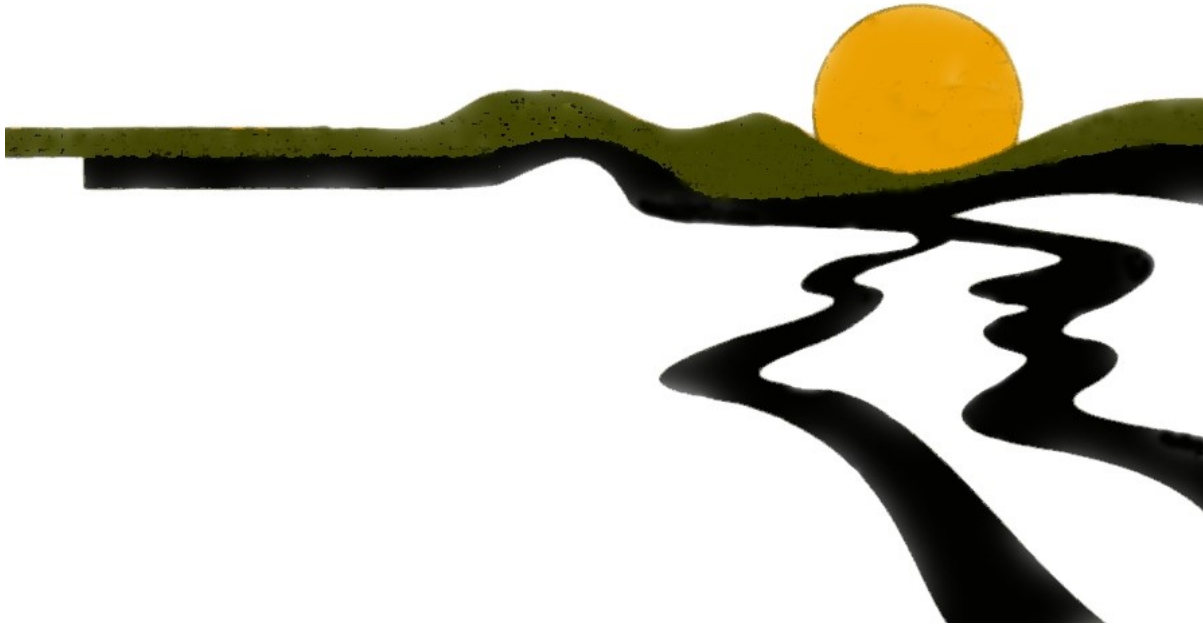


**ARKANSAS RIVER COALITION NEWSLETTER**  
**VOLUME 29, ISSUE I January-February, 2025**



## **President's Message**

### **Environmentalists Wanted**

The ARC Board of Directors wishes to expand the BOD with individuals who are interested in monitoring and improving the Arkansas River and its watershed. The mission of the Arkansas River Coalition is to protect, restore and improve the entire watershed and enhance the well-being of all life it sustains. Expanding the BOD with environmentalists should allow more progress in the mission. Please contact any board member if you are interested

### **Water Quality Sampling 101 - Volunteers Needed**

Do you love the river and the environment as much as we do? Do you want to show that love by monitoring water quality along the Arkansas River? If the answers are Yes, we want to hear from you!

The Coalition is planning to re-start its citizen science water quality monitoring program in 2025. The Coalition had a successful citizen science-based water quality monitoring program for many years, and we want to pass that on to a new generation of lovers of the river.

Volunteers will receive training on how to collect and process water samples. Data collected will be forwarded on to other partners and organizations to help monitor the river's water quality. As our population increases, we want to do our part to ensure a healthy river ecosystem for future generations.

Coalition Board member and now retired Wichita Water Center employee, Kay Drennen, will provide the training. The training is tentatively scheduled for February. If you are interested, please contact Kay Drennen at [kldrennen84@gmail.com](mailto:kldrennen84@gmail.com).

## **Coalition News Board Meeting**

Monday, March 10, 2025  
WATER Center  
Monday, May 12, 2025  
WATER Center

## **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

## **CONTRIBUTIONS**

**\$100 and over level:**

**Under \$100 level:**

## **ARC Mini-Float Schedule**

To find the schedule for Mini-Floats go to our website at [www.arkrivercoalition.org](http://www.arkrivercoalition.org) or email at [info@arkrivercoalition.org](mailto:info@arkrivercoalition.org)

**Next Newsletter Deadline**  
**March 20, 2025**

## **ARKANSAS RIVER COALITION, INC. NEWSLETTER**

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Email: [2fe2o3y@gmail.com](mailto:2fe2o3y@gmail.com)  
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Address: PO Box 3056, Wichita, KS 67201  
Website: [www.arkrivercoalition.org](http://www.arkrivercoalition.org)  
Facebook: Arkansas River Coalition

## **Website**

Our website is:

<http://www.arkrivercoalition.org>

Our email is:

[info@arkrivercoalition.org](mailto:info@arkrivercoalition.org)

## **Coalition and Great Plains Nature Center Hosted Wichita Area Environmental Groups**

The Arkansas River Coalition's board of directors partnered with the Great Plains Nature Center to host a gathering of Wichita area environmental group leaders on the evening of Nov. 4. The purpose of the gathering was to learn about the missions of other environmental groups and to see if there is potential to work together for the betterment of Wichita. Twenty-one individuals from 10 different environmental groups, including all of the Coalition's board of directors attended the meeting. The other groups included:

- **Great Plains Nature Center - Amanda Alessi**  
Website: <https://gpnc.org/>
- **Bike Walk Wichita-Holly Terrill**  
Website: <https://bikewalkwichita.org/>
- **ICT Trees - Elizabeth Bishop, Harold Schlethweg, Doug Ballard**  
Website: <https://icttrees.org/>
- **Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams KAWS - Libby Alber**  
Website: <https://kaws.org/>
- **Kansas Chapter of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers - Kurt Ratzlaff**  
Website: <https://www.backcountryhunters.org/kansas>
- **Shocker Rowing, Boats and Bikes - Calvin Cupp, Rachel Tuck**  
Website: [https://www.wichita.edu/athletics/rowing/boats\\_and\\_bikes.php](https://www.wichita.edu/athletics/rowing/boats_and_bikes.php)
- **Wichita Clean Streams - Becky Lewis and Krystina Furst**  
Website: <https://wichitacleanstreams.com/>
- **Wichita River Walk Clean Up Crew - Krystina Furst**  
Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/WichitaCleanupcrew/>
- **Wichita Audubon Society - Kevin Groeneweg**  
Website: <https://wichitaaudubon.org/>
- **Arkansas River Coalition - Russ Icke, Kay Drennen, John Marr, Tom Kneil  
Curt Demuth, Royce Taylor, Brian Bohnsack**  
Website: <https://www.arkrivercoalition.org/>

The groups offered several suggestions for potential ways to partner and promote each other's events and organizations. Follow up meetings were planned in 2025.

Stay tuned for more information on future gatherings of the Wichita area environmental groups!

# Wichita Area Environmental Groups Meeting

Note: the following are my draft meeting minutes. Any errors or omissions are not intentional and are my fault. I was trying to take notes while also engaging in the conversations. Please make any recommendations/edits etc., and I will make final adjustments - Brian Bohnsack

Welcome and introductions: A total of 21 individuals representing 10 different organizations attended. Organizations and contact information are on page 3.

Russ Icke, ARC President, discussed the Coalition's focus on river cleanups - primarily between the Red Foot Bridge and Seneca Bridge. We discussed whether Bike Walk Wichita's (BWW) Road closures were a good location for a club to attend with an informational booth. We learned that the Arkansas River Coalition had done that in the past. ICT Trees has participated in a more recent BWW event. Great Plains Nature Center (GPNC) has participated in a recent event, and it was successful for them.

Krystina Furst spoke about the Wichita River Walk Clean Up Crew started with approximately 30 members and now has a following of 800 on Facebook/social media. They host river clean up events throughout the year.

We discussed the possibility of promoting volunteer opportunities on the Wichita State Community Service Board. Some organizations participated in the Blues Big Event in the spring. The website for the Service Board is [https://www.wichita.edu/student life/seal/civic engagement/csb.php](https://www.wichita.edu/student%20life/seal/civic%20engagement/csb.php)

Rachel Tuck and Calvin Cupp from WSU Rowing and Boats and Bikes spoke about their efforts to work with the Delano Business Association on river related events. They also partner with Visit Wichita and have been on the cover of that organization's magazine. They partner with Wichita Parks and Recreation. They have partnered with Veo in the past and have recovered almost 200 scooters that were thrown into the river. (Note - as this was being discussed I wondered if the organizations could partner with the Windsurge in April to promote the big cleanup in May and perhaps have a display of some of the trash that has been picked up from the river? Just a random thought here.)

Kevin Groeneweg from the Wichita Audubon Society chapter spoke about this organization, including the Sean Sullivan Tract of 230 acres that is managed for wildlife and tours.

Becky Lewis spoke about the background of Wichita Clean Streams. The organization was originally started with funding from WRAPS grant program (Watershed Restoration and Protection Strategy grant program). Funding from that source stopped in 2011 but the organization has continued. They have 2 big events annually, including Lights on the River (which took place December 8th) and the Big Float held in the summer. They also help to maintain the rain garden downtown near the river.

Krystina and Becky spoke about a potential river clean up they have been considering in advance of the Men's NCAA Basketball Tournament that will be held this spring. They discussed ways to make it into a challenge bracket with the winning teams potentially being determined by the most bags of trash collected and/or the most unique trash collected from the river. The group rallied around this idea and discussed it in detail.

Doug Ballard, Elizabeth Bishop and Harold Schlethweg discussed the mission of ICT Trees and their goal to increase the canopy coverage of trees in the Wichita area. ICT Trees hosted a tree ID walk on November 9th. They discussed their desire to expand their efforts and reach out to area garden centers and also to get better GIS maps of Wichita's tree canopy. Attendees gave several suggestions on possible sources/organizations that may be able to provide that information. The Kansas Biological Survey, associated with the University of Kansas, was mentioned as one of the possible options.

316 United was mentioned as a possible organization to include in future meetings. (Can anyone add more to this:)

Amanda Alessi discussed the Great Plains Nature center and some of their programs, which includes taking programs to school. She also spoke about the collaborative trash trap project currently being completed in cooperation with the Environmental Finance Center at Wichita State and other partners. Krystina shared information on Disney's research on the optimum distance for Trash barrel placement.

Libby Albers spoke about the Kansas Alliance for Wetlands and Streams (KAWS). KAWS has been a sponsor of the Arkansas River Clean Up for many years. Last year the clean up retrieved 9 tons of trash. The river cleanup is funded with grants and donations from several sources. Volunteers receive a free T- shirt, and last year there were more than 1,200 volunteers. KAWS has been influential with many projects along the Ark River. She pointed out that it is the longest river trail in Kansas. KAWS is also working to remove phreatophytes in the Ark River bed in western Kansas and near the Colorado border. Phreatophytes are largely invasive species whose water needs are helping to reduce native plant species along the river bed. KAWS also coordinated the Kansas Natural Resource Conference. Libby encouraged individuals/organizations to attend this conference. It will be held in February in Manhattan: <http://www.kansasnrc.org/>.

Kurt Ratzlaff spoke about the Kansas Chapter of the Backcountry Hunters and Anglers. This organization provides a lot of physical resources/volunteers for projects. They devote much of their efforts to work on public lands. Many of its members are in the Kansas City area. They have assisted with Kansas River cleanups, including cleaning up discarded battery cases in the Manhattan area. The group discussed the potential for them to assist with tires and other large items from 47th Street to the Derby takeout point.



## Next Steps

Everyone felt the meeting overall was productive and discussed having a follow up meeting in January or February. Some potential discussion points/action items for that meeting include:

- 1) Detailed discussion on rallying everyone's organizations for a river clean up in advance of the NCAA basketball tournament.
- 2) Development of a group calendar so that organizations are aware of other's major events and can cross promote and/or partner for the events.
- 3) Possible discussion of trying to educate the Kansas legislature's water committee about issues affecting the Ark River and other Kansas water bodies.
- 4) Perhaps hosting a joint public meeting of all Wichita area environmental groups in a February time frame for a happy hour/social (note - This was added by me - Brian). Perhaps we could tie in an additional opportunity like a speaker.
- 5) A potential idea stems from a contact with the Wichita Area Kayak Association, which was not able to attend the meeting, but offered the potential to partner with the Red Cross in the future. Possibly to have a Basic First Aid course.



**Arkansas River Coalition**  
**Box 3056**  
**Wichita, KS 67201**

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**www.arkrivercoalition.org**

**Facebook-Ark River Coalition Group**

**YOU ARE INVITED TO JOIN THE ARKANSAS RIVER COALITION**

I believe in the Mission Statement: The Arkansas River Coalition's mission is to protect, restore and improve the entire watershed and enhance the well-being of all life it sustains. A Family consists of any number of people who live in one household. A Partner can be an organization, business, individual or informal group who wants to give extra support to our mission. Please give us the name that you want listed for these categories...

Your name/joint names/Partner name: \_\_\_\_\_

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**If your employer has a matching contribution program we will get you the details needed to apply.  
Extra donations to help with our work are always welcome.**

Donations are deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. The Arkansas River Coalition, Inc. is a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. Thank you for all you do for the Arkansas River and its tributaries.

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Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership levels:

Senior/Student/Other@\$15 \_\_\_ Individual@\$20 \_\_\_ Joint@\$30 \_\_\_ Family@\$40 \_\_\_ Partner@\$50 \_\_\_

Extra Contribution \_\_\_\_\_ I want to volunteer with \_\_\_\_\_

This membership is a gift for \_\_\_\_\_ Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Make check out to the Arkansas River Coalition, Inc., P.O. Box 3056, Wichita, KS 67201

I wish to receive newsletters by \_\_\_\_\_ mail or by \_\_\_\_\_ Email when available.

**Upcoming Events:**

- Board Meeting Monday, March 10, 2025 WATER Center
- Spring river clean up Saturday, May 3 , 9:00 A.M. until noon
- Board Meeting Monday May 13, 2025 WATER Center