



Fighting For the Ohio Seen As Critical Need

For over 30 years Kentucky Waterways Alliance (KWA) has worked to protect, restore, and celebrate Kentucky's unique waterways and its watersheds. In advocating for clean water and protection for Kentucky streams from the impacts of pollution, they engage citizens and provide the tools for speaking up for our state's critical water resources. Michael Washburn is the Executive Director for KWA. Common Home recently interviewed him on KWA's work and the state of our area's water resources. Here is part one of that interview.)



Common Home (CH) How would you describe KWA's work through its first 30 years?

Washburn: The entirety of that time has been about celebrating and protecting our waterways. And we do our work through a variety of platforms. In addition to grants programs, where we fund citizen participatory science, like water sampling groups, such as Watershed Watch. In addition to lobbying and advocacy, we do watershed planning. That takes intensive work with communities to figure out what are the threats the community thinks are most prevalent in their home and then work with them to find ways to address those threats. As an example, in eastern Kentucky, we're quite active in septic repair and installation, because straight-pipe discharge into the waterways is still a primary public health threat to the waterways there.

CH: Is there a current or priority issue KWA is working on?

Washburn: One of the things we're focusing on

now is the Ohio River basin. For so long, people have assumed it's an open sewer or a machine specifically and only for commerce. People have stopped thinking about it as an element of the natural world. I think about it from a basin perspective; 97% of Kentucky's water drains into the Ohio. It's where we get our water. Since everything drains into it, all the pollutants, all the misuse, the abuse, the neglect that happens out in the state is going to find its way into the Ohio. You can't talk about the Ohio without talking about its tributaries.

The Ohio basin is massive. It includes parts of 14 states; it's 205,000 square miles and is home to 25 million people. Five million people get water directly from its main stem. A large percent of U.S. commerce floats up and down that river. It's also vital to national security issues. In addition, it's a cultural, historical, and recreational center, right in the heart of the country. It's the most significant part of the Mississippi River basin.

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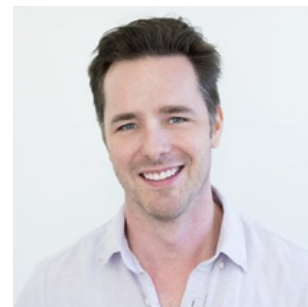
At its confluence, 60% of the Mississippi is made up of the Ohio River.

It does have problems. It has farm runoff, toxic pollution, and it has legacy pollution. It has PFAS (perfluorooctanic acid and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid). It has issues of economic injustice. There are any number of things occurring in this basin, and here's the thing, despite it being in the heart of the country, there is no significant dedicated ecological restoration funding for the Ohio.

So KWA is working with a group of organizations, some national, some regional, led by the Ohio River Basin Alliance along with the Ohio River Valley Water Sanitation Commission and the National Wildlife Federation. Together we are working on a restoration plan that would do for the entire Ohio River basin what has been done for places like the Great Lakes, Chesapeake Bay, Lake Tahoe, or the Everglades. And that is to get dedicated federal restoration funding for the Ohio basin. It's important because you can't talk about Ohio River restoration without talking about Kentucky restoration.

To really do a restoration, we're talking about workforce development as well as recreational opportunities, economic opportunities, as well as ecological

opportunities. These are all being addressed in the plan we're working on. We're going to deliver it to Congress later this year. This is one of the main things we're doing because I feel like everything else we do is based on the Ohio River; everything is either upstream or on it.



Michael Washburn

Now there is an Ohio River congressional caucus. Its co-leaders are Erin Houchin from Indiana and Morgan McGarvey here in Kentucky. Both of them are 110% committed to making this (restoration funding) happen. At this point, we've gotten every member of the Kentucky congressional delegation to join the Ohio River Caucus. But we need the House district members that are in the basin area and right now there's only 15 of those members in the caucus. If people have friends in one of the other 14 states that are in the basin, and this goes up to New York and down to Alabama, we encourage them to reach out and contact their elected officials to ask them to consider joining the Ohio River Caucus.

That's Incredibly powerful and I think this could be transformative for our state and the nation.



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CH: What other actions can individuals take to help protect our waterways?

Washburn:: Individual action is important, but we should never be tricked into thinking it's the individual's responsibility to fix the world's problems that have been caused by legacy polluters and industry. That having been said, you do want to maintain a hold on your trash to make sure it doesn't get into the creek.

There are a number of groups around Jefferson County and throughout the state such as Beargrass Creek Alliance and the South River Watershed Alliance. These are community groups who are getting out there and cleaning up waterways or doing community sampling so they so they actually have data to relate to people how safe or unsafe the waterways are, or how contaminated by e. coli their waterways are.

So there are opportunities to get engaged and I think those ways are very important. I also think we are in an age of cynicism and an age of unproductive polarization, but when it comes down to it, if you place a call to your U.S. congressman or your senator or the folks in Frankfort, the public sentiment expressed to those officials is listened to.

(Watch for part 2 of this interview in Common Home's next issue where Michael Washburn discusses area waterways, such as Beargrass Creek and Floyds Fork, their issues and what's causing their problems.)



A variety of plastic and pollution finds its way into the Ohio River.

Trivia Night Is Coming!

*Get your facts together. Get you team together. Get ready for fun!
Join us in the Community Center*

Friday Night, October 11, 7pm

**20 teams will compete to see who has the facts
on caring for our earth.**

Teams will have 8 players

**Prizes given to the best team name
and best table decoration.**

Babysitting will be provided (Toddlers to age 6)

For reservations call Jeanna Danhauer 502-777-2740



You Don't Say... But Do You Know Who Did?



See if you can match the quotes below with the person who said it.

1. There are foolish people. And even if you show them the statistics, still the fool will not believe.
2. The climate crisis is both the easiest and the hardest issue we have ever faced. The easiest because we know what we must do
3. To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.
4. If you have men who will exclude any of God's creatures from the shelter of compassion and pity, you will have men who will deal likewise with their fellow men.

A. Wendell Berry



B. Pope Francis



C. St. Francis



D. Greta Thunberg



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The Lighter Side of Climate



A masked priest just threw some holy water at me...
... I think it was a blessing in disguise.



That awkward moment when you pay \$2 for Evian water and notice
when it's spelled backwards you're Naive.



In the future water will be like sarcasm.
No one will get it.

The Environmental Concerns Committee would love your feedback on this issue of *Common Home*. In addition, let us know if there is particular climate change topic that you've experienced, have seen in the news or read about in *Laudato Si'* that you'd like to see covered. Email us at commonhome914@gmail.com.



Saving The World's Children With Clean Water

(Continuing the water quality focus of this issue of Common Home, our team member, Jeanna Danhauer, interviewed Sister Lorraine Lauter, OSU-MSJ, one of the founders of Water By Women, formerly Water with Blessings, on May 22. Here is her story.)

As a 19-year-old teenager Sister Lorraine entered the Ursuline Sisters of Mount St. Joseph in western Kentucky. Laughingly she says “I was the last teenager they accepted.” Upon completing her novitiate, she worked for ten years at Precious Blood parish in Owensboro, Ky and also St. Columba in Lewisport, Ky, teaching art and music and performing liturgy work as pastoral associate, liturgist and music director. After working at Precious Blood, but while still in Owensboro, she founded a community center for immigrants and started a non-profit to support it.

During her Owensboro years she started going annually to Honduras with an ecumenical group of friends. On one of her first trips to Honduras, a priest casually mentioned as they were walking around the neighborhood, “You were going to eat supper with that family over there, but they canceled because their two-year-old daughter died this morning of dirty water.” This shocked and affected her intensely; even though she was aware that such things happened, she had not experienced it “face-to-face, heart-to-heart.” She connected with this tragedy because she had grown up hearing stories her grandmother told. As the daughter of a share cropper, her grandmother related what life was like in rural Mississippi, for the poor. And in those stories, Sister Lorraine learned many children died.

The death of the Honduran child impacted Sister Lorraine deeply and she struggled with the situation saying “I did not speak Spanish at that time. I had, my response to God was: I’ve got nothing. You know, my response to the situation was: I’ve got nothing. I don’t speak this language. I don’t know these realities...



This is really a terrible thing, but I have nothing to offer this, to make a difference. But it haunted me.”

After that event she began learning Spanish, continued working with immigrants, and she started going once a year on her own vacation time with a local group on their medical mission trips to Honduras just to translate. On a trip in 2006, she was standing with Arnold LeMay, trip logistics manager, and Jim Burris, the team leader. As they watched a crowd of about 300 people waiting to see a doctor, she overheard Le May (a hospital engineer and one of her co-founders whom she credits with responsibility for Water By Women) comment to Burris that, “If we could bring clean water here, half this patient load would disappear.”

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Sister Lorraine knew this was true because about half the cases she was translating for the doctor were complaints of intestinal parasites, which is easily preventable with clean water. Her response was “Okay, how are we going to do that?”

A lot happened in 2007

That year she moved “back home” (Louisville) to take care of her mother who had stage 4 breast cancer. She also helped a number of Louisville parishes establish a Hispanic ministry, became a member of Epiphany and became the Minister for Social Responsibility.

It was also the year the mission group returned with a big purification device to share. She recalls, “and we returned with our naïve ideas that someone would take good care of it and people would share equitably and problems would be solved.” What she learned was that, “It lasted about a week!” The water purifier was well designed technology, but only lasted a short time because of the “culture of survival” and infighting as to who would control the water. “It was an expensive lesson, but I am a big believer in failure as our best teacher,” Sister Lorraine asserts.

Out of that failed lesson the mission group questioned what would work. They thought mothers with toddlers might work, because in general, mothers are hardwired for the survival of toddlers. And toddlers are the people most likely to die of dirty water.

Conventional thinking would propose a clean water solution using technology, engineers, water treatment plants, laying of pipes, etc., an idea whose reality was still years away for Honduras.

Sister Lorraine emphasized that looking to mothers as a solution to their water problem was a critical shift. Instead of looking to technology as the solution, the group focused on the human being. She referenced *Gaudium Et Spes* or the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World 1965 because “they talk about

very prophetically... as the world becomes increasingly complex, and the problems of humanity grow, the challenge or the temptation will be to assume we can fix our problems with technology, that technology will solve our problems (but) and the only real solutions will always be human solutions.” She believes “when we put the control of the solution into people’s hands at the place of need, at the point of need, then people will rise to their destiny.” This philosophy of empowerment undergirds the whole ministry of Water by Women.

“So, we started researching a lot of things,” she recalls. They wanted something they could put into the hands of poor mothers in violent crime ridden neighborhoods. So, it had to be something modest looking and not expensive because they needed a lot of them.

Later in 2007 Sister Lorraine attended a Medical Missions Conference and learned of a new device exhibited by Sawyer Products. She explains that the company had been selling their water purification systems commercially (to government entities and outdoor survival companies) to acquire capital for large scale production, with the goal of getting them into the mission field with something that saves people. That year was the company’s first time at the exhibit. The group’s newly founded Water with Blessings decided to purchase ten expensive Sawyer filters with the financial help from the Methodist Church and the Catholic Church (Epiphany was a big supporter).

2008 Brings New Approach

The Challenge to Water with Blessings was to implement the program without destroying the community. At that time there were homeless survivors of hurricane Mitch living at the edge of the city dump. Rather than going to local leaders, “who could be ruthless in a culture of

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survival”, Sister and her group chose to go to the most needy: mothers in the home and mothers focused on the survival of toddlers. “The dangerous point for toddlers is from weaning to age five; 90% of those who die before age five, die because of dirty water”, she says with a sigh.

They found the leaders they needed in the Delegates of the Word. In Honduras, about 50 years ago, the Cardinal had appointed Delegates of the Word, lay men and women in communities lacking priests. They preached, led Sunday services and communion services when no priests were available. It was these men and women whom Sister Lorraine credits with making the 2008 water program a success.

The quandary was how to distribute only ten Sawyer water purifiers to this huge community without creating havoc. Sister Lorraine told how the lay leaders first emphasized that the water devices were a blessing and “blessings are meant to be shared.” Any woman could enter her name in a drawing for one of the ten filters with the expectation that she would provide water for three to four other families. The lay leaders chose the women using “la mano inocente”, the innocent hand. Sister Lorraine explained: the names of the women were placed in a bucket where all could see and the group prayed to the Holy Spirit. Then a young child, who could not yet read, drew the names of the ten women. It was all conducted in public so everyone knew it was fair.

After the drawing, these first water women were trained in the use and care of the filters by Sister Lorraine. She explains, “16 years ago, I taught one and a half classes on the use of the device.” She only taught those classes because she quickly realized the capability of the lay leader women to do this teaching themselves. Some of those first trainees are still water women today using their original durable filters!

“Sharing of the filters and drawing by the innocent hand—that works in every culture all over the world, in every culture we have been



in,” Sister Lorraine proudly states.

The other aspect that makes the program work she proclaims is “this amazing filter, which I think is the most important product on the planet!” Not only is it durable with proper care, but it provides water at the quality level of Louisville Water Co. It even filters micro plastics! To date they have distributed about 186,000 Sawyer filters.

In 2011 they incorporated as an ecumenical interfaith organization. They started working with many other churches doing clean water mission trips using Water With Blessings guidelines. This quickly spread their program to other countries. (See details about Water Women and the Sawyer Point one filter and watch Miranda’s video at <https://waterbywomen.org>)

Sister Lorraine developed a concept of charity and of justice. In the beginning Water with Blessings had very limited funding, impact, and capacity. She considered the organization as a charity. Her thought was “Charity is mercy for a lucky few. Whereas Justice means it’s for everyone, everyone’s needs are going to be considered. And we are going to do everything we can to meet everyone’s needs.”

Her experience with the water filter program taught her that people will share if they have the right product. For example, the Sawyer device

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can filter hundreds of gallons of water which can be shared without compromising the woman's own family needs by that sharing. Sister Lorraine proudly tells Water by Women current policy: "Now when we go anywhere in the world into a community of need, we say everyone in this community by the time we leave will have access to safe water through a water woman." She further notes "It would be gratifying to give everybody a filter, but then three more communities whose children are sick and dying never get filters. Is that Justice? Justice is thinking of all the people in need and as much as we can try to bring them the solution".

When going into a community, the plan is to have one water woman for every four households and her home is strategically located across the community, building a web, in a sense, of clean water. The women are publicly known as "water women" and they are trained and equipped by Water By Women. They are registered in a geographic information system and are periodically checked with to compare disease symptoms in their households at time of training to disease symptoms months after using the filter.

Sister Lorraine lauds the compassion and the persistently high degree of dedication by these water women. Other organizations like Red Cross and UNICEF use this same filter but without the same level of community success. **Water with Blessings** changed its name to **Water By Women** to highlight the organization's trust that women are a reliable resource and solution to providing safe water around the world.

Sister Lorraine concluded, "Now what we (Water By Women) look to, which is a little bold, and as you know, a little crazy of us, a little gutsy, is to try to change the conventional thinking of people who work in water solutions. Because the conventional thinking is all about technology. And it's all about ideal water infrastructure projects, which means that only a tiny lucky few get those benefits every year." Two billion people, or one out of four people on the planet are drinking unsafe water. Women are in all communities of need and could be trained and equipped to bring safe water to their areas. "So, if we could get people thinking about this differently it could cause a revolution in solving the problem of unsafe water."

Amen.

Did You Know?



- Evapotranspiration is a process in which a tree's leaves release water into the atmosphere. Some heat energy in the surrounding air is used to evaporate that water from a liquid to a gaseous state, which "leaves" less heat to raise air temperatures.
- About a half of a tree's dry weight is composed of carbon, which trees extract from the atmosphere as they grow.
- Dark surfaces, like asphalt roads, have low albedo, a term meaning they retain more sunlight than they reflect. Hence, they also retain more of the sun's heat and contribute to Urban Heat Island effect.





New Water Standards Limit 'Forever Chemicals' Exposure



Every day Louisville Water Company delivers about 127 million gallons of drinking water to nearly a million people in Louisville Metro and parts of Bullitt, Hardin, Nelson, Oldham, Shelby, and Spencer counties. Two plants are used to treat Louisville's water. Water from the Ohio River, the source of the majority of the area's drinking water, is treated at the Crescent Hill Water Treatment Plant. The second plant, the B. E. Payne Water Treatment Plant in eastern Jefferson County treats groundwater collected from the surrounding aquifer through a process called riverbank filtration. This ground water is naturally filtered through the riverbank.

Louisville started delivering “fresh from the faucet” water in 1860. Over the years Louisville’s drinking water has been notably good. So good, the company gave it a name—Louisville Pure Tap®--the first and only trademarked tap water in the country. American Water Works Association voted it the “Best Tasting Tap Water in America” twice. Louisville Water adds coagulants to help clay and silt particles stick together. Other debris settles to the bottom and is removed during a sedimentation process. The water is disinfected with chlorine to eliminate pathogens. Ammonia stabilizes the disinfectant and the water then flows through filters of anthracite coal and sand to remove any remaining particles.

In addition to treating water, Water company scientists perform 200 tests daily before the water reaches customers.

This spring the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) finalized, for public drinking water, regulatory standards for a group of chemicals called PFAS.

PFAS (Per/Poly Fluoroalkyl Substances) are manufactured chemicals that do not naturally occur. These chemicals have been used in industry and consumer products since the 1940s. More than 80% of human exposure to PFAS comes from consumer goods such as non-stick cookware, waterproof fabric, fast-food packaging, pesticides, firefighting foam, and more. PFAS are known as Forever Chemicals because they do not break down in the environment; instead, they migrate readily in ground water and bioaccumulate in aquatic organisms. They also bioaccumulate in humans and studies indicate they can cause numerous health problems in humans.

The EPA’s new standards individually regulate the maximum allowable concentration in drinking water for six PFAS chemicals. While the EPA regulations apply to six PFAS chemicals there are thousands of PFAS chemicals. For the past ten years Louisville Water scientists have monitored PFAS in their source and finished waters and conducted research on various treatment approaches. They also monitor for contaminants not currently regulated. Louisville Water, with thousands of other drinking water utilities, monitors for 29 PFAS compounds as required by EPA’s Unregulated Contaminant Monitoring Rule.

Louisville Water publishes an annual water quality report available to customers. Based on the Jan. 2023-Dec. 2023 report, Louisville Water was below the EPA Maximum Allowable Limit for PFAS levels. Of the nine PFAS chemicals regulated, only one, PFOA, has a measurable amount. It has a 1.9 point measurement, well below the 4.0 point EPA maximum allowable limit.

According to the Environmental Working Group, New Jersey, Massachusetts, California, New Hampshire, and Pennsylvania have the most highly contaminated drinking water systems. There are 556 problem water systems in New Jersey, 439 in Massachusetts, 263 in California, 202 in New Hampshire, and 125 in Pennsylvania.

High Heat Calls for Hydration

Summer is here, so it's a good time to take some tips from Louisville Water on staying hydrated:

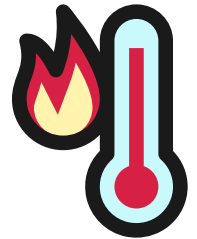
- Drink before you're thirsty. By the time you feel thirsty, your body has lost up to five cups of water.
- Keep a reusable bottle with you and fill, drink, and repeat throughout the day. Louisville's drinking water, Louisville Pure Tap®, is the best value to stay hydrated, costing less than a penny a gallon. A good way to beat the heat is to fill and freeze a plastic water bottle so you can drink refreshing Pure Tap as the ice melts.
- When you sweat, drink water. Anytime you sweat, your body is losing water. Drink plenty of Pure Tap before, during, and after exercise.
- Don't mistake thirst for hunger. It's easy to confuse the two because sometimes you may feel hungry, but your body is actually thirsty.

How do you know if you're hydrated? Check the color of your urine. The more transparent it is, the more hydrated you are. When in doubt, consult a doctor about the recommended water intake specifically for your body.



Climate Change Adding Weeks of Extreme Heat

When high temperatures are setting records its time to limit your outside time. And that goes for your pets too. Save outdoor activities for early mornings or cooler days. This includes sports, such as pickleball and outdoor events like concerts and festivals. If you have to be outside, especially if you're working outdoors, stay hydrated, wear a hat, and take as many breaks as you can.



Extreme heat disproportionately affects young children and the elderly, especially those with chronic medical conditions. Check on those you know who might be vulnerable, make sure they are okay and that they have a cool place to be. Support organizations that care for people in our community who may not be able to pay their utility bills or get to a cooling center.

Red Cross /Red Crescent in collaboration with Climate Central and World Weather Attribution found that last year climate change was responsible for an average of 26 additional days of extreme heat. Their report also finds that 78 percent of the world's population experienced at least one month of extreme heat in 2023.



The heart sometimes has to pump two to four times more blood each minute than it would on a cooler day. This can be problematic for older adults especially as they don't sense heat the same way as younger people do. In addition, older people don't sweat as much. That means their body has essentially a less efficient cooling system.