



2025 Annual Report

Mission of Rock River Coalition

To educate and provide opportunities for people of diverse interests to work together to improve the environmental, economic, cultural and recreational resources of Rock River Basin

President's Report

As I complete my first year as President of the Rock River Coalition's Board of Directors, it is a meaningful opportunity to pause and reflect—and 2025 offers much to be proud of!

One of our most significant achievements this year was securing more than \$250,000 in grant funding from River Network, the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Alliant Energy, and the Green Bay Packers Foundation. This support made it possible to launch the Beloit Neighborhood Tree Project, one of the largest initiatives in the Coalition's history. Through this project, we are excited to partner with Beloit residents to increase tree canopy in under-resourced neighborhoods, enhancing these spaces while helping to offset the impacts of climate change.

Equally important, 2025 reinforced that our impact is driven by people. This includes the generosity of people who donate their time as volunteers and those who choose to invest in the mission of the Rock River Coalition financially. This support is a powerful vote of confidence in our vision and our stewardship, and it allows us to continue to grow and expand our impact across the basin. We are deeply grateful for this trust, along with the commitment of our partners and the thoughtful governance provided by a highly engaged Board of Directors.

I offer special appreciation to Becca Dymzarov, Executive Director, whose leadership, passion, and steady vision continue to move the organization forward. On behalf of the Board, thank you to everyone who supported the Rock River Coalition in 2025. Your commitment ensures that our rivers, lakes, and communities will remain healthy and resilient for generations to come.

Sincerely,
Chris VanGundy
Board President



Tree survey in Beloit with Kavon Jenkins.
Photo credit: Rhiannon Erhardt



Watertown Stream Monitoring Training.
Photo Credit: Lizzy Reitzloff

Executive Director's Report

Greetings, Rock River Basin,

I am thrilled to say that 2025 was an excellent year for Rock River Coalition! The year began with the hiring of Rhi Erhardt, our Forestry and Water Resources Outreach Coordinator. Rhi's expertise and enthusiasm have already made a meaningful impact, and we are fortunate to have her on our team.

We were also proud to hire two outstanding summer interns through our Beloit Neighborhood Urban Forestry Project. Emmanuel Martinez Garcia and Kavon Jenkins helped kickstart this project by conducting a tree survey in Beloit. They both exceeded expectations and helped create a strong foundation for this important initiative. We are grateful for their contributions and wish them continued success in their bright futures. Last year, we also completed the second phase of the Creekside Restoration Planting in Watertown's Riverside Park. With the help of dedicated volunteers, more than 2,000 native plants were installed to filter urban runoff, reduce sediment erosion, and protect the health of the Rock River. This project stands as a powerful example of the collaboration that drives our mission forward.

In addition to the above successes, we continued to advance our core programs, including volunteer stream monitoring across the basin and efforts to prevent and control aquatic invasive species.

Thank you to our dedicated staff, board members, volunteers, members, and partners. Your commitment makes healthier Wisconsin waters possible.

With gratitude,
Becca Dymzarov



Volunteers from the 2025 Riverside Park restoration planting. Photo credit: Becca Dymzarov

Chapters' Reports

Johnson Creek Watershed Alliance

The Johnson Creek Watershed Alliance continues to advocate for shoreline restoration and water quality in their community. Their work is on hold at the moment, but they hope to become more active in the future.

Friends of Badfish Creek Watershed

- Our annual Spring Highway Cleanup on HWY 138 South was held on April 5, as part of the Adopt-A-Highway program. The fall cleanup was October 5.
- On April 24, we sampled the Badfish for E. coli levels.
- On June 24, to celebrate the creation of the new canoe/kayak landing at County Road A and the partnership that made this possible, we gathered at the landing with our partners from Madison Metropolitan Sewerage District, Town of Rutland, and Rock River Coalition for a photo op.
- On workdays throughout the summer, volunteers put in many hours of hard work to increase visibility at the County Road A, Old Stone and Old Stage landings, making them safer and easier to access. Volunteers also built and installed the picnic table, kiosk, bike rack and signage at County Road A.
- In August members of FBCW did community outreach about the Badfish at the National Night Out at Stoughton and Oregon.
- On September 25, students from Sam White's Stoughton High School Ag class worked with FBCW to clear invasives and plant native prairie species at the CTHA landing. Students also learned about ecologically sound watershed practices from Dane County Extension, Biological Farm Friends and MMSD speakers.
- Volunteers cleared the Badfish of deadfalls as needed throughout the year, providing portage-free paddling.
- In addition, workdays on our adopted Badfish Creek State Wildlife Area included mowing trails as part of WI-DNR's Adopt a Wildlife Area throughout the year as needed.



"Paddle Badfish Creek CTH A Landing" Dedication. Photo Credit: Amanda Wegner

Chapter's Report

Maunesha River Alliance

The Maunesha River Alliance wrapped up another productive season with 249 volunteer hours completed over 12 workdays.

River Cleanup Efforts

Over 8 water-based cleanups, volunteers removed 22 blockages that were impeding water flow and preventing safe watercraft passage. Through these efforts, the MRA successfully kept the river open from the dam in Marshall to the Waterloo Wildlife Area—a 10.3-mile stretch of navigable waterway.

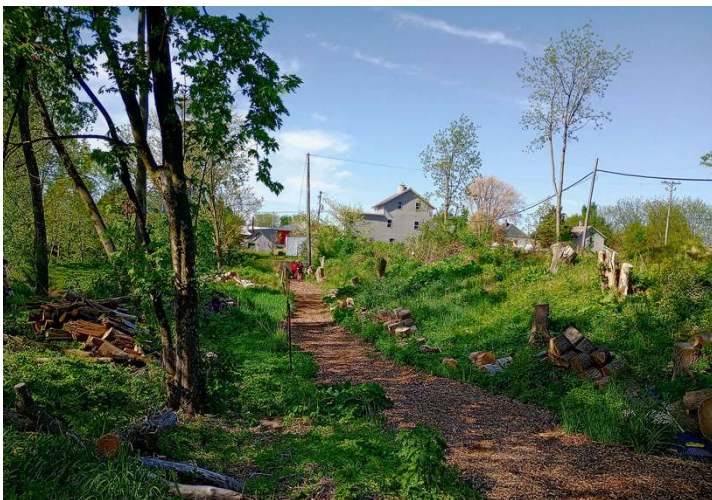
Dam Restoration Project

The MRA also completed 4 workdays on a one-acre restoration site near the dam along Highway 73. This ongoing restoration project focused on removing invasive species, clearing old growth, and preparing the site for future native plantings.

Community Collaboration

Volunteers continued maintenance of the wood chip trail at the dam restoration project. In partnership with Marshall High School, students participated in their annual Service Day by helping apply a fresh layer of wood chips to the trail.

Together, these efforts reflect the continued dedication of MRA volunteers and community partners in protecting and restoring the Maunesha River corridor.



The wood chip trail at the dam restoration project with fresh chips laid down during Marshall High School's annual service day.

Photo Credit: Ryan Frey



Volunteers - Joe Greene, Jeff Page, and Steve Falter - remove some blockages from the river to restore the flow.

Photo Credit: Ryan Frey

Outreach & Education Events

Beloit Neighborhood Tree Project

2025 saw the kickoff of our Beloit Neighborhood Tree Project. A grant-funded effort to plant and maintain tree cover in under resourced areas of the city of Beloit, WI. Rock River Coalition hired Rhiannon Erhardt as our new Outreach Specialist and brought on two Beloit Fresh Start interns for the summer to survey the trees in Beloit Neighborhoods. They surveyed 4,216 trees across the East side of Beloit, with i-Tree Eco tools they were able to determine common species in this area, pollution removed annually, stormwater runoff avoided, tree economic value, and more!



Kavon and Emmanuel survey trees in Beloit.
Photo Credit: Rhiannon Erhardt

Creekside Restoration Planting in Riverside Park

Two years after phase 1 of this project was completed, 26 hardworking volunteers met RRC staff at Riverside Park in Watertown on a sunny Saturday morning in September to plant phase 2 of this creekside restoration. Staff and volunteers planted more than 2,000 native plants and grasses along the creek, stabilizing it and reducing stormwater runoff into the Rock River.



Riverside Park planting.
Photo credit: Becca Dymzarov

Waubesa Wetlands Screening



Screening of Invitation to Wonder: Waubesa Wetlands.
Photo credit: Sue Heffron

Waubesa Wetlands remains one of the healthiest and most diverse wetlands in southern Wisconsin. In the winter and spring of 2025 RRC partnered with schools and educational groups to host 3 film screenings of “Invitation to Wonder: Waubesa Wetlands” in Milton, Watertown, and Madison. We had 109 school-aged children and 35 adults attend across the 3 showings.

Presentations around the Basin

Rock River Coalition staff traveled throughout the Rock River Basin and gave 10 presentations, reaching over 200 people to spread our mission and gain supporters.



Waupun Rain Barrel Workshop attendees.
Photo credit: Becca Dymzarov

Rain Barrel Workshops

Rock River Coalition hosted 3 successful rain barrel workshops in April and May 2025 in Waupun, Watertown, and Beloit. After a presentation on water conservation and preventing pollution in your own backyard, the groups went over how to assemble a rain barrel. Then they moved outside, grabbed a barrel and got to work! They drilled the initial spigot hole, and took the rest of the kit home with their barrel to finish connecting their barrel to their downspout. 75 rain barrels were given to community members and a total of 114 people participated across the three municipalities in 2025.

Stream Monitoring and Aquatic Invasive Species Programs

Stream Monitoring Program

Initiated in 2002, Rock River Coalition's stream monitoring program celebrated its 23rd birthday in 2025, continuing decades-long partnerships with Wisconsin DNR, Water Action Volunteers, and county conservation departments. The success of this program is due to the dedication from an ever-evolving group of volunteer stream monitors that go out monthly between April or May and October to measure important water quality indicators in their local streams. These include stream temperature, dissolved oxygen, water clarity, stream flow, and macroinvertebrate diversity. Depending on the stream site, some volunteers also collect water samples that are tested for nutrients and others deploy thermistors that record hourly water temperatures.



New stream monitor on the Rutland Branch.
Photo Credit: Lizzy Reitzloff

- Rock River Coalition and its partners equipped and supported just over 200 volunteers, while welcoming 25 new volunteers to the program. Volunteer teams monitored 140 sites across the Rock River Basin.
- 56 stream sites were monitored for nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, with the support of the Yahara Watershed Improvement Network, Water Action Volunteers, Wisconsin DNR, Friends of Lake Kegonsa Society, and several local partners.
- Rock River Coalition hosted four volunteer stream monitoring trainings spread throughout the basin including their second bilingual training with the support of Water Action Volunteers and Wisconsin EcoLatinos.
- Rock River Coalition hosted a gathering at the end of the monitoring season for Yahara River Watershed volunteers, with a presentation on understanding and interpreting water quality data.

Aquatic Invasive Species Program

Rock River Coalition continued to tackle the spread of aquatic invasives species in the basin with several grant-funded projects conducting outreach, monitoring, and biocontrol. In Dodge and Rock Counties we partner with their land and water conservation departments to implement this work.

- Continued the 3-year Dane County and Driftless Area New Zealand mudsnail monitoring and outreach project. Another mudsnail monitoring training was hosted at Token Creek County Park to equip new volunteers. Staff trained volunteers who monitored 18 stream sites and found no new populations. Mudsnail identification and prevention outreach at several public events reached over 110 individuals.
- Continued the purple loosestrife biocontrol program, with youth groups helping to raise beetles on captive purple loosestrife plants, feeding and breeding an estimated 27,000 *Galerucella* beetles released at wild purple loosestrife sites across Dodge, Jefferson, and Rock County. Thanks to support from Koshkonong Trails School, Lake Ripley Management District, and Neighborhood House and funding from Wisconsin DNR Surface Water Grants and Lake Koshkonong Wetland Association for making this possible.
- Built and installed 6 boot brush stations at vulnerable and highly trafficked waterways around Beaver Dam Lake, Fox Lake, and Horicon Marsh, thanks to funding from the Beaver Dam Area Community Foundation and the We Energies Foundation and support from Beaver Dam Lake Improvement Association members and Beaver Dam Unified School District students and staff.
- Hosted successful Snapshot Day in Beaver Dam, searching 10 stream sites and identifying 11 new or expanding populations of aquatic invasives, including curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, purple loosestrife, zebra mussels, and rusty crayfish.
- Conducted 29 inspections of invasive species signage at public water access sites.
- Across outreach events, trainings, and workshops, aquatic invasive species prevention messaging directly reached over 210 individuals.



Purple Loosestrife biocontrol program with Koshkonong Trails School students.
Photo credit: Lizzy Reitzloff



New boot brush station at Fish Camp Boat Launch.
Photo credit: Bill Foley, Mike Zimmer

Rock River Coaliton Financial Summary

Income

Memberships and Donations: \$26,134

Grant and Restricted Income: \$185,003

Events and Other Income: \$7,068

Total Income: \$218,205

Expenses

Program Services: \$162,179

Management and Administration: \$45,472

Total Expenses: \$207,651



Rock River Coalition Board Members and Executive Director at the 2025 Annual Meeting.



Dane County Stream Monitoring Training
Photo credit: Lizzy Reitzloff

2025 Staff

Becca Dymzarov, *Executive Director*
Lizzy Reitzloff, *AIS and Stream Monitor Coordinator*
Rhiannon Erhardt, *Urban Forestry and Water Resources Outreach Specialist*
Garrett Hopkins, *Communications Specialist*
Sue Heffron, *Administrative Assistant*
Emmanuel Martinez Garcia, *Beloit Tree Project Summer Intern*
Kavon Jenkins, *Beloit Tree Project Summer Intern*

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*In kind donation



Monarch butterfly lands on a milkweed plant next to Riverside Park Creek.

Photo credit: Becca Dymzarov

This annual report is available at www.rockrivercoalition.org

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