



IMPACT REPORT 2024





“

Thanks to your unwavering support, and volunteerism, we reached a remarkable milestone in 2024 by launching a new program and expanding into two new states. ”

- Sarah Nelson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR STATEMENT

Each year we This year we had the most successful cleanup series on record, expanded into two new states, and launched a program to get underprivileged youth on the river for free. We also mapped our our 10 year vision and laid the framework to implement new river cleanup and access programs over the next 5 years.

All of this was possible thanks to your support - whether you made a donation, shared our mission, or volunteered at an event.

As we look ahead, we will continue to expand our impact, empowering people to make a difference, breaking down barriers to river access, and working to transform people into future river protectors, ultimately passing our rivers forward for future generations to preserve.

Read on to learn about our plans for the new year. Thank you again. Your love and dedication have made this progress possible.

A stylized, handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Sarah'.

SARAH NELSON

Founder, Executive Director

PROTECT OUR RIVERS



OUR MISSION

Our mission is to make a lasting impact on river health through active conservation, education, and access. Our programs 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 four years we've organized 131 river cleanups across five states. We've also educated thousands of people about plastic pollution, responsible recreation, rural and urban watersheds, and river health.



We've led 131
river cleanup
events



Across 20
rivers and
streams in five
states



And removed
250,500
pounds of
trash



10,250
people have
volunteered
with us



Totaling over
25,000
volunteer hours

2024 HIGHLIGHTS



We had our most successful cleanup series yet and expanded into two new states! This year we organized 31 river cleanup events across 5 states with over 3,000 volunteers and removed 75,680 pounds of trash from waterways.

We launched an access program that provides underprivileged kids the chance to learn about rivers and experience them for free. Our first year we built the program's framework and got 19 kids from the Mathew House out on the Poudre River for the very first time.



We engaged more kids in river cleanup events than ever before. We also organized a field trip for 100 fifth-grade students, providing them with hands-on environmental education and fostering a deeper connection to river conservation.

We empowered local communities by providing the tools and resources needed for several groups to independently organize and run their own cleanup events.



We supported the production of a short feature film that follows our Executive Director's story and was made to spread a message that everyone has the power to make a difference. We will debut the film in 2026.



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 river health.

Since we started in 2021, the Protect team has organized 131 cleanup projects on 22 waterways including:

- Arkansas River [CO]
- Big Thompson River [CO]
- Boulder Creek [CO]
- Clear Creek [CO]
- Cherry Creek [CO]
- Colorado River [CO]
- Green River [UT]
- Hillsborough River [FL]
- Madison River [MT]
- Poudre River [CO]
- New River [WV]
- Ralston Creek [CO]
- Salmon River [ID]
- San Juan River [UT]
- Skunk Creek [AZ]
- South Platte River [CO]
- St. Vrain River [CO]
- Ten Mile Creek [CO]
- Yampa River [CO]
- Yellowstone River [WY]
- Sloan's Lake [CO]
- Crown Hill Lake [CO]



EDUCATION & ACCESS



HANDS ON EDUCATION

We create interactive learning opportunities to teach people about river ecosystems, watershed conservation, and human-caused problems like pollution.

Some examples of our education programs include:

- A kids coloring activity sheet to educate kids about sustainable practices they can adopt to help protect rivers.
- Responsible recreation cards to educate new river runners.
- A watershed model that we've used to educate over 300 young river stewards about point source and non point source pollution.
- A traveling "raft full of trash" that we displayed across the front range to raise awareness about the types of trash that end up in rivers.

ACCESS

We host activities that give people opportunities to experience the natural power and beauty of rivers. After all, getting on the river connects people to the possibilities of protecting them.

This year we launched an access program designed to break down barriers and offer underprivileged and at-risk youth the chance to experience the power of rivers. The program combines hands-on educational activities with exciting experiences like fishing and rafting, giving participants the opportunity to both learn and enjoy rivers for the first time.

This year, we not only developed the framework for the program, but also got 19 kids and 62 adults out on the river for the first time. We're excited to scale this initiative in the coming years!

2025 GOALS

Increase the Impact of River Cleanups and Expand our National Footprint

- Execute impactful cleanups across Colorado in areas that need it most – that inspire action and leave people feeling good.
- Host river cleanups in 5 states.
- Increase storytelling to reach more people with the message that they can do something today to make an immediate impact on river health.

Set the Foundation for a Nationwide Ambassador Program

- Train and educate dedicated brand ambassadors on how to lead Protect Our Rivers river cleanups across Colorado.

Access

- Expand our access program in 1-2 additional places across Colorado and solidify program curriculum and goals.
- Partner with new outfitters to make this program more profitable.

Increase Education & Hands On Learning Opportunities

- Continue to educate new river runners on responsible river recreation and support programs that teach people about river health, watershed conservation and human-caused impacts like pollution.
- Create and distribute compelling content that empowers people of all ages to make small, sustainable lifestyle changes that positively impact river health.

Grow & Diversify the Board of Directors



THANK YOU!

CONTACT INFO

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