478	Freezers	150	Helipad	1
Civil War Mortar Shells	1	Life Jackets	409	Playstation	1
Prosthetic Limbs	13	Jet Skis	14	Vintage Barbie Doll	
Construction Cones	689	Safes	31	Collection	1
Helmets	78	Electric Guitars	2	Grandfather Clocks	2
Keys	3	Dishwashers	71	Box of Military Coins	2
Waste Oil (Gallons)	527	Bicycles	143	Laptop	1
Unicycle	1	Hot Tubs	19	Dryers	2
Coolers	1,095	Gas Cans	743	VCR	1



MEET THE CURRENT CREW



LEAH CAFARELLI
MARKETING MANAGER

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Living Lands & Waters is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization. All donations are tax deductible.

EXPENSES & REVENUE



84% PROGRAM SERVICES ●
 12% MANAGEMENT & GENERAL ●
 4% PUBLIC RELATIONS ●



● CORPORATIONS 44%
 ● FOUNDATIONS 36%
 ● INDIVIDUALS 16%
 ● OTHER 4%
 ● GOVERNMENT 0%

A WORD FROM THE BENCH

As you will certainly learn after reading this report, it was another great year for Living Lands & Waters (LL&W). Hats off to all the crew, volunteers, and donors who helped make this success happen. We are very excited to continue to grow our efforts to educate the public about all the activities and opportunities "inside the levees." Our new floating classroom gives us another great tool to enhance those efforts. We also anticipate spending more time out on the water engaging in cleanup efforts with our supporters and sponsors. The organization continues to create new and unique opportunities to get involved—for volunteers and donors.

On a personal note, at our recent board meeting in St. Paul, I was so impressed as we went around the table with the quality of each of the staff members. Chad has assembled a team of bright, enthusiastic, and dedicated people who share the passion of the leadership of the organization. It is an honor and a "hoot" to work with such a driven group of people.

Everyone has choices regarding where they volunteer their time. Likewise, they can choose where they donate their hard-earned money. I want to thank you for choosing LL&W.

Cheers,
Rick Calhoun
 Chairman



2023 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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RIVER CLEANUPS

Our cleanup journey commenced in March, right from the heart of Memphis, extending all the way to a week shy of Christmas. Armed with our crew and volunteers, we embarked on **115 cleanup missions** across nine different rivers: the Mississippi, Illinois, Ohio, Tennessee, Rock, Cumberland, Des Plaines, Licking, and Great Miami.

With the dedication of **1,601 volunteers** and the relentless work of our partner in grime, the "Game Changer" (our John Deere excavator), we successfully eradicated a staggering 348,106 lbs of debris from America's waterways. This year's efforts bring our cumulative total to an awe-inspiring **13,316,262 lbs!**

River Miles Adopted: 214 Mississippi River | 158 Tennessee River | 43 Illinois River | 13 Ohio River | 126 Other Rivers
2023 Great Mississippi River Cleanup Stats: 81 Volunteers | 604 Pounds Removed



ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK

As tradition dictates, we kicked off our 2023 cleanup season with in Memphis, hosting of our Alternative Spring Break program.

We welcomed **119 college students** hailing from 12 different schools across the nation. Together, they waged war against waste, triumphantly hauling away **80,614.50 lbs** of refuse from the shores of McKellar Lake in a mere three weeks. And the cherry on top? We reached a monumental milestone, clearing our **13th MILLION pound** of trash from America's waterways!

Adding to the excitement, during the third week, we were honored to host a documentary film crew from Rivers Are Life, who masterfully captured the essence of our ASB program. Dive into the action by scanning the QR code below and witness their stellar work firsthand!



RECYCLE LIKE A ROCKSTAR



Double the events, double the impact! During our stay in Nashville for the Inland Marine Expo, we rocked not one, but TWO Recycle Like a Rockstar events! With the unwavering support of **35 volunteers** from esteemed partners like Ingram Barge Company, Cargill, and Tractor Supply Company, we delved into the depths of 9,880 lbs of trash, emerging triumphant by salvaging and **recycling 1,980 lbs.**

It marked a historic moment as the barge made its inaugural appearance in Nashville. And guess what? The excitement doesn't end there – brace yourselves for round two as we gear up to return to Nashville for the 2024 IMX! We're counting down the days and can't wait to rock the riverfront once again with your phenomenal support!

MILLION TREES PROJECT

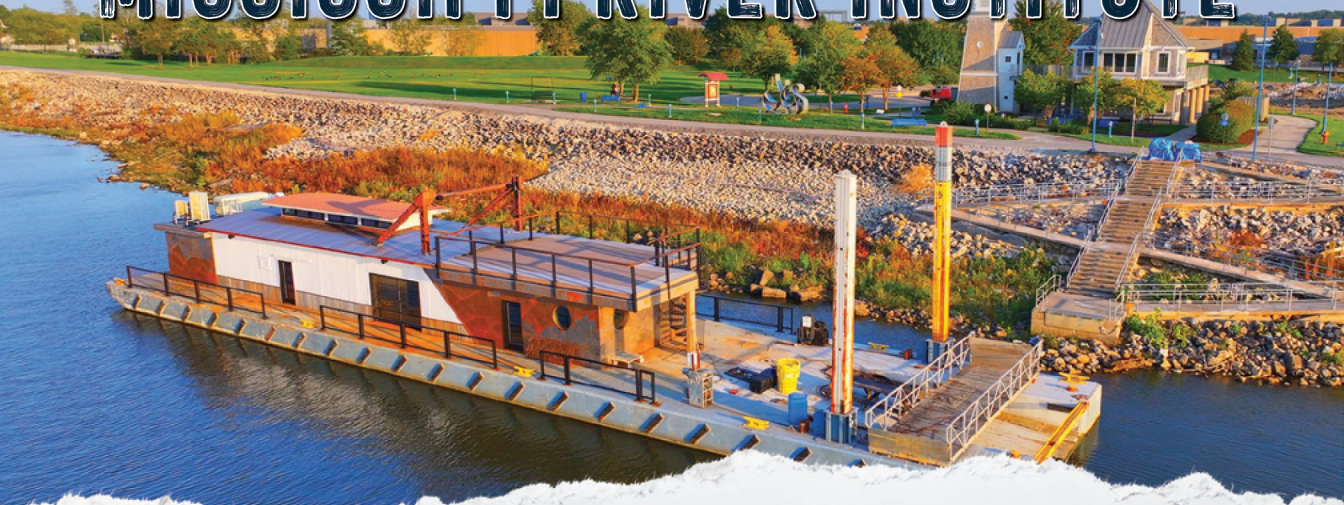


In 2023, with Americorp NCCC's assistance and a legion of volunteers, we wrapped, bagged, tagged, shipped, and dug, achieving a record-breaking year, planting and distributing **185,327 trees.** This brings our total to **1,964,378,** inching us closer to our new goal of 2 million trees. We're committed to inspiring individuals and communities nationwide to join us in this vital effort.

The MillionTrees Project embodies our dedication to environmental stewardship and community engagement, encouraging everyone to roll up their sleeves and plant a tree. Together, we're nurturing a greener, healthier future for our planet.



MISSISSIPPI RIVER INSTITUTE



At LL&W, we have always framed the Mississippi River as **"2,300 miles of opportunity."** We believe it is not only a tremendous resource from an ecological standpoint but also offers numerous career opportunities that are typically overlooked by students preparing to enter the workforce... Thus, we have built a second classroom barge, the **Mississippi River Institute (MRI)**!

The vast array of careers along the mighty Mississippi include dozens of STEM jobs, barge and boat crew, navigators and pilots, conservation and wildlife rangers, hospitality, and more. The access to learning about career opportunities on the river could be a critical catalyst for students to find pathways to success.

By traveling along the Mississippi from St. Paul, MN, to St. Louis, MO, with various stops in between, high-school students will have the chance to explore the available career options along the river in a unique and memorable classroom setting.

This year, we proudly hosted nine workshops as part of the MRI, welcoming **179 students** from **seven high schools**: Davenport West, Davenport North, East Peoria, United Township, Moline, Geneseo, and Mt. Carrol.

Throughout the workshops, students had the privilege to interact with various maritime industry guest speakers, such as commercial fishermen, conservation officers, representatives from the inland marine industry, and experts from the Rock Island Soil and Water sector. These interactions provided invaluable insights into the diverse career paths awaiting them "over the levee."

Moreover, participants delved into the crucial conservation initiatives spearheaded by Living Lands and Waters' educators, gaining a deeper understanding of the pivotal role each individual plays in preserving the sanctity of our waterways.



EDUCATION WORKSHOPS



In 2023, we conducted nine educational workshops aboard our "Floating Classroom", captivating the minds of **265 students** along the Ohio River. Our workshops unfolded in Cincinnati, OH, and Lawrenceburg, IN, offering immersive experiences in watershed dynamics, water quality testing, macroinvertebrate identification, and biomagnification!

The student's enthusiasm for the environment also translated into tangible action as they joined forces for river cleanups, collectively hauling away a commendable **3,154 lbs** of debris from the banks of the Ohio River.

On the mighty Mississippi, we extended the reach of our mission, hosting six summer camp programs, where 113 students immersed themselves in the marvels of river life and conservation.

Our dedicated educators also traversed both physical and virtual realms. Through engaging outreach initiatives, we instilled in 3,828 students far and wide the importance of clean water and the need for waste reduction, particularly in combating single-use plastics.



I80 RESTORATION PROJECT



With heavy hearts, we share the outcome of the Illinois and Iowa Departments of Transportation's decision regarding the new I-80 Mississippi River Bridge alignment. Unfortunately, the chosen alignment necessitates the demolition of the existing I-80 Bridge, resulting in the end of the Bison Bridge Foundation's mission of transforming the bridge into a pedestrian crossing and public space.

The foundation acknowledges the community's disappointment and expresses deep gratitude for the unwavering support it has received throughout this challenging journey.

Although this great project will not move forward, the I80 Restoration Project site still saw great progress in 2023. Thanks to **318 volunteers** from the community and outstanding partners such as John Deere, we removed acres of invasive honeysuckle, restoring space for native plants to grow and thrive.



IN GOOD COMPANY



The return of Clif Bar's In Good Company program has us bursting with excitement! Over a thrilling two weeks, we teamed up with **31 volunteers** from Clif Bar and Mondelez to embark on a garbage-grabbing adventure in quaint Rabbit Hash, KY, nestled along the banks of the Ohio River.

Together, these dedicated volunteers epitomized the spirit of hard work, tirelessly hauling away an impressive **44,411 lbs** of refuse during our cleanup efforts.

A heartfelt thank you to all those who lent a hand and worked side by side with us. The camaraderie, determination, and sheer dedication exhibited by each volunteer fueled our collective passion for making a tangible difference.



RED BULL FLUGTAG



The verdict is in – river rats CAN fly!

Joining the exhilarating Red Bull Flugtag in Cincinnati, OH, was a no-brainer as our barge and cleanup schedule coincided perfectly with the event. In this unique competition, teams are challenged to build their own flight crafts and send them off a stage towering 30' over a body of water. Teams are judged on flight distance, appearance, and a 30-second skit performance.

Months of preparation culminated in a thrilling **second-place finish** amongst dozens of competing teams! We're immensely grateful to Red Bull for the unforgettable opportunity to showcase our organization to thousands of spectators.





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Living Lands & Waters
17624 Route 84 North
East Moline, IL 61244

SAVE THE DATE!

2024 BARGE PARTY - JUNE 13, 2024

TICKETS ON SALE NOW! SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW & FOLLOW LL&W ON SOCIAL MEDIA TO STAY UPDATED ON ALL BARGE PARTY ANNOUNCEMENTS.

**SCAN HERE TO STAY UPDATED
ON ALL THINGS LL&W!**



OUR MISSION

To aid in the protection, preservation, and restoration of the natural environment of our nation's major rivers and their watersheds.

To expand awareness of environmental issues and responsibility encompassing our rivers.

To create a desire and opportunity for citizens to take an active role in helping to make a cleaner river environment.

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