



2018 River Manager of the Year

Corita Waters

This award recognizes contributions that are field-oriented and location-specific, with a focus on recent accomplishments. Corita Waters of the National Park Service is the 2018 winner of this award.

For the last 15 years, Corita has promoted river conservation and recreation access through the National Park Service technical assistance program to communities. Her thoughtfulness, optimism, and dedication, effectively contributes to river management as she advocates for river staff, dollars, standards, and protection.

One of Corita's major successes is developing innovative river management techniques through her work to establish the National Water Trail System (NWTS). Because of her ability to resolve complex issues relating to river management, Corita was an essential member of the team that created the NWTS as a new program: naming the program, determining how it should be organized, developing criteria and soliciting applications, setting up websites, coordinating interagency meetings, spearheading the selection committee, and getting Secretarial approval. Now with 21 Water Trails, the NWTS exemplifies best practices for recreation opportunities, education, conservation, community support, public information, trail maintenance, and planning.

Corita has an amazing ability to keep up-to-date with National Park Service partners, interagency networks, which has been crucial in coordinating experts, practitioners, and a team to champion best management practices. Her resourcefulness has led to the creation of various river management tools that can be used by river managers across the country. Examples of best practices resources Corita has been involved with include: Prepare to Launch; River Access Framework (in progress); and the National Rivers Project.

Corita is extremely adept at designing meetings and conferences as well as implementing new techniques that connect river managers through conference calls, trainings, and webinars. Corita helped develop the 2015 National Water Trails Forum in Michigan, which enabled water trail managers and advocates to exchange information. She is a frequent leader of Water Trail, Water Safety, Accessibility, and Diversity sessions at RMS trainings and River Rally. In addition, Corita co-leads the National Park Service community of practice group, to share experience and answer questions, hosting webinars, often in association with National Park Service, RMS, or American Rivers. She has also successfully advocated for her colleagues' participation in conferences and training. Notably, Corita recently engaged National Park Service Risk Management Staff to present information about river safety for NPS staff and develop a river safety toolkit session for the October 2018 RMS Symposium.

Throughout her career, Corita has provided countless opportunities to increase river and watershed awareness among communities. Corita supports river management staff in the field and built the new National Park Service rivers website, which provides information on the wide variety of ways National Park Service works on rivers. She successfully pursued a variety of interagency and public outreach materials. She was responsible for guiding a team to create a Jr. River Ranger educational handout that promotes youth engagement through river-focused activities. Additionally, Corita helped create Wild and Scenic River films and prepare them for public viewing online and film festivals. Corita played a leading role in organizing and facilitating public events including the Washington, DC Environmental Film Festival and the #FindYourWay interagency panel session.

2018 is the 50th anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and Corita has been acting as a liaison to the National Park Foundation advocating for grants for wild and scenic rivers. She effectively represents the National Park Service in partnership and interagency working groups, which directly lead to innovative communications that engage diverse audiences in celebration of rivers, including “It’s your River. Make Your Splash!” tagline that is featured prominently in 50th anniversary outreach materials.

Corita is an outstanding advocate for professional river management. Her extraordinary accomplishments primarily center on improving public river access and stewardship with the creation of the National Water Trails System and support for the 50th Anniversary of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. She succeeds in bringing people together around the common purpose of improving river access and stewardship opportunities through the development of new tools, websites, films, and social media. Corita is the water that brings life to the National Park Service rivers program because wherever she goes, she is able to engage people in meaningful discussions about advancing the needs of rivers and watersheds.