



# IMPACT REPORT 2022





“

Everyone has the power to make a difference. We're inspiring people to make small changes today that have an immediate impact on river health and water supply. As more people join us, the bigger the impact we will make. ”

- Sarah Nelson

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STATEMENT

I'm so inspired and moved by the efforts of our passionate community. Thank you for donating to our cause, volunteering your time, and sharing our mission with friends and family. 2022 marked a significant milestone of sustainability and growth that wouldn't be possible without your love and support.

This year, we brought on phenomenal new partners, collaborated with Jack Johnson, expanded into three new states, and quadrupled our cleanup series impact. We also received dozens of letters from people who we inspired to host a river cleanup on their own - reinforcing our belief that every individual has the power to make a difference.

In the upcoming year, we will ramp up education, expand our footprint, and evolve cleanup events to have the largest impact. Importantly, we will continue to connect people to rivers through hands-on conservation projects and experiences that make a positive and long-lasting impact on river health.

Read on to learn about our plans for the new year. Thank you for continued support in protecting our rivers.

Happy Holidays!

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sarah".

**SARAH NELSON**

Founder, Executive Director

# PROTECT OUR RIVERS

## OUR MISSION

Our mission is to connect people to rivers through hands-on conservation projects and experiences that inspire action, thus making a lasting positive impact on river health.

## OUR PURPOSE

As individuals, we are inspired by rivers, and we believe in the transformative power that rivers have on all of us. We work to protect rivers so future generations retain access to them as critical resources and have opportunities to discover the solace, adventure, and harmony that healthy rivers provide us all.

## OUR IMPACT

In the past two years we've hosted 70 river cleanups across Colorado and beyond. We've also educated thousands of people about plastic pollution, responsible recreation, and river health.



70 River  
Cleanups  
Across 4 States



52,140 pounds  
removed from  
waterways.

3,800 pounds  
recycled



Across 204  
river miles



4,004  
individuals  
volunteered  
their time



Totaling 8,290  
volunteer  
hours

# 2022

## HIGHLIGHTS

Here are a few of the things we accomplished this year:

- Organized 42 river cleanup events, removing 40,895 pounds of trash from rivers, streams, and beaches.
- Received support from Jack Johnson and led a nationwide DIY cleanup effort. 1,857 people participated in our Better Together Cleanup Challenge, and picked up over 15,000 pounds of trash.
- Expanded into three new states and diversified river cleanups to include underrepresented communities.
- Launched several interactive education programs to teach new river runners and volunteers about watershed conservation, responsible recreation, river health, and human-caused problems.
- Hosted five on-river cleanups, including two of Colorado's largest events, with the support of the Bureau of Land Management and Denver Parks and Rec.
- Diverted 70% more trash from landfills than in 2021 through increased recycling and composting resources.
- Mentored and supported middle school students to host a river cleanup that engaged their local community including Boy Scouts Troops, fellow students, friends and neighbors.
- Received support from 22 new partners, 3,884 volunteers and 252 individuals who donated to Protect Our Rivers.





# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## RIVER CLEANUPS

Protect Our Rivers organizes 30+ river cleanup events annually throughout the western United States. Our volunteer events take place on-river and on-land and most of them are open for the public to join. In addition to removing harmful waste from waterways, river cleanups are opportunities for people to connect with rivers, experience their beauty, and learn firsthand the problems threatening rivers today. This year, we evolved our cleanup program to better educate volunteers, include more people, and divert trash from landfills.

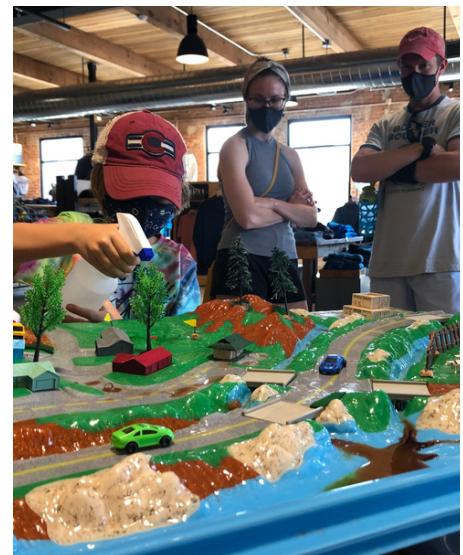
Since we started in 2021, the Protect team has organized 70 cleanup projects on 17 waterways including:

- Arkansas River [CO]
- Boulder Creek [CO]
- Clear Creek [CO]
- Cherry Creek [CO]
- Colorado River [CO]
- Green River [UT]
- Madison River [MT]
- Poudre River [CO]
- New River [WV]
- Ralston Creek [CO]
- San Juan River [UT]
- South Platte River [CO]
- St. Vrain River [CO]
- Ten Mile Creek [CO]
- Yampa River [CO]
- Sloan's Lake [CO]
- Crown Hill Lake [CO]

# PROGRAM OVERVIEW

## EDUCATION

Protect Our Rivers uses hands-on, interactive programs to educate people about river health, watershed conservation and human-caused impacts like pollution. Our education efforts are focused on teaching people how to recreate responsibly, reduce their carbon footprint, and lead their own conservation efforts. Below are some programs we rolled out in 2022. We have plans to ramp up our education efforts in 2023!



### RESPONSIBLE RECREATION CARDS

In partnership with Down River Equipment, we developed responsible recreation cards to help educate new river runners on ways to minimize their environmental impact.

We printed and distributed the cards to hundreds of new rafters before they set out on multi-day trips.

### EDUCATIONAL SEMINARS & EVENTS

We participated in panel events, seminars, and educational happy hours that shed light on problems and solution specific to each community.

We started weaving education into our cleanup events by starting each cleanup a five-minute overview with fun river facts, top threats, and tips on minimizing human impacts.

### WATERSHED DEMONSTRATION MODEL

We invested in a watershed demonstration model to educate elementary and middle school students. This watershed model is an interactive presentation tool that kids can participate in to help demonstrate causes and ways to reduce point source and nonpoint source pollution.



# 14.6 MM

Individuals reached with  
our mission in 2022



# 2022 GOALS

## **Increase the Impact, Magnitude and Reach of River Cleanups**

- Focus Colorado efforts on larger-scale river cleanups to increase impact and maximize team resources to expand our National footprint.
- Empower people of all ages to lead river cleanups across the country by providing them with the support and tools to do so successfully.
- Increase the number of on-water cleanups in which the community can participate throughout Colorado, Montana, Wyoming and Oregon.

## **Amplify Support of Young River Stewards**

- Educate the younger generation to become protectors of our water resources by providing them opportunities to experience, learn, and appreciate them.
- Continue to mentor grade school students to help them lead river cleanup events.

## **Increase Education & Hands On Learning Opportunities**

- Increase hands on learning opportunities through workshops, interactive displays, and literature.
- Create and distribute compelling content that empowers volunteers to stretch their impact beyond participating in cleanup events.
- Continue to educate new river runners on how to minimize their impact.

## **Lean On Volunteers & Grow Our Board of Directors**

- Engage volunteers to host and support river cleanups and event activations
- Grow and diversify our Board of Directors.

## **Dive into Microplastics**

- Publish a study on microplastics and their direct impact on water quality.

# THANK YOU PARTNERS!

## FOUNDING PARTNERS

These organizations made significant contributions to help us get off the ground. They will continue to be an integral piece of our programs for years to come.



**ORVIS**®

**BOWIE RIVER**



**LAVABOX™**  
PORTABLE CAMPFIRE

**YAKODA**

## LEADERS IN PROTECTION

In addition to partnering with us on cleanup events, these organizations made substantial donations to our organization. Thank you for going above and beyond to further our mission!



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**ELEVATIONS**  
CREDIT UNION



**river  
NETWORK**  
connecting people · saving rivers



## CLEANUP SERIES PARTNERS

These organizations sponsored river cleanups and fueled the success of our 2022 event series!



**klean kanteen®**



**MDL**  
OUTDOORS

**Deloitte.**



**Pivot Energy**

**SALIDA MOUNTAIN SPORTS**



**Magnite**

**THE UN SPILT**



**DENVER PARKS & RECREATION**



**ASTRAL.**

**ORIS**  
HÖLSTEIN 1904



**GOALS**  
YOUTH RIVER EXPEDITIONS



**Sawyer**  
paddles and oars.com





# THANK YOU!

## CONTACT INFO

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