

RUNOFF REPORT

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A Reflection on the Clean Water Act

BY: DR. BRIAN STORZ, LICKING RIVER BASIN COORDINATOR



Unlike the 250 years of the Declaration of Independence, our Clean Water Act is relatively young. At only 54 years old, it may be young, but it is wise beyond its years and is still the most important policy to protect our waterbodies across the United States. It is the preeminent law protecting our waters from pollution, and it directs the restoration and maintenance of the chemical, physical, and biological processes of our nation's waterbodies.

The Clean Water Act guides our care for waterbodies by allowing us to regulate point source pollution—a single, identifiable source--but also recognizes the importance of managing nonpoint source pollution, which is runoff pollution from multiple sources associated with rainfall or snowmelt. Nonpoint source pollution management is mostly led by state and non-governmental agencies and is reliant on the communities that voluntarily develop watershed management plans and implement best management practices (BMPs) to reduce this runoff pollution.

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Nonpoint source pollution is considered the leading cause of water quality impairment in our waterbodies and with support from Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act, many communities are using green infrastructure, improved agricultural practices, and restoration practices to improve their local waterways.

On this 250th Anniversary of the United States, the Nonpoint Source and Basin Team salutes The United States of America, the Clean Water Act, and communities that are working to make a difference in their local waterways.

10th Annual Wild and Scenic Red RiverFest

BY: ALICE MANDT, UPPER CUMBERLAND RIVER BASIN COORDINATOR

The Kentucky Waterways Alliance recently hosted the 10th Annual Wild & Scenic Red RiverFest. This year's event took place along the river at a site generously provided by Red River Gorge Kayaking. The festival supports KWA's ongoing Red River Watershed Project, which aims to improve water quality throughout the Red River.

More than 10 educational tables lined the Clean Water Education Tent, where attendees could visit learning stations and connect with water quality organizations and environmental educators.

Local vendors and food trucks showcased the artistry and character of the region, from hand-painted canoes to live music from local musicians. Filled with celebration and community spirit, the Wild & Scenic Red RiverFest continues to stand out as a beloved local tradition – one that inspires the community to protect and celebrate the Red River.



Alice Mandt and Division of Water Director, Sarah Marshall, host a water education table under the Red River Fest Clean Water Tent.



The Herrington Lake Conservation League is making an impact on trash and water pollution

BY: STEVE EVANS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, KENTUCKY WATER RESEARCH INSTITUTE

Celebrating its one hundredth year in 2025, Herrington Lake, located in Garrard, Boyle, and Mercer Counties in central Kentucky, was first formed when Kentucky Utilities impounded Dix River for power generation. As the deepest lake in the state, the 3.648 mi² lake is a beloved tourism destination for boaters and fishermen and those who are attracted to the stunning views of the Palisade cliff-faces. The lake holds a lot of water - an estimated 175 billion gallons - which flows from 439 mi² of upstream land. Unfortunately, when the water arrives at Lake Herrington, it doesn't come alone but brings trash and debris that is deposited along its 325 miles of shoreline.



In 2001, homeowners around the lake grew weary of all the debris and trash and decided to take action. They formed the Herrington Lake Conservation League (HLCL) with a mission to preserve the natural beauty, environmental health and safety of the lake. As Beth Boursaw, Vice President of HLCL says, "We were founded by a bunch of neighbors who just decided to try make the lake look better." They quickly got to work raising funds and organizing events to clean up the lake and have been doing so ever since. The HLCL organizes an Annual Community Cleanup Day each year and hosts numerous festivals, meetings, and events throughout the year to generate awareness and funding to address the lake pollution.



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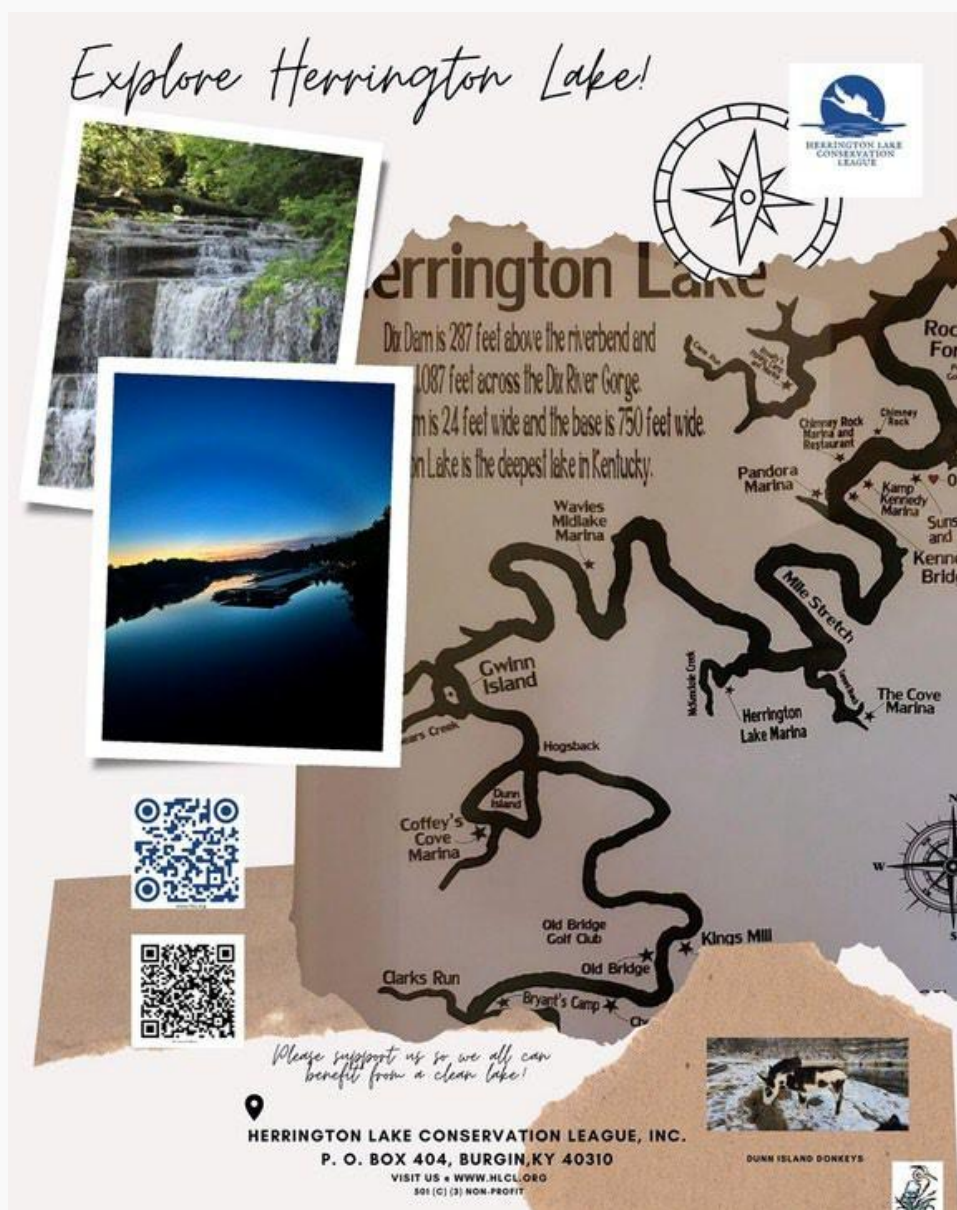
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY HLCL.



Because of the magnitude and size of the trash and debris generated, an independent contractor is hired to utilize the equipment necessary to extract the trash and debris from the area. “We want to help with the big stuff. We encourage the landowners to take care of their own properties though we help where we can.”

In recent years, HLCL has increased the magnitude of their cleanup operations thanks to partnership with funding assistance from LG&E and KU, the Kentucky River Authority, and numerous donations. In 2023, LGE&E and KU provided HLCL with three dumpsters around the lake that each hold 40 cubic yards of trash and debris. In that year, the contractors removed 2,230 tons of man-made material (35 dumpsters full) and burned 400 tons of wood. In 2004, an additional dumpster was added to increase capacity. In 2025, an estimated 1/60 cubic yards of man-made debris and trash were removed (44 dumpsters), burning 510 tons of wood. Commonly collected items include plastic bottles and Styrofoam.

Beth says their efforts are making a difference. “It is not as bad as it once was.... There will always be wood and trees, but we are seeing a reduction in Styrofoam.” HLCL recognizes that because their upstream neighbors are limited in what they are able to do to minimize runoff and debris, there will always be plenty of work to keep them busy. While their organization is small and focused, but their message to other nonprofits is encouraging. After 25 years of successful efforts, Beth wants others to know they can “do anything if they try.”





New staff for Kentucky Division of Water Nonpoint Source Section

BY: EILEEN MILLER, BIG SANDY RIVER BASIN COORDINATOR



Eileen Miller joins the Nonpoint Source Section as the new Big Sandy River Basin Coordinator. Eileen's previous position was with the Division of Water's Drinking Water Branch. She is looking forward to getting out in the region, meeting community partners, and learning about the great work already being done.

If you are in the Big Sandy River Basin, please contact eileen.miller@ky.gov to let her know what you are working on and how she can help.



Laura Talbert has joined the Division of Water, Nonpoint Source Section, as an Environmental Scientist Advisor. Laura has a background in conservation and public policy and will be largely working on the Gulf Hypoxia Program. Originally from Northern Kentucky, she is thrilled to be back in her home state. In her free time, Laura enjoys reading outside and consuming vast quantities of sugar.



Not the Good Kind of “Green” River!

BY: COLIN DUNCAN, GREEN RIVER BASIN COORDINATOR

As Kentucky transitions from the height of summer into fall, it's the perfect time to visit your favorite lake, stream, or park and enjoy the outdoors. Western Kentucky is home to several large reservoirs within the Green River Basin, including Rough River Lake and Barren River Lake, where swimming, fishing, and boating remain some of the region's most popular warm-weather activities.



PHOTO CREDIT: CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL (CDC)

Before heading out, it is important to think about safety. Wearing a life jacket, practicing safe boating, and avoiding contact with the water after heavy rain or if you have open cuts or sores are all simple ways to stay safe. While these common safety tips are important, it's also good to be aware of natural hazards in the water. One hazard to watch for is harmful algal blooms, also known as HABs.

A harmful algal bloom happens when cyanobacteria or blue green algae grow very quickly and produce toxins that can be harmful to people, pets, and wildlife. HABs are more likely to form when excess nutrients, such as nitrogen and phosphorus, wash into lakes and streams from runoff. Warm, slow-moving water and direct sunlight also create ideal conditions for these blooms to grow. Some types of cyanobacteria produce toxins, known as cyanotoxins, that can affect the nervous system or damage the liver. Fish can also be affected by these toxins, making them unsafe to eat. As a bloom dies and begins to break down, it uses up oxygen in the water. This can lead to fish kills, unpleasant odors, and poor water quality that can keep people from enjoying the lake.

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The good news is that not every algae bloom is harmful. There are a few signs that can help you recognize a possible HAB. Watch for water that has changed to bright green, blue-green, or brown. Harmful blooms may also create a thick, foamy, or scummy layer on the surface of the water, and sometimes produce a strong odor like rotten eggs.

One simple way to check if the algae may be cyanobacteria is by using the stick test. Carefully place a long stick into the bloom and slowly lift it out of the water. If the algae look like stringy threads or cotton and hang from the stick, they are more likely to be harmless algae. If the algae appear slimy and slip off the stick, they may be cyanobacteria, or harmful algal blooms. If you think you have found a harmful algal bloom, avoid contact with the water and keep children and pets away.

To protect yourself from harmful algal blooms, remember these simple steps:

- Avoid water that looks scummy or has a strong odor
- Keep children and pets away from suspected blooms
- Check for and follow fishing and swimming advisories
- Follow guidance from local officials if there is a harmful algal bloom in your drinking water supply
- If you or your animal goes in water with an algal bloom, rinse off with tap water right after

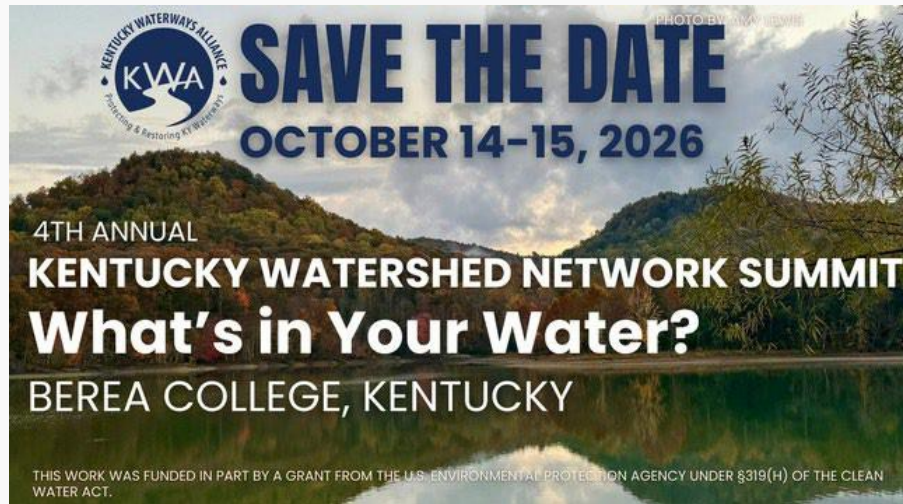
If you suspect that you have seen a HAB, please report the bloom to the Division of Water by calling 502-564-3410 or using the [HAB Notification Survey Form](#). After hours and on weekends, you may contact the 24-hour hotline at 502-564-2380 or 1-800-928-2380.



PHOTO CREDIT: CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVERKEEPER

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

CLICK AN IMAGE TO ACCESS A LINK FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT AN EVENT OR ANNOUNCEMENT



SAVE THE DATE
OCTOBER 14-15, 2026

4TH ANNUAL
KENTUCKY WATERSHED NETWORK SUMMIT
What's in Your Water?
BEREA COLLEGE, KENTUCKY

THIS WORK WAS FUNDED IN PART BY A GRANT FROM THE U.S. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY UNDER §319(h) OF THE CLEAN WATER ACT.



**JOIN US AT THE UPCOMING
UPPER CUMBERLAND COMMONWEALTH CLEAN SWEEP!**

Saturday; August 29, 2026
Check In: 8:30 AM-9:00 AM
Clean Up: 9:00 AM-12:00 PM
Location: Corbin, KY at Terry L. Shelby Memorial Shelter and along the Lynn Camp Creek Trail

Register Now!

Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA)
Protecting & Restoring KY Watersheds

Corbin KY
lives company

Seaguar

EKU
REPUBLIC BANK
Time to Thrive

Stantec

TEAM KENTUCKY
ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT CABINET

THE KENTUCKY WILDLANDS

The Center for Rural Development

PRIDE



2026 Kentucky Water Resources Symposium

SAVE THE DATE
18th SEPT

**CENTRAL BANK CENTER, 430 W VINE ST.
LEXINGTON, KY 40508**
<https://kwrri.uky.edu/annual-symposium>

Kentucky Water Research Institute



SAVE THE DATES
SEPTEMBER 5-12

September 5: Kick-Off Event
Fort Boonesborough State Park:
Family and community clean-up event

September 8-11: Join us for workshops about the watershed and environment

September 12: Closing Festival
Kelly's Landing
Paddle Race with Finishing Medals, Family Paddle & Clean-up, exhibits, music and food.

STAY UPDATED ON EVENTS, OR LEARN HOW YOU CAN SPONSOR BY SCANNING THIS QR CODE -->

HELLBENDER FESTIVAL
COMMUNITY FUN ALONG THE WATERSHED
2026

Hellbender?
LIVES IN CLEAN WATER
KEY TO WATER QUALITY
NON-TOXIC
AGGRESSIVE
MOSTLY NOCTURNAL
LARGEST SALAMANDER IN NORTH AMERICA, UPTO 30 INCHES LONG
FAVORITE FOOD: CRAYFISH



Friends of Red River
2026
CLEANUP SCHEDULE

4/25 **Middle Red River Gorge**
co-hosted by Kentucky Waterways Alliance

6/6 **Lee City**

7/11 **Clay City Loop**

8/1 **213 to Maple Street (Stanton)**

9/12 **Wolfe Lake / Swift Camp Creek**
co-hosted by Kentucky Waterways Alliance

Questions?
Contact Maggie - maggie@kwalliance.org

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ANNOUNCEMENTS AND EVENTS

Cumberland Falls State Resort Park Public Clean Up

Saturday, August 15

During our high peak seasons, we accumulate lots of trash at our beautiful waterfall. This is caused from littering, and from all of the debris that accumulates along the Cumberland River that ends up at the falls. Help keep Cumberland Falls looking beautiful as ever!

9:00-9:30 AM - Registration in front of Gift Shop
9:30-11:30 AM - Clean Up
11:30 AM - Winner for the most trash picked up wins a prize!

PLEASE DO NOT LITTER

Wearing gloves, closed-toe shoes, and long pants are recommended. Vests, trash bags, and gloves are provided. Great way to get community service hours!

Cumberland Falls State Resort Park is 20 mi SW of Corbin. Take US 25W to KY 90. 7351 Hwy. 90 • Corbin, KY • 606-528-4121
More event details on the parks.ky.gov event listings

KWA Kentucky Watershed Network Virtual Public Conversation Series

RESTORATION IN REAL LIFE: KY NATURE-BASED SOLUTIONS FOR CLEAN WATER

August 25 on Zoom, 12:00-1:00 pm

Speakers will provide an overview of how nature-based practices protect our water infrastructure, share case studies, and answer questions.

- It's FREE
- It's for watershed advocates, landowners, professionals, students, conservation districts, consultants, concerned citizens, and community leaders looking to turn conservation concepts into local action.

SPEAKERS

Chuck Davis, Kentucky Ecological Restoration Assoc. & Beaver Creek Hydrology

Leslie White, Beaver Creek Hydrology

REGISTER HERE

Friends of the Tug Fork River RUBBER DUCK RACE

KING COAL FESTIVAL

RACE WILL BE HELD IN THE TUG FORK RIVER AT 4:00 PM SATURDAY, SEPT 19 - DOWNTOWN WILLIAMSON, WV

Purchase ducks to enter the race at friendsofthetugfork.org, at our office, or from our booth the day of the event.

Ducks are: \$5 Each - Five for \$20 - Fifteen for \$50

Grand Prize: More than \$1,000 worth of gift cards and merchandise! You do NOT need to be present to win.

ENTER NOW!

More info: friendsofthetugfork.org

Funding Opportunity: \$5,000 Grants for Urban Forestry and Community Resilience

KAEE is thrilled to award grants of up to \$5,000 each to support initiatives that strengthen community resilience, expand urban forestry, increase tree canopy coverage, or provide education programming that addresses these important issues in underserved communities across Kentucky.

SYRCL's WILD & SCENIC® FILM FESTIVAL

WHERE ACTIVISM GETS INSPIRED

AN EVENING OF OUTDOOR ADVENTURE FILMS AND FUN

FRIDAY, AUGUST 28, 2026

FARISH THEATER • LEXINGTON KY

HAVE AN EVENT YOU WANT TO SHARE?
EMAIL EILEEN.MILLER@KY.GOV TO SEE IF YOUR EVENT CAN BE ADDED TO OUR UPCOMING NEWSLETTER.