



RIVERKEEPER.

**Strategic Plan FY21-FY25
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Executive Summary

In the 1960s the Hudson River was dying from pollution and neglect. Run-down factories were choking the river with hazardous waste, poisoning fish, threatening drinking water, and ruining the world-class boating and swimming. In March 1966, a small group of recreational and commercial fishermen, concerned citizens and scientists met at a Crotonville American Legion Hall intending to reverse the decline of the Hudson River by reclaiming it from polluters. Their work began as the Hudson River Fishermen's Association (HRFA), as an environmental watchdog and enforcement organization founded by a group of concerned fishermen. The organization was able to use little known laws to track down and prosecute polluters: The Rivers and Harbors Act of 1888 and the Refuse Act of 1899. These statutes forbade pollution of American waters and provided a bounty reward for whoever reported the violation.

The fishermen used their winnings to build and launch a Riverkeeper boat. In 1983, the association hired a former commercial fisherman as the first full-time Riverkeeper, and launched a 25-foot wooden outboard boat to patrol the Hudson for polluters. Since the early days, Riverkeeper patrols have resulted in tens of millions of dollars in fines to polluters and led to the Hudson River's remarkable resurgence. These patrols inspired a global movement that now counts more than 350 Waterkeeper Organizations and Affiliates on six continents and 44 countries.

Today, Riverkeeper continues its fight to reclaim the Hudson River and ensure that over ten million New Yorkers have clean, safe drinking water. Pollution levels are down, and swimming and boating are back. Yet, the Hudson's recovery is still a work in progress. Few of our most important fish species have recovered, and most remain too toxic to eat; pollution levels spike with every rainfall. Budget cuts in government spending threaten to reverse a half-century of water quality gains, and we face the challenges of antiquated power plants, climate change, and emerging, harmful pollutants. At the same time, nationally, important conversations about climate change, power, rights, justice, and overly burdened communities are gaining new and much needed attention.

As Riverkeeper looks to build on its history and strives confidently into its second half century, this strategic plan, which was staff-driven at every step of the process, reaffirms Riverkeeper's commitment to its work and articulates Riverkeeper's mission, vision, and core values afresh:

Riverkeeper's Core Values

At Riverkeeper, we value:

- the fundamental rights of the Hudson River, its tributaries, and all the living things that depend upon them to exist and thrive in healthy, balanced ecosystems,
- clean water as essential to all living things and access to clean drinking water as a human right,
- a reduction of environmental harms, especially for disproportionately impacted communities and decimated fish and wildlife populations,

- facts, science, and community voices as the foundation of our work,
- trust, respect, integrity, and justice as the basis for our relationships, both within and beyond our organization, and
- environmental and recreational benefits for all.

Riverkeeper's Vision

We envision a future in which the Hudson River, its tributaries and watershed, and the New York City drinking watershed are:

- restored to ecological health and balance,
- free-flowing, resilient, and teeming with life,
- reliable sources of safe, clean drinking water,
- recovered from historic and inequitable environmental harms,
- safe and accessible for swimming, fishing, boating and other recreational activities, and
- valued and stewarded by all.

Riverkeeper's Mission

Riverkeeper protects and restores the Hudson River from source to sea and safeguards drinking water supplies, through advocacy rooted in community partnerships, science and law.

Goals of this Strategic Plan

This strategic plan also articulates 13 strategic goals towards which all of Riverkeeper's work will be focused:

Programmatic Goals

1. Improve the water quality of the Hudson River and its tributaries and protect drinking water supplies
2. Restore wildlife and habitats in the Hudson River and its tributaries
3. Support communities seeking to envision and enact positive change in their relationships with the Hudson River, its tributaries, and drinking water supplies
4. Address climate change's impacts on the Hudson River, its tributaries, shoreline communities and drinking water supplies

Operational and Financial Goals

5. Strengthen internal operations to align with our core values
6. Align our teams with the newly articulated mission, vision, core values, and strategic plan priorities and give them the support needed to succeed
7. Align our work with the newly articulated mission, vision, core values, and strategic plan goals
8. Solidify the organization's identity, its approach, and its priorities
9. Strengthen Volunteer Leadership and build stronger relationships between Volunteer Leaders and Staff
10. Improve our IT and data management systems
11. Build and engage our member, volunteer, funder, and prospect base

12. Conduct a comprehensive fundraising campaign
13. Increase financial sustainability

This strategic plan, as detailed in the pages which follow, sets Riverkeeper on a course for deeper and greater impact on the Hudson River, its tributaries, ecosystems, watersheds, and drinking water supplies and the communities that depend on them. We hope that you will join us and help to ensure that this important work continues to flourish.

Our goal is for everyone in our watersheds to feel responsibility for the Hudson River and our drinking water supplies. For the Hudson and our communities to thrive, in the years ahead, *we must all become riverkeepers.*

Riverkeeper's History & Accomplishments

Since the inception of Riverkeeper, we have fought hard to realize our vision of a Hudson that is teeming with life, and of waters that are safe for recreation and consumption. Thanks to the massive reductions in pollution we've helped foster over the past half-century, we've taken historic steps toward realizing our vision of a clean, safe and vibrant Hudson. Our vigilance and determination have helped to hold polluters accountable and to pass crucial legislation. The support of our members, concerned citizens, partner groups and agencies is the vital force behind every achievement.

We have a lot of achievements to celebrate over the past years; such as helping to pass the Sewage Pollution Right to Know Act in 2012 and the Water Infrastructure Act in 2017, which invested \$2.5 billion towards clean drinking water in New York. In 2016, Riverkeeper began identifying obsolete dams for removal; the first removed was Wynantskill Dam, ushering in a new era of habitat restoration. In 2017, Riverkeeper joined New York State and Entergy in a historic agreement to close the aging and increasingly dangerous Indian Point nuclear power plant by 2021.

Thanks to our dedicated community scientists and partners, we have established over 20 local water quality testing programs. We helped to create new programs to ensure people have access to high quality drinking water, including establishing New York's Drinking Water Source Protection Program and some of the nation's most protective standards for emerging contaminants. In March 2018, the U.S. Coast Guard pulled the maritime industry's request for more than 40 new long-term anchorages for crude oil barges on the Hudson. In 2019, we stopped a quarry from being converted into a dump for toxic incinerator ash. In that same year we prevented a construction and demolition waste processing facility from being built near the river.

Every year since 2012, we've organized an annual day of service to remove trash and invasive plants from Hudson Valley and New York City shorelines, and to plant and maintain hundreds of shoreline trees. Over the last eight years, Sweep has brought together thousands of volunteers at a total of 737 service projects. Their combined efforts have removed 259 tons of debris from the Hudson River and its tributaries, planted 2,372 trees, and inspired numerous ongoing local cleanup efforts.

In another policy success from 2019, we successfully lobbied for a statewide ban on single-use plastic bags. In February 2020, the US Army Corps of Engineers' plan to erect giant storm barriers across the width of New York Harbor was tabled indefinitely, after a major advocacy, media, and legal campaign coordinated by Riverkeeper. We fought alongside grassroots activists to ban fracking and the NY State Legislature made the fracking ban permanent by 2021.

For more than 50 years, the Riverkeeper has been New York's clean water advocate, establishing globally recognized standards for watershed protection. Hudson Riverkeeper serves as the mentor and model for the growing Waterkeeper movement across the U.S. and the globe.

Strategic Planning Process & Context

Riverkeeper embarked on a strategic planning process in late 2019 to set the course for its next chapter. Its most recent chapter was highly successful and impactful from a mission perspective and this planning process sought to build on that success. As a whole and individually, the staff team at Riverkeeper is experienced, committed, and hardworking to the point that goals which would seem wildly ambitious in another organization are, at Riverkeeper, routinely achieved.

The timing for this planning process presented both challenges and opportunities. Riverkeeper was rebuilding after a significant change in board leadership while simultaneously, external environmental, political, and social justice movements brought into the open questions about our priorities and how we carry out our work.

This strategic planning process, facilitated by Paper Crane Associates, was designed to be staff-driven and iterative. Staff were deeply involved in idea generation, had multiple opportunities to influence emerging ideas, and had a voice into final decision-making. This planning process focused first on defining who Riverkeeper was, is, and wants to be (its mission, vision, and core values), second on its priorities for its work over the coming years, and then on the implications on operations, staff and board, and financials.

This strategic planning process was launched in the midst of a diversity, equity, and inclusion process which raised questions about Riverkeeper's current and future priorities and its operations. Therefore, this strategic planning process was also designed to support organizational priorities by strengthening staff engagement in the Riverkeeper's decision-making, building team cohesion, answering longstanding questions, and building staff-to-staff and staff-to-board relationships.

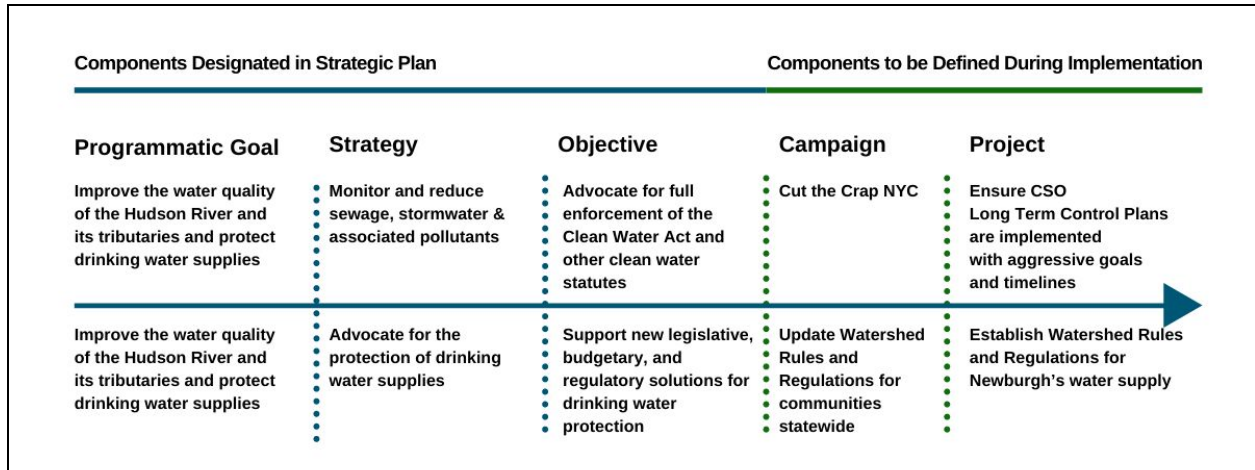
The success and impact of this strategic planning process are already being felt and the combined effects of successfully implementing this plan will be profound for Riverkeeper; the Hudson River and its watershed; the fish and their habitats; and for the communities which interact with and rely on the Hudson River.

Definitions

As part of the strategic planning process, we came to understand the need to build a shared language within Riverkeeper to describe pieces of our work. For the purposes of this plan and our work going forward, we share below definitions of commonly used words.

Organizational Terms	Definition
Mission	The organization’s purpose and north star. What we do.
Vision	Why the organization exists and what aspirational change we are trying to bring to fruition.
Values	The core beliefs that guide our work, both internally and externally.
Programmatic Goals	External objectives to maximize mission impact, implemented according to importance and available resources. All subsequent operational or tactical planning and resource allocation is based on programmatic goals.
Operational Goals	Internal objectives to support the success and wellbeing of staff and the organization as a whole (e.g. marketing, development, finances, facilities)
Financial Goals	Capital needs to support programmatic and operational goals.
Programmatic Terms	Definition
Strategies	The methods we will use to achieve the Programmatic Goals.
Objectives	The steps we will take to achieve strategies
Campaigns	Complete, planned courses of action formulated to achieve objectives, leveraging multiple Riverkeeper advocacy tools, including legal, scientific, legislative, communications, and community partnerships.
Projects	Planned sets of tasks, typically time-bound, undertaken by members of one or more teams, to achieve a measurable step to implement a campaign.

Often, definitions come to life best through examples. Below, we provide two examples which we hope will illustrate how strategies, objectives, campaigns, and projects relate to each other. During the strategic planning process, we defined programmatic goals, strategies, and objectives. As we move forward and begin to implement this strategic plan, one of our first tasks will be to articulate the campaigns and projects we will be undertaking in order for this plan to come to fruition.



Mission, Vision, and Core Values

A key part of this strategic planning process was updating the mission and vision statements to articulate the impact we want to have in our next chapter and to articulate the core values which will underpin all of our work.

Riverkeeper's Core Values

Our core values are how we intend to carry out our work and operations.

At Riverkeeper, we value:

- the fundamental rights of the Hudson River, its tributaries, and all the living things that depend upon them to exist and thrive in healthy, balanced ecosystems,
- clean water as essential to all living things and access to clean drinking water as a human right,
- a reduction of environmental harms, especially for disproportionately impacted communities and decimated fish and wildlife populations,
- facts, science, and community voices as the foundation of our work,
- trust, respect, integrity, and justice as the basis for our relationships, both within and beyond our organization, and
- environmental and recreational benefits for all.

Riverkeeper's Vision

Our vision statement describes the aspirational change we are trying to bring to fruition.

We envision a future in which the Hudson River, its tributaries and watershed, and the New York City drinking watershed are:

- restored to ecological health and balance,
- free-flowing, resilient, and teeming with life,
- reliable sources of safe, clean drinking water,
- recovered from historic and inequitable environmental harms,
- safe and accessible for swimming, fishing, boating and other recreational activities, and
- valued and stewarded by all.

Riverkeeper's Mission

Our mission statement is our organization's purpose and north star.

Riverkeeper protects and restores the Hudson River from source to sea and safeguards drinking water supplies, through advocacy rooted in community partnerships, science and law.

Programmatic Goals

Through this strategic planning process, we have defined who Riverkeeper is, what is important to our organization, and what should be the focus of our next chapter. We have met as a staff team, in departments, and with the Board. These numerous conversations have built every component of this strategic plan.

We have many aspirational goals that will require more resources (time, staff capacity, and financial resources) than we have today. In the pages that follow, we distill the four programmatic goals around which Riverkeeper's work will be focused over the next few years which are designed to maximize mission impact, scaled to the need, built on our expertise, and reflective of the available resources for our work at this time. Our goals will be accomplished by combining our core strategies and strengths of advocacy, science, law, and community partnerships.

Within each of the programmatic goals, we have identified strategies and objectives which will support the successful accomplishment of those goals and therefore our mission and vision. Some of these we are already doing, some we will start soon, and some we'll launch by the end of the strategic plan.



Improve the water quality of the Hudson River and its tributaries and protect drinking water supplies

The Hudson River was a birthplace of the nation's industrial revolution and its watershed includes the nation's largest city and its sprawling suburbs. It's no surprise then that the Hudson River is well known for its history of pollution, with two-thirds of its length designated a federal Superfund site, and over a billion gallons of sewage discharged into its watershed every day.

Despite decades of progress that has resulted in a river that is often safe for swimming and a world-renowned set of protections for New York City's drinking water supply, significant pollution problems still plague our waterways. The imperative to protect drinking water at its source has never been more critical. While some of the most noxious chemicals have been banned or controlled, pockets of toxic contamination persist, billions of gallons of sewage overflow annually, and unregulated chemicals like pharmaceuticals are widespread. Riverkeeper's advocacy for improving water quality will focus on the following strategies and objectives:

- Monitor and reduce sewage, stormwater & associated pollutants
 - Advocate for full enforcement of the Clean Water Act and other clean water statutes
 - Support new legislative, budgetary, and regulatory solutions to reduce pollution and modernize treatment systems
 - Test water quality to monitor conditions, identify priorities for restoration, and/or gather evidence for enforcement
- Reduce toxic pollutants in watershed
 - Foster remediation of legacy pollutants through Superfund cleanups
 - Spur creation of standards for emerging priority contaminants
 - Foster the safe closure, decommissioning and decontamination of Indian Point
- Hold the line: Patrol, watchdog and enforce, in court where necessary, against water pollution threats affecting the Hudson River, its tributaries and drinking water supplies
 - Maintain presence on the river to observe and deter/stop polluters
 - Fight industrial and commercial pollution
- Advocate for the protection of drinking water supplies
 - Support new legislative, budgetary, and regulatory solutions for drinking water protection
 - Identify and advocate for source water protections (quantity & quality) for drinking water supplies & watersheds, including New York City's

Restore wildlife and habitats in the Hudson River and its tributaries

An arm of the sea, the Hudson River Estuary is an engine of life, providing habitat that is critical to wildlife that live in the river and throughout the Atlantic Ocean. While water quality and public perception of the river have improved dramatically since Riverkeeper's inception, populations of signature fish species have plummeted. Virtually every mile of shoreline habitat along the Hudson River Estuary has been altered, vast acreages of shallows and side channels have been filled, and thousands of dams have been built, blocking the river's arteries. Atlantic sturgeon, American shad, river herring and American eel are at or near their lowest documented numbers. These trends mirror global declines in biodiversity and wildlife abundance, particularly in freshwater ecosystems.

To reverse this decline, overfishing must cease, habitat must be restored and new threats to the wild abundance of the river must be prevented. Society's relationship with nature must be restored. Riverkeeper's advocacy for restoring wildlife and habitats will focus on the following strategies and objectives:

- Prevent further habitat degradation and help damaged ecosystems begin to thrive again
 - Patrol, watchdog, and enforce current wildlife/clean water laws to prevent further deterioration of biodiversity and habitat
 - Remove high priority dams and mitigate impacts of other dams that significantly reduce habitat and biodiversity
 - Encourage the creation of biodiverse and abundant wetlands, oyster reefs and other nearshore habitat; and, foster needed wildlife assessments, such as the Hudson River Biological Monitoring Survey
- Support legislative, budgetary, and regulatory solutions to support wildlife and habitat restoration, including opportunities to support the rights of rivers
 - Advocate for better fisheries policy to foster biodiversity and abundance
 - Support controls on invasive species that threaten biodiversity

Support communities seeking to envision and enact positive change in their relationships with the Hudson River, its tributaries, and drinking water supplies

The Hudson River has been celebrated as a birthplace of environmental activism, and the need to engage a broad community in pursuit of environmental improvements has never been more important. We also recognize that environmental activism has also largely pursued goals that have been formulated by the privileged. Environmental injustices, affecting BIPOC communities more than others, are still deeply embedded where we work.

Riverkeeper recognizes that the goals of environmental improvement are often championed by marginalized communities. Riverkeeper will be an actor in realizing a more just future by supporting communities seeking to achieve justice for themselves and for our environment. This goal encompasses both the outcomes we seek to achieve as well as our approach to accomplishing the other programmatic goals in this plan. Riverkeeper's support of communities will focus on these strategies and objectives:

- Help communities identify and address injustices affecting their right to safe waterways and clean drinking water
- Support community advocates and coalitions, particularly in communities that are historically disempowered and/or overburdened by environmental harms, by such approaches as:
 - Building and supporting local partnerships and watershed-wide coalitions
 - Fostering the development of local and watershed-wide visions for remediation, restoration, recreation, and/or resilience that bring resources into, and advance the goals of, local communities
 - Offering training, advice and expertise to communities and coalitions undertaking their own actions
- Make everyone a riverkeeper
 - Create opportunities for engagement throughout the watershed, along the lines of the Riverkeeper Sweep, hands-on habitat restoration projects, water quality monitoring and community-based activities
 - Encourage increased access to the river

Address climate change's impacts on the Hudson River, its tributaries, shoreline communities and drinking water supplies

The impacts of the climate crisis have already affected the Hudson River, particularly where its tidal estuary is connected to the sea. The water temperature is warmer, the storms more extreme, runoff more intense, and the tides higher. The Hudson has lost species of fish, drinking water supplies are profoundly challenged by pollutants associated with runoff, and aging infrastructure is overflowing frequently. Extreme flooding and storm surge have cost lives, wreaked havoc on waterfront communities and damaged water infrastructure. The most profound, damaging and challenging consequences of unmitigated global warming are still to come, and will damage the river, its watershed and communities, even if all greenhouse gas emissions ceased immediately.

Riverkeeper's advocacy to address climate change will focus on these strategies and objectives:

- Support community-centered efforts to foster coastal resilience and protection
 - Replace "NY/NJ Harbors & Tributaries" Study with one or more that prioritize(s) nature-based and on-shore solutions
 - Foster biological protections for changing/rising shoreline and other climate-related impacts
- Identify climate change impacts to waterways and habitat, and be a voice for mitigation of those impacts
- Fight against new fossil fuel projects in our watersheds, with a strong emphasis on projects threatening water resources
- Support renewable energy projects and assure that they protect communities and the ecosystem

Operational and Financial Goals

In order to achieve our mission, vision, and core values, as well as our programmatic goals, we need to ensure we have adequate human, financial, and other resources. In addition, we need to align our existing resources and prioritize our investment of new resources in accordance with the goals articulated in this plan.

Strengthen internal operations to align with our core values

Our newly articulated core values compel us to think and act differently as we carry out our work internally and externally. We will take deliberate, intentional, and thoughtful actions so that we live up to our intentions. To support this goal, we will:

- Build a respectful and collaborative culture centered on trust and integrity that prioritizes diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) principles.
 - Improve feedback culture throughout Riverkeeper
 - Act on goals identified for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice by Riverkeeper's DEIJ committee
 - Commit to periodic DEIJ training for all staff
 - Hold regular, accessible meetings, retreats, and experiences that encourage a healthy organizational culture, build skills, and connect individuals and teams across the organization
 - Invest in professional development, including role-specific professional development, industry networking and convening, leadership development, team management, and project management training
 - Clarify decision-making processes and make them more transparent and inclusive, where appropriate
- Build internal shared language
- Value, support, and recruit diversity of experience, expertise, and background at the staff and board level
- Prioritize salary, benefit, and promotion equity across the organization

Align our teams with the newly articulated mission, vision, core values, and programmatic goals and give them the support needed to succeed

Our organizational chart and teams have grown organically over time as we took advantage of opportunities to expand our work in new and different directions and our committed and talented staff moved from project to project.

We are anticipating leadership transitions at the staff and board levels within the next few years. The combination of those compel us to take a thoughtful approach to aligning the organizational chart, job descriptions, and decision-making responsibilities with this strategic plan so that we are best equipped to accomplish our ambitious goals. To do this, we will:

- Redesign the organizational chart to align with new strategic plan
 - Assess staff's skills and expertise against what is needed to accomplish this plan and grow organizational capacity over this plan through more professional development, increased leadership opportunities, and the addition of new positions
 - Improve administrative support capacity (human, technological or otherwise)

- Establish clear roles, responsibilities and decision-making authorities, including for campaign and project management
- Prepare for upcoming leadership transitions within strategic plan period and hire new leadership with the skills needed to continue to implement this plan

Align our work with the newly articulated mission, vision, core values, and programmatic goals

In addition to aligning our talented staff with this strategic plan, we also need to align our programmatic work with this strategic plan. Recognizing that our goals are ambitious and that each part of our work needs to drive towards the change we envision, we will also become more structured in the development of work plans, metrics of success, and decision-making about both embarking on new work, and continuing or discontinuing existing work. To do this, we will:

- Develop work plans, metrics of success, and teams for each strategic plan goal, campaign, and project
- Implement decision-making matrix to improve decision-making about taking on new work and evaluating existing work
- Assess current projects to measure progress and discontinue work that doesn't match our strategic plan
- Integrate DEIJ principles into all work plans and operations
- Regularly review workloads to ensure equitable distribution of work and prevent burnout

Solidify the organization's identity, its approach, and its priorities

Sharing Riverkeeper's successes and impact both attracts and engages supporters and cements Riverkeeper's seat at community, legal, and political tables. In addition, communications plays a critical role in accomplishing specific programmatic goals around community engagement, partnerships, and advocacy. To that end, we will:

- Refine and implement a comprehensive marketing and communications plan leveraging social media, print, and email communications for the organization and for campaigns
- Train staff in core messages and communications best practices
- Redesign website for better storytelling, data visualizations, and greater stakeholder engagement

Strengthen Volunteer Leadership and build stronger relationships between Volunteer Leaders and Staff

Our Board of Directors is composed of long-standing members and a new generation which have risen to the challenge of supporting the organization as it articulates and embarks on accomplishing its next chapter. This strategic plan assumes that the Board will continue its leadership role in organizational affairs and provide important leadership on key organizational initiatives over the next few years. To do this, we will:

- Continue to build stability in this next generation of the board through deep engagement in Riverkeeper's priorities
- Provide periodic board training to build camaraderie, orient all board members to their role and responsibilities, and gain support for and understanding of our current initiatives
- Engage board in specific initiatives suited to their interests and expertise, e.g., presidential search, DEIJ, management/leadership training & coaching
- Establish a Program Committee to facilitate board input into our work, within the bounds of this strategic plan and organizational capacity
- Increase board membership and diversity
- Align roles and composition of volunteer leadership councils (Advisory, Leadership, Young Advocate, and Corporate Stewardship) relative to new strategic plan, and strengthen working relationships as needed
- Increase opportunities for staff and board to connect through interactive events, webinars and other shared activities

Improve our IT and data management systems

For Riverkeeper, knowledge management and data management are critical to track successes and impact of projects so those lessons learned can inform future projects, support large data collection and analysis projects, and preserve documents for potential future use in litigation. In addition, in these times of COVID-19, our IT infrastructure needs to support staff working from home and in the office while being reflective of ever-evolving IT security best practices. To accomplish this goal, we will:

- Develop and implement standard processes for knowledge management systems
- Update security, document storage, and recordkeeping to align with legal requirements, industry standards and best practices

Build and engage our member, volunteer, funder, and prospect base

Riverkeeper's power and impact is driven by the base of supporters who share Riverkeeper's vision for change for the Hudson River. Riverkeeper will grow its base of supporters and deepen the depth and breadth of their involvement in Riverkeeper's work. To do this, we will:

- Grow the number of community members who support Riverkeeper's work
- Increase the number of ways community members are actively involved in Riverkeeper through collaboration across teams within the organization, including through program, outreach, and fundraising events
- Invest in prospect research and audience expansion
- Grow the number of foundations, major donors and businesses supporting Riverkeeper through increased research, Riverkeeper Board introductions, and staff connections
- Engage our volunteer leadership councils (Advisory, Leadership, Young Advocate, and Corporate Stewardship councils) to help build our funder and prospect base
- Improve data management across the organization to track and more deeply engage members, volunteers, and partners

Conduct a comprehensive fundraising campaign from FY21 - FY25

Riverkeeper is well poised to capitalize on its recent successes and impact as well as on some upcoming key milestones through a comprehensive fundraising campaign. In addition, this fundraising campaign will also provide important capital to underwrite key portions of the organization's current work, ensure its financial stability during these critical years, and build its financial sustainability for the future.

- Capitalize on the strategic plan launch and leadership changes to strengthen the organization's ability to successfully accomplish its mission and priorities
- Craft and present a case statement for current and prospective funders detailing investments needed over and above current annual giving to achieve strategic plan

Increase financial sustainability

For an organization of Riverkeeper's age, mission, approach, business model, and time horizon, Riverkeeper's capitalization structure is undersized and requires significant fundraising each year to meet annual budget needs. We will strengthen our balance sheet in order to increase our financial sustainability and our impact. To do this we will:

- Build and grow key funds on the balance sheet including operating reserves and working capital which support ongoing operations, a new initiative fund which will allow us to more nimbly launch urgent projects, and an endowment to sustain Riverkeeper's work for years to come.

Needed Investments

In order to accomplish this plan, we will need to identify investments and detail their costs above and beyond our normal budget. Below, we share the list of ongoing and one-time investments which have been identified to date as being necessary to deliver this plan. Additional investments will be identified as we move forward with implementing this plan and create the campaigns and projects we will prioritize over the next few years.

We have already identified the need to add the following investments first and foremost in our staff and then to our capital and technology:

New Annual Staff Expenses:

- Add staff to meet new programmatic, operational, and financial goals in this plan after the staff and work have been reorganized to align with this plan and staff capacity has been assessed
- Continue our DEIJ work (training, consultant, retreat, etc.)
- Provide training/coaching for management/leadership
- Invest in staff's skill development, culture, and connections through training/coaching, retreats and experiences
- Support Volunteer Leadership's growth through training and events
- Create salary equity and provide annual salary increases
- Launch retirement match contributions
- Increase Riverkeeper's contributions towards staff's benefits

New Annual Capital & Technology Expenses:

- Underwrite costs of new leases for each office to align with our changing needs
- Invest in membership acquisition and lead generation; major donor, foundation, and corporate prospect research; and fundraising communication tools and activities, including digital, mobile, and social fundraising capabilities
- Invest in integration of financial and development software
- Maintain and update website
- Update and maintain hardware, software, knowledge management systems, security, document storage, and recordkeeping systems
- Invest in marketing and outreach
- Invest in planned giving program and operations

One-time Investments:

- Create and launch a new website
- Hire a firm to recruit a new President
- Develop a systems replacement plan and budget for capital repairs for the boat
- Improve office space (new carpet, paint, etc)
- Secure information with a new server
- Support Comprehensive Campaign expenses

Opportunities and Risks of this Plan

When we successfully accomplish this plan, our impact will be felt up and down the Hudson River, throughout the watershed, tributaries and communities, and inside of Riverkeeper. Our newly articulated mission, vision, and core values will guide both what we focus on and how we carry out our work. Our staff will be better utilized, empowered, and organized to enable us to accomplish more impactful work. Our deliberate and intentional commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice will improve our internal organizational culture and operations and be a guiding light for our work with partners and communities.

We will bear witness to the closure of the Indian Point Nuclear Energy Plant, ensure the completion of clean ups of contamination which has impacted our watersheds and communities for too long, compel drinking water quality improvements throughout the watershed, and prompt the launch of new stormwater projects to prevent future harm. Our new campaign based approach will position us for more comprehensive work and deeper impact on habitat restoration, water quality, coastal protection, ecosystems, and communities. It will also give us opportunities to bring new energy and perspectives to our long-standing work.

This strategic plan will also allow us to strengthen our story telling about what we do and why we do it and this will help us to more deeply engage existing supporters and attract new riverkeepers who share our vision and want to invest in our collective goals. We will support a community-led commitment and movement to ensure clean water through the Hudson River, watershed, and tributaries.

In undertaking any strategic plan, there are risks which may limit our ability to successfully accomplish the goals in this plan within the time frame we have set out to do so. Our country, our communities, and Riverkeeper are being impacted by a sea of changes and we will need to work together to navigate through them successfully.

We are ratifying this plan on the eve of a historic presidential election, the outcome of which will have profound impact on climate change and environmental strategies; justice, equity, and inclusion responses; COVID-19 response; the economy; and government spending priorities. We know that during the last few years, Riverkeeper has benefited from donors and partners eager to reverse or forestall harmful policies implemented by the current administration and, at the same time, we know that our donors and supporters have increased their investment and attention to this election. The outcome of the election will have impacts on our ability to tackle proactive vs. reactive work and on our donors' and supporters' priorities.

This plan sets a strong foundation on which our work and organizational structures will be based. We know that the first year is critical in translating this strategic plan into action by organizing our staff teams to align with this plan; assessing honestly our current work against this plan; identifying work to transition to trusted partners or to wind down; and identifying new campaigns without which this plan will not be accomplished. Our success in

accomplishing this plan is heavily predicated on us adding onto that solid foundation of this strategic plan through these steps. We recognize that this may be one of our hardest and yet most important hurdles, as we resist the temptation to maintain our status quo and, instead, embrace the opportunities that this plan allows to think and act differently in order to deepen and accelerate our impact. This may be particularly challenging because internal norms and culture and the broader national conversations about diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice have brought out into the open some of the challenges and divisions within Riverkeeper.

We also need to bring along our stakeholders, internally and externally. In keeping with Riverkeeper's culture and newly articulated core values, this strategic planning process was staff-driven with significant staff engagement at each stage in the process. Despite our aspirations, we do not believe we achieved consensus at every stage. Therefore, an important component of the early part of this strategic planning process is ensuring that, even if they would have preferred an alternative path forward, all staff and board members unify behind this strategic plan and move forward in earnest towards its successful execution. Externally, throughout this strategic planning process, staff and board members have shared and discussed emerging findings with supporters, donors, and partners. It will be important to the success of this plan that those supporters, donors, and partners join forces with us in our shared goal of accomplishing this vision.

Our board has undergone its own transition over the last few years and a new generation of volunteer leaders is stepping up to lead Riverkeeper through this chapter and into our next chapter. Sustained engagement and well-tailored deployment from an increasingly diversifying board of directors will be critical to Riverkeeper's success in its plan, our hiring of our next leader, and our success in building the financial sustainability of Riverkeeper through a comprehensive capital campaign.

Finally, during the early stages of this strategic plan, Riverkeeper will experience a change in staff and board leadership. With every leadership transition comes both opportunities and risks. It will be critical to have as smooth a transition as possible to a new set of leaders eager to embrace every aspect of this plan, fundraise for it, and lead Riverkeeper to accomplish even more than can be thought possible as this plan is ratified.

The Hudson River, its watershed and tributaries, and the communities throughout the region are counting on us to succeed.

Conclusion

As an organization, we have accomplished so much in our 50+ year history and, with this strategic plan, Riverkeeper is poised for the next chapter of growth and impact. Through this process, we have had high levels of engagement from both staff and volunteer leadership, contributing countless hours of input and ultimately leading to a stronger plan and organization. This plan has truly been a collaborative effort and speaks to the dedication and passion all of us at Riverkeeper have for our mission to protect and restore the Hudson River from source to sea and safeguard drinking water supplies.

We have laid out four distinct and overlapping programmatic goals that allow Riverkeeper to continue and strengthen its important work while leveraging its existing expertise in advocacy, community partnership, science and law. We have identified areas where we hope to grow our influence and impact in line with our vision for the future. We have articulated operational and financial priorities to bring these goals to fruition.

The next five years will herald tremendous growth and evolution for Riverkeeper. To accomplish this plan, there will be changes big and small to align with the mission and vision. Change is never easy, but the talented staff and leadership at Riverkeeper have always been up for a challenge. We all carry the responsibility and stewardship of the Riverkeeper mission and for the Hudson and our communities to thrive *we must all become riverkeepers*. We only achieve this future when we work together in collaboration towards these shared goals.

Our vision is bold, ambitious and represents a brighter future for the Hudson River, its tributaries and watershed, the ecosystem, and its communities. We deeply appreciate and understand our role in bringing about that future and we are now equipped with a strategic plan that brings us closer to realizing that vision.