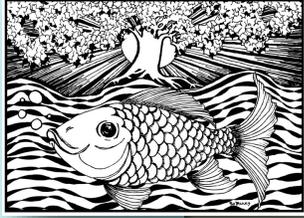


Kentucky RIVERKEEPER®



# Kentucky Riverkeeper

## Drips, Ripples and Waves

### Newsletter Summer 2021

#### Kentucky Riverkeeper Board

Alan Banks  
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Kinney Hounshell  
Teri Williams  
Peter Switalski

Pat Banks  
Kentucky Riverkeeper  
Editor Teri Williams

Issues facing your Kentucky River in the short term and long term... this is for our Children!

- ◆ Restore and Protect
- ◆ Enforcement
- ◆ Storm Runoff
- ◆ Sewage/Aging Infrastructure
- ◆ Mercury
- ◆ Water Quality and Flow
- ◆ Mining and Industry abuses.
- ◆ Agricultural Nonpoint Source Pollution
- ◆ Environmental Justice



#### Summer 2021

### The Kentucky River Flood of 2021 This is one for the Records!!!

Dedra Brandenburgh

Flood victims who were displaced and local business owners are still struggling to find solid ground and normalcy after the devastation of the March 1st, 2021, flood that hit Beattyville in Lee County, Kentucky

On March 1st, water was rising, and the Lee County Search and Rescue volunteers were knocking on doors asking residents to leave their homes. By the afternoon, they were rescuing people in canoes, pontoon boats, and even dump trucks. The South Fork of the Kentucky River crested at a record breaking 44.33 ft. There were around 50 homes in downtown Beattyville that were damaged or destroyed. Other communities along the river such as St. Helens, Cressmont, and Heidelberg sustained heavy damage due to the flooding.

All the streets in downtown Beattyville were affected by floodwaters. There were 40-50 businesses who had standing water from 2.5 feet up to 6 feet inside. Once water receded, after three days of flooding, people were able to assess the damage and start cleanup efforts. They cleaned mud from their homes and businesses, pulling up soiled carpets, tearing out drywall and throwing away furniture, equipment, and stock. The city of Beattyville blocked off Main Street to the public and used every available dumpster.

Volunteer groups poured in from everywhere bringing donations of clothing, food, water, and cleaning supplies. Groups also pitched in to help with the cleanup. The Happy Top Community Center and a few churches on both sides of the river opened their doors and became drop off locations for the public to bring supplies. They also helped in the organization and distribution of the supplies.

Tracy Farmer, a Lexington horseman and entrepreneur who grew up in Lee County, donated \$25,000 to a relief fund to help downtown businesses and another \$25,000 to a county recovery fund for flood victims. Also, an organization called Americans Helping Americans, which works in Appalachia, donated \$100,000 to the Downtown Beattyville Alliance. The alliance has set up a committee created a process to make grants available to businesses downtown.

For more information visit:

[www.heartofthekentuckyriver.com/flood](http://www.heartofthekentuckyriver.com/flood)  
Read more here: <https://www.kentucky.com/news/state/kentucky/article250172630.html#storylink=cpy>



Photo by Donnie Benton



Photo by Donnie Benton

### COVID-19 is the Headline of 2020 and 2021

We have lost many Kentuckians, Americans and world citizens to this deadly pandemic. It has impacted everyone and all walks of life! It has impacted many of Kentucky Riverkeeper's service, educational and fundraising activities as well. We encourage mask wearing, social distancing and hand washing. We follow the science. We believe clean air and clean water are more important than ever. We will continue to work for our Kentucky River and the whole watershed!

Thank you for your help.  
Be safe and healthy and know that we will get through this together!

Turn on your green light!

## Celabrate the Kentucky River Watertrail! Kentucky RiverKeeper 2021 Paddles and Clean ups

*Saturday June 19-June 20, 2021, 25 mile paddle and overnight! Starting at Wolf Creek Ramp, overnight camping at Fish Creek ramp then arriving in Beattyville, behind Jack's IGA. For more information on the overnight paddle, go to Lee County Tourism web page for the 25 mile paddle @ [www.visitleecountyky.com](http://www.visitleecountyky.com). or call 606-464-5038. Sunday June 20th,*

*The Kentucky Riverkeeper "soft" paddle and Kentucky River Water Trail Ribbon Cutting*

*will be stationed in the field by the river, behind the Jack's IGA! We will start at 12:00 noon for the paddle then 2:00 pm. ribbon cutting, and cook out. We will welcome the 25 mile long haulers! Our special guests include, David Brown Kinloch with the Appalachian Hydro Associates, David Hamilton and Sue Northern from the Kentucky River Authority, Kentucky Riverkeeper Board Members, Lee Co. officials, and others! Come and celebrate the **Kentucky River Water Trail!!!***

**Saturday, August 28th, Red River Paddle for Pool 10 (meet at College Hill ramp)** Kentucky River Clean up and Picnic. T-shirts available while supplies last! Sign in starting at 9:30 -10am-2:00pm. If you do not have your own kayak or canoe you can still join us! We are partnering with EKU to supply 10 canoes with safety gear to accommodate 20 adults. If you bring children please bring their own suitable PDF! Community people and groups are invited!!!

**Saturday, September 11th, Boonesborough Beach, Kentucky River Sweep!** Sign in 9:30-10:00am-The Kentucky RiverKeeper is partnering with the Kentucky River Authority, Madison, and Clark Counties, on a river cleanup for pool nine. We will have a river clean up, picnic, and a ribbon cutting for the portage of lock and dam 10. After the cleanup we will have a fun float and paddle. T-shirts available while supplies last! If you do not have your own kayak or canoe you can still join us! We are partnering with EKU to supply 10 canoes with safety gear to accommodate 20 adults. If you bring children please bring their own suitable PDF! Community people and groups are invited!!!!

**To help us manage the requests for reservations for your canoe please send an email to:**

**Kentucky Riverkeeper! First come basis!** EKU Campus Recreation - Adventure Programs is providing 10 canoes with 20 Adult PFD's and 20 paddles.

**To reserve canoes and adult PFD's please send an e-mail request to:**

[kentuckyriverkeeper@gmail.com](mailto:kentuckyriverkeeper@gmail.com).

**Please list the names in your party and the date (s) you**



**The Kentucky River Water Trail was selected in 2011 as 1 of 100 projects across the country to be recognized in President Obama's initiative, "America's Great Outdoors", launched to develop a 21st century conservation and recreation.**

## Doing our Part The Importance of Practicing Leave No Trace

By: Brian G. Clark, Ed.D.

This past year has been a difficult one for all of us as we have had to learn how best to deal with this pandemic. The closures of many businesses and the recommended protocols from our health professionals of social distancing has led to many challenges including how to maintain a healthy lifestyle and still be physically active. Being outside has been recommended as safe and healthy option for exercise. Getting outside and being physically active has many health benefits besides just getting exercise including reducing stress, decreasing anxiety, mental health wellbeing, and more.

This desire to get outside and be active during the pandemic has led to record numbers of visitors and therefore an increase in the environmental impact of our parks and natural areas. Our public land management agencies have been trying to deal with these impacts as best they can. There will be a need to continue to be focus on how best to restore these areas to their pre-pandemic condition. Research has shown that educational opportunities on decreasing your environmental impact before and during your outdoor recreational activities are one of the best ways to mitigate the visitor usage impacts that we are seeing. This is where practicing Leave No Trace becomes so critical for outdoor recreation visitors.

The Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics is a nonprofit organization based out of Boulder, Colorado. The mission of Leave No Trace is to protect the outdoors by teaching and inspiring people to enjoy it responsibly. The organization accomplishes this mission through education and science based/data driven research. The seven principles of Leave No Trace provide an easily understood framework for minimum impact practices for anyone visiting the outdoors (LNT.org).



### The Seven Principles of Leave No Trace:

- ◆ Plan Ahead and Prepare
- ◆ Travel and Camp on Durable Surfaces
- ◆ Dispose of Waste Properly
- ◆ Leave What You Find
- ◆ Minimize Campfire Impacts
- ◆ Respect Wildlife
- ◆ Be Considerate of Other Visitors
- ◆ <https://lnt.org/why/7-principles/>

For more information on how to get involved with the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics (how to become a member, trainings, becoming a volunteer, etc.) visit their website at <https://lnt.org/> or follow on various social media platforms. Also feel free to reach out directly via email at [info@LNT.org](mailto:info@LNT.org). You can also reach out to me directly as the Kentucky State Advocate for Leave No Trace <https://lnt.org/state/kentucky/>.

The Kentucky Arts Council and the Kentucky River Authority  
Awarded the KORE Academy  
a Teaching Art Together Grant  
with teacher, Roberta Hounshell,  
and artist and Kentucky Riverkeeper, Pat Banks

KORE Academy students worked with Roberta Hounshell, teacher, Pat Banks, artist . to create the 2021 River sweep T-Shirt! See the final design submitted to the printer. The students had an in depth experience from the presentation of the geological origins of the Kentucky River watershed and a brief history of the development of flora and fauna of the region. They received a map of the Kentucky River watershed and an artist rendering of the map with creatures great and small, from the watershed incorporated into the design.

Students practiced their drawing skills and learned some watercolor techniques while studying the Rainbow Darter. The lettering was designed by the students and three rainbow darter watercolors were chosen for the spring 2021 River Sweep t-shirt design. The judges for the project was Sue Northern and the Kentucky River Authority Board. See the design below!



KORE students at work!

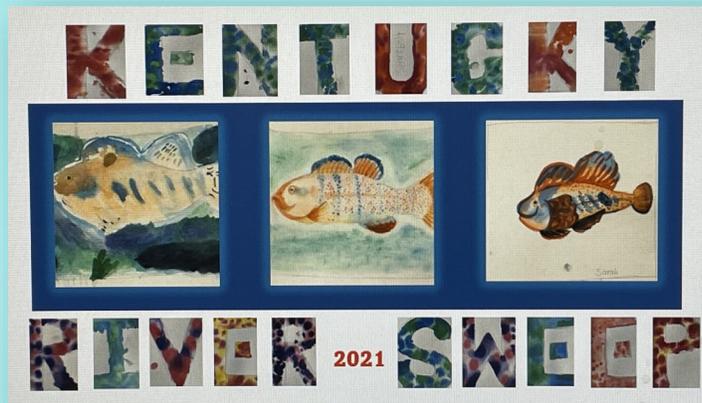


**The Geological History of the Kentucky River**

The Kentucky River snakes through the Commonwealth of Kentucky starting at the headwaters of its three forks North, Middle and South Fork in south eastern Kentucky. They converge at Beattyville then winds for about 260 miles from the convergence. Then flows north to its mouth at Carrolton, Ky, where it flows into the Ohio River.

The Kentucky River meanders through the coal mining regions of the Cumberland Mountains, the Daniel Boone National Forest, past Boonesborough and through the Palisades and the Bluegrass Region of the state.

This is a bird's eye view! Beautiful!



2021 Kentucky River Sweep T-Shirt Design!

### About the Curriculum Project

Riverkeeper, Pat Banks, and board member Roberta Hounshell are developing a school curriculum designed to help students develop an understanding of the Kentucky River. The main goal of the curriculum is for students to become excited to be a part of their environment and their world. They were awarded a grant by the Kentucky River Authority.

KRK and the Kentucky River Authority want to work with teachers and students to look at Kentucky River watershed through the lens of the Kentucky Core Curriculum arts and science principles while cultivating stewardship and responsibility. Students learn best when they can explore a subject from multiple disciplines and media. The lesson plans serve starting places for integrating science, history, art, writing, language arts, and culture while discovering the Kentucky River Watershed. Key components include encouraging conservation and recreation.

Two of the lesson plans are complete while work continues on eight or ten more. KRK is excited about the curriculum! The completed plans are getting rave reviews form folks that have been allowed a sneak peek. Stay tuned for more to come about this innovative project.

# Illegal Dumping of Radioactive Hydraulic Fracturing Waste in Estill County

Mary Cromer

By the time residents of Estill County learned about the illegal dumping of radioactive hydraulic fracturing waste in the county's Blue Ridge Landfill in February 2016, over two million pounds of the waste had been dumped and buried beneath layers of the landfill's daily municipal waste receipts. Between July 2015 and January 2016, a man named Cory Hoskins of West Liberty had brokered the disposal of 96 loads of waste, most of which was radioactive sludge from a fracking waste recycling facility called Fairmont Brine Processing in West Virginia. The waste was shipped from West Virginia and Ohio illegally in trucks that lacked the required radioactive waste placarding. The import of radioactive waste from any state other than Illinois is a felony in Kentucky.

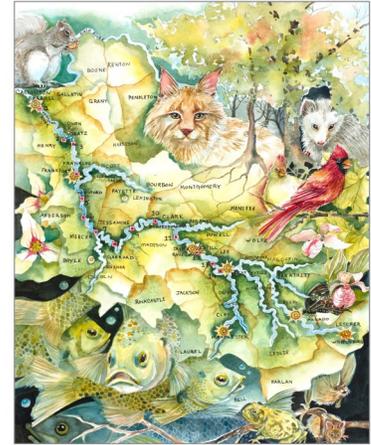
Estill County residents and downstream allies worked quickly to organize the Concerned Citizens of Estill County to respond to the crisis. CCEC, working with Appalachian Citizens' Law Center, Kentucky Resources Council, Kentucky Riverkeeper and Kentucky Environmental Foundation sought all records from the multiple state agencies investigating the illegal dumping. CCEC received thousands of records that helped the citizens understand what had occurred and the risks posed by the waste, but records related to the Energy and Environment Cabinet's negotiations with the landfill over how to deal with the buried waste were withheld. In 2016, CCEC petitioned the Governor for release of the records and for a seat at the table to ensure that citizens' voices were considered as the Cabinet and the landfill worked to settle the Cabinet's enforcement actions. The Governor refused.

In 2017, CCEC, represented by Appalachian Citizens' Law Center and Kentucky Resources Council, sued the Cabinet for release of its records of negotiation with the landfill and for its approval of the landfill's plan to leave all of the radioactive waste in place. After over three years of litigation, CCEC won both lawsuits in late 2020. The Cabinet released all records of its negotiations and paid CCEC's lawyer for her time litigating under Kentucky's Open Records Act. Through its litigation, CCEC was also able to ensure better ongoing water monitoring requirements for the landfill and require the landfill to put a perpetual fund in place to ensure that the landfill site would be properly maintained after the landfill closes to ensure that the radioactive waste remains securely in place in the future.

In February 2021, Cory Hoskins pled guilty to two charges of shipping radioactive waste without proper placarding in violation of Department of Transportation regulations. He faces up to five years in prison and fines of up to \$250,000. He was not charged with the state felony of illegally importing radioactive waste, as Kentucky's then Attorney General found that he lacked sufficient evidence to prosecute.



## The Kentucky River Water Trail



## Be Greener!

### All purpose Cleaner

Combine equal parts distilled white vinegar  
And water in a spray bottle.  
\*Baking soda can be added or sprinkled on surface prior to spraying with the vinegar solution.

### Furniture Polish

Mix together in glass container  
1/4 c olive oil  
1/4 c distilled white vinegar.  
Add 20 -30 drops lemon oil.

Shake well before using. Dip clean cloth into polish and rub wood in the direction of the grain. Use soft brush to work into corners or tight places.



# Red Wine Vinegar & White Wine Vinegar

Alan and Pat Banks

**Description:** Alan and I received the original "mother" from a friend in France. The vinegar tastes amazing and is a natural probiotic! We divided her into separate containers and fed one part of her red wine (any kind) and the other part of her white wine (any kind). At this point, we had made red wine vinegar and white wine vinegar! But you can feed your mother both. She does not care! She will make you pinkish vinegar and still taste amazing! Just pour any leftover or funky wine of your preferred "color" and the mother will transform the wine into vinegar in about 4-6 weeks. She does not take a lot of care once she is established. Our mother or (her daughter) is over 10 years old. Of course, that is how long we have had her. I am not sure how long she was living in the French wine cellar...

**Containers:** The mother tends to grow in layers to fit the container she lives in. We prefer large clear glass canisters with a loose-fitting lid. Place a clean cotton towel or cheese cloth over the top of the container or few layers of cheese cloth then place the lid on top. You do not want a firm seal. There needs to be room for the mother to breathe.

A large opening is preferable. This will allow you to reach a ladle or measuring cup down into the container to retrieve your vinegar for use. Some vinegar containers on the market have cute little pouring spouts. They don't work. The mother will clog it up and if it is metal, it will soon show signs of corrosion.

**Environment:** The mother likes a cool dark place like a cupboard or pantry. Do not put her in the same storage place as your wine. Her spores are powerful, and she will go through corks to get to the wine!

## Getting Started:

Have a place on a shelf or pantry ready for her. Make sure it is convenient for you to pour the wine in and scoop the vinegar out!

- ◆ Splurge and buy a cheap bottle of drinkable wine of your preferred color and pour it onto the mother.
- ◆ Add the cloth over the top of the jar to prevent a hard seal.
- ◆ Wait 4-6 weeks. At this point you can scoop out enough vinegar for use. Then add more wine. At this point your mother will have grown. She will process the wine faster. We add a few ounces of left-over wine anytime! Nothing goes to waste. She will be happy for months at a time just do not let her go dry!
- ◆ Harvest: Look at your mother. Has she overtaken her jar? Then it is time to reach into the canister and separate her and put her into small glass jars with a small amount of vinegar for friends. You can then fill the rest of the small jar with fresh wine and tell your friends to wait six weeks for the most amazing vinegar! For yourself save a few of the top layers for your large container.
- ◆ Pour your vinegar into a pouring vessel and strain it. Pour the strained vinegar into your small bottles for your handy use.
- ◆ Okay so now you have your strained vinegar in your handy bottles, now it is time to put your momma back to her world so she can make more vinegar. Put her into her large container. Make sure she has at least a cup of her vinegar with her then add a bottle of your favorite color of wine. Then you can process her again in six weeks or if she has plenty of liquid you can wait for months! It is okay to just go with the flow. She is easy and wants to fit into your lifestyle and make you happy and healthy!

## How to use your fabulous vinegar:

Add this vinegar into any of your salad dressings or other recipes. (Because this is a natural living product you might have to strain her but only if she has been sitting around for a few months. She does grow!!)

When I make my salad dressings, I give her a taste. Sometimes I add a drop of honey or a few grains of sugar to the dressing to balance the acidity.

My grandfather used to tell us how he would take a teaspoon of vinegar a day.

He said it would cure anything. He said that the vinegar you get from the stores today just isn't the same. Fifty years later I get it! It was the natural probiotics found in the vinegar! Wow! Isn't nature grand?

## Easy Vinaigrette

½ cup of olive oil or canola (some people like more oil)

½ cup of red or white wine vinegar

1 Clove of garlic or more to taste!

Salt (I like kosher salt) and pepper to taste.

Give this a twirl in your blender or small food processor. Sometimes I add a ½ teaspoon of spicy mustard. It is all about your taste!

If you need more, you can double or triple your recipe and keep it in the fridge for several weeks. Wait an hour to give the flavors a chance to meld. Taste your dressing, if it is too "strong" you can add a tablespoon of water or a half teaspoon of honey (or sugar) to balance the flavors. I love to add fresh herbs such as basil, oregano, chives, parsley, cilantro and/or jalapeno!



Large canisters with a loose fitting lid- place cotton towel or cheese cloth over the container then place the lid.



Here is how I put the cotton fabric under the lid. So the vinegar mother can breathe



Here are some cute salvaged jars to place your vinegar mother in to share with friends.



Here are the Bottles I like to have my Vinegar in for handy daily use!

# Conserving Water and Reducing Plastics at Home

Teri Williams

It can seem overwhelming to try and tackle the many environmental issues we face as a planet. There is much crucial work to be done holding factories/corporations and government accountable. We need to continue supporting national and local non-profit organizations (like KRK J) as well. But there are multiple ways to help on the home front. There are many, many actions we can take at home to conserve water and reduce single use plastics. At times, it might feel as though our actions are too small and that there is no way we can make a difference. In fact, these actions will make a huge difference and are not difficult to incorporate into our daily habits.

Imagine that you stopped using laundry detergent that comes in a plastic jug. Let's say you, had previously gone through 1 jug per month. This adds up to 12 jugs a year. Let's say you live in a neighborhood of 30 households. If those other households stopped using 12 jugs per year as well, your neighborhood would prevent 360 plastic laundry jugs from going into landfills, streams, oceans, etc. every year. Keep in mind that we are just talking about plastic laundry jugs. We could do the same multiplying the use of plastic medicine bottles, shampoo bottles, food containers, milk jugs and much more. And keep in mind we are just talking about one neighborhood. Do the math!

Many types of plastics can be recycled. Unfortunately, the recycling process is not without its negative impact on the environment but it is, nonetheless, an integral component of waste reduction.

When plastics production is reduced there is less to recycle. Hmmm!



## Consider these Facts

- ◆ \*It is estimated that one third of all plastic waste ends up in soil or freshwater. Plastic is everywhere. When plastic cracks or breaks small pieces less than 5 mm in length of plastic leach off and pollute the environment. These are called micro-plastics. They are so small that they are usually not picked up by water filtration and make it out into rivers and oceans. Fish and other aquatic animals ingest them and become sick or die.
- ◆ \*When you see trash in the water or on riverbanks, it may have been washed downstream from storm drainage systems, roadways, creeks etc.
- ◆ \*Almost 70% of the earth is made up of water yet many parts of the world suffer from a clean watershortage.
- ◆ Every drop of water that we use continues through the water cycle. Whatever we put down the drain ends up in water somewhere. We can help protect the quality of our planet's freshwater by using it more wisely. We need to keep our limited supply of fresh water pure and away from pollutants. Be a water saver!
- ◆ There is a lot of information online that details how to conserve water and reduce plastic at home. Just google.

## In the meantime, here are some ideas:

\*Turn off the water while brushing your teeth, while soaping your hands, and while scrubbing dishes.  
Use a hose instead of a sprinkler.  
Time your showers.  
If possible, buy energy saving appliances.

\*Make your own cleaning products using non-toxic but effective ingredients for general cleaning. Reduce the use of stronger disinfectant cleaners, only using as needed. Again, there are many easy recipes on-line.

\*Avoid buying plastics when possible including food products in plastic containers such as condiments, salad dressings, spaghetti sauces, other sauces, peanut butter and on and on.

\*Consider using laundry sheets/strips. Earth Breeze packages their laundry sheets in small biodegradable boxes.

\*If you have a pool, you may be wondering how all of these water conservation measures make a difference when you use so much water in your pool. All water conservation matters and you will probably see a reduction in your water bill as well.. And pool covers cut the amount of replacement water needed by 30-50% according to a list by Forbes Magazine, "11 Ways to Save Water at Home".

\*And, yes, recycle! Many products aren't available in glass such as some medicines, many make-up products etc. There needs to be strong continued effort to promote recycling of cardboard, glass, aluminum, paper, etc

The economy works primarily through supply and demand. As consumers, we can demand, through our purchasing, that we want plastics reduction. Local singer/songwriters Mitch Barret and Carla Gover remind us that we may be just a 'Drop in the Bucket' but we become a strong force when we work together on important issues. (The entire song is available online)



## A Drop in the Bucket (excerpt) Mitch Barrett

It's a crazy world we live in  
Bad news all around  
Brothers and Sisters if we're  
gonna make a difference  
We're gonna have to stand  
our ground

It's a drop in the bucket  
And a bucket in the pond  
And the pond fills the river  
And the river rushes on  
And every river swells a river  
Until the power can't be stopped  
and what becomes a mighty ocean  
Started as a drop

# Kids Korner with Roberta Hounshell

The new legends of magical creatures of the Kentucky River.

## This is an interview with Eluama, From Sea Serpent to Riverkeeper Mascot

Roberta Hounshell



Magical Sea  
Serpents?  
What will  
we discover  
next?

**Riverkeeper:** Good morning Eluama. Thank you for agreeing to the interview. Many will be surprised and skeptical of your existence as you are the stuff of legends and myths. Also, water serpents like you are not supposed to be real.

**Eluama:** You are right until I accidentally was spotted by paddlers during a recent river sweep I had rarely surfaced in these times, especially during the day. When I did surface many, many years ago, there was a lot of fear and lots of searches for me. So, I stayed safely hidden at the bottom of the river. You might have heard of my distant cousin who lives in Loch Ness in Scotland and all that is going on there to locate him.

**Riverkeeper:** Let's tell the readers how we met.

**Eluama:** Yes, I did not mean to be seen at first. However, when I did surface and was seen, to my surprise your humans did not start screaming and attack me. They talked in quiet voices and showed interest in me. I remember you saying that some of them were scientists, poets, and teachers. As always, I was able to understand their words and they were able to understand me. I also understand the language of trees, flowers, and other plants by the way. Trees especially take a long time to tell a story!!

**Riverkeeper:** When we first saw you, we had a good talk about who you were and what you were doing. Were you a danger to us or we of you? We had many questions, what you were doing there? We quickly discovered that we were all interested in the same thing: keeping our beautiful river as clean as possible for all creatures.

**Riverkeeper:** Tell us the story of how you got here and how long you have lived here.

**Eluama:** It is a long story but I will tell it if you really want to hear it.

**Riverkeeper:** Yes, I am sure there are many people that that would really like to hear it.

**Eluama:** I was born about 75,000 years ago far away in the ocean. My family has existed for ages and ages but much of our history was lost in the mists of time. While I am a giant in your world, I am the smallest in my family. I am 33 feet long and 15,000 pounds in weight. Our family led an incredibly quiet life far away in the oceans of this world. I spent my days playing with other sea creatures and hunting for food. We survived on rainbows, sparkles, and stardust. We also listened to the stories of the water creatures. We can understand all creatures even those on land! Then, on a day just like all the all the others, we went to sleep. When we woke up the next day, most other creatures were gone, only we and a very few other creatures were left.

**Riverkeeper:** I am sure that was scary!

**Eluama:** Yes, very much so. We swam long, long distances in the ocean and finally we met a few others like us. Nobody knew what had happened. We do not know why we survived. Stories were going around about a giant fireball hitting the earth. Some said they saw fire spewing out from inside the earth and that the ground shook and rumbled. I do remember that the sea was rough that night, but that happened often. However, since that time we seem to have magical powers and our food is a magical feast of rainbows, sparkles, and starlight.

**Riverkeeper:** Modern scientists have found out what likely happened. We can talk about that later if you want to. For now, just continue with your story.

**Eluama:** Slowly other animals showed up in the oceans again. Somehow, we did not age. Our bodies became slimmer and longer, just like we look now. One day some things showed up swimming on top of the water, carrying creatures with two legs. I know now that those were ships carrying humans. They were terrified of us because of their fear of the unknown. Well, my family told me that some creatures that resembled us would swim around those ships, terrorize the sailors and sometimes capsize the ships and drown the sailors.

**Riverkeeper:** So you and your family led that kind of life?

**Eluama:** No, I did not and my family could not. That was not our nature or teachings! We are natural explores and nurturers, so we all set out in different directions to explore this new world. I decided I needed to find my own purpose. I swam for a long time in all directions until one day I came to a place where the ocean stopped. Fresh water flowed into the ocean through smaller armlike shapes. Later I learned that the water arms are called rivers.

**Riverkeeper:** What happened next?

**Eluama:** I swam closer and closer and watched for many days. Finally, I got the nerve to swim into one of the small arms. I liked it that the water was so much calmer than the ocean. Immediately, I was greeted by some nice fish and some furry creatures who told me that they were called river otters. Everybody was friendly. We swam together for a long time. I could not go everywhere because in some places the water was not deep enough for my size. I heard many stories of their lives and what was important to them.



**Riverkeeper:** So how did you get here and how did taking care of the Kentucky River become your mission?

**Eluama:** We swam up and down the river for days. One day I just ended up here and made new otter friends, one in particular. We had wonderful adventures together. In the evenings other creatures came to the river and told their stories. So, I stayed here for a while. Then one day, a small boat (canoe) carrying some humans was floating on the river. They saw me and were not afraid. I could understand their language and they understood mine. I learned they were called Cherokees. They told me their origin stories, their favorite foods, and we often talked about the water. The Cherokee knew that water is important for all life and that we must all help take care of our water! They think in terms of the seventh generation! I, of course, think even further ahead but that is a different story. The Cherokee also had a story about a sea monster, Uktena- figure that!! Uktena was horned, mean and dangerous though and deadly. It sounds like those creatures that would terrify the human sailors! I do not look anything like Uktena, thank goodness. The Uktena stories are scary but entertaining! At that point I realized that some humans understood that taking care of the land and water was important for life on this planet! I decided that I wanted to spend my life here in this river that some people call the Kentucky River. This river may have had other names in different times and by earlier people. I decided this beautiful river would now be my home. I will study these people and help them and the other creatures on the land. I made a vow to keep the river drinkable, fishable and swimmable. I was fascinated by the way my new friends shared the ways they honored their water. It was very much how my family taught me. I hoped we could learn from each other! Their children played with me in the water, and we had a great time. I learned that in the Cherokee language "Elu" means beautiful and "ama" means water, so I pulled the words together and took it as my name: Eluama. My otter friend took Equoni as his name, as it means "river".

**Riverkeeper:** That is beautiful! What happened next?

**Eluama:** Well, for many years we all lived happily like that. Then it seemed like one day my Cherokee friends were gone. Other people came, but they carried something that looked like long sticks and made a very loud noise. One time they pointed the stick at me, and I felt a sharp pain. After that, I rarely came up to the surface anymore. I stayed hidden from the human creatures safely in underground caves and on the bottom of the river. There I could continue to keep the water drinkable, fishable and swimmable. Even if the new people did not believe in me!

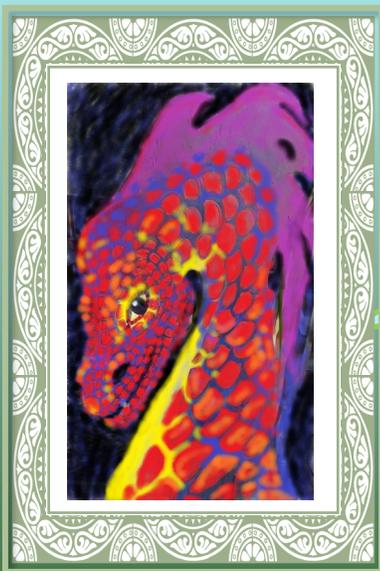
As I said, I was seen a few times after that, but it led to searches, and it became hard to evade the fire sticks. So, I just stayed hidden from the people and kept in touch with my friend Equoni and all the other creatures great and small. We each have our own part in this cycle of life around the river. Then one day you and your small group saw me!

**Riverkeeper:** That was a lucky day for us. We are so glad that you remember all the stories the Cherokee told you about their forests, origins, and reverence for water. You and I have spoken and shared our missions for keeping the river drinkable, fishable and swimmable. We are thankful that you want to help us with our mission to keep the water clean and spread the message. We love it that you agreed to be our mascot!!! A symbol of clean water and stewardship. We will tell your stories and share your adventures to inspire others to care about their water. We will educate others that many creatures depend on the Kentucky River Watershed, including almost one million of us who get our drinking water from the Kentucky River. We promise you and your secrets will be safe as you help us spread this important message. We will share images of you to teach stewardship and remind people that we have a partner working with us to keep our water clean!!! I am sure you will inspire artists and children to create art to educate and inspire stewardship. One of our artists has already created some jewelry for us to wear to remind us of our missions everyday!! The Riverkeeper has created a sculpture of you to remind the people that you are here and watching over the Kentucky River, your new home.

While many people may never see you, your legend, stories, parables, and adventures will be shared! I cannot wait to hear what the plants and trees have to share!

**Eluama:** You are welcome. While my origins are hidden in time and my mission is forever, I am looking forward to working with the Riverkeeper in this time and this place! The kids told me about movie stars. I feel like a movie star! Eluama, the Riverkeeper Mascot! I will be watching you and help where I can, but remember it is up to every one of you to be a steward of your waters and to teach your children the lessons of love and commitment!

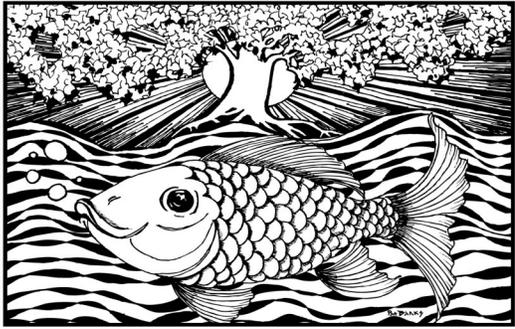
**Riverkeeper:** Eluama, thank you for your mission and service to the Kentucky River watershed. We will talk again soon, we hope!



Custom designed  
jewelry  
and collectables  
by Roberta  
Introducing Kentucky  
River Water Serpent  
Eluama



Kentucky RIVERKEEPER®



AmazonSmile Laura Melius

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If you would like to become a member or donate to support Kentucky Riverkeeper events and projects, please designate how you would like to contribute to this wonderful cause. You can donate online at [www.kyriverkeeper.org](http://www.kyriverkeeper.org),  
Send Check to: PO Box 1296, Richmond KY 40475

CONTACT INFORMATION

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_ \$25.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$50.00 \_\_\_\_\_ \$100.00 \_\_\_\_\_ Other

Thank you for your support! Drink Fish Swim!

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NOTES/COMMENTS/PROJECTS:

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to be notified about river clean-ups, paddle events, and other Riverkeeper events.

\_\_\_\_\_ Put me on your email list.

Comments or suggestions. \_\_\_\_\_

