



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028

MISSION:

To support professionals who study, protect and manage North America's rivers.

VISION:

To be the national and international leader in river management education, collaboration and training, whose members, volunteers and partners represent the nation's leaders of thought, agents of change and resources for all things related to the holistic management of rivers and river environments.

Effective river management relies on an understanding of how rivers function and how rivers interact with their surrounding environment. In turn, this understanding flows from expertise in the physical, natural and social sciences; skills practiced by those who welcome the public to rivers and streams that are cared for with honor; opportunities to exchange ideas and best practices.

In its effort to support current and future river professionals, RMS identifies and shares the following through networking, education and training;

- Relevant research findings and best management practices and techniques;
- Responses to opportunities and challenges to rivers and the professions intended to support their use, health and long-term viability;
- Information about and connection to organizations and other resources that can improve the effectiveness of river study, protection, stewardship and management;
- Honor for river management workspaces that encourage, welcome, support and applaud qualified professionals from underserved and previously-overlooked communities; and
- Recognition for river management excellence and those who have made a difference in their fields.

CORE VALUES:

Rivers and river management professions must be accessible and welcoming to people of all backgrounds, orientations and abilities. To support diversity, equity and inclusion in river management, RMS:

- Welcomes participation, contribution and leadership by individuals committed to and willing to increase their knowledge of and experience in river management;
- Offers training, education, open discussions, and resources that contribute to a field of river management accessible to all; and
- Develop pathways to river management careers for people who self-identify with underserved and marginalized groups.
- Encourage and reward bold thought in an era of a generational shift, institutional challenges and the demand to mitigate the effects of climate change.

2023-2027 STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

During this period, RMS seeks to achieve the following:

River Management Core Competency-Based Certificate

The River Training Center staff has begun to align workshops and trainings with the [River Manager Core Competencies](#). By 2023, the RTC seeks to develop a certificate program that is based on the elements of these core competencies developed for federal agency staff, and which can be adjusted to guide position requirements, performance evaluations and cross-walked position comparisons for State and County, water trails and partnership river managers.

Geospatial Resource for Members and the Recreating Public

The [National Rivers Project](#), supported by the [National River Recreation Database](#), has grown through data collection and partnership development to include 2000+ rivers. Yet, the [nationalriversproject.com](#) does not yet serve as a truly nationwide resource due to notable data gaps. By 2027, the National River Recreation Database team seeks to be established as the ‘go-to’ national recreation river resource, as defined by one of the following: rivers in excess of 5,000 reaches, visitorship of 274 visits per day, annualized and 80% membership in RMS among our data partners.

Volunteer-led Chapters

Since 2020, we have become accustomed to teaching or training and learning through virtual media. As we return to in-person meetings, we are re-discovering how face-to-face encounters fuel relationships unmatched by other means of collaboration. While we will continue to utilize the efficiency and value of virtual meetings, in-person events such as RMS Chapter trips, the River Ranger Rendezvous, and trips offered during Symposiums go a long way to deepening ties between event participants and highlighting leadership among peers. During the 2023-2027 period RMS will re-establish the program of hosting one chapter volunteer-led event as well as supporting one initiative or special event (such as the symposium) per year, per chapter.

River Studies and Leadership Certificate and Other Students

Student members of RMS represent the future of our river professionals’ community, and we look to 2023-2027 as a time to grow River Studies and Leadership Certificate (RSLC) participation back to pre-pandemic levels. By 2027, the RSLC program seeks to achieve an active program, supporting at least one certificate graduate each year among 80% of participating institutions.

We also seek to plan at least one inaugural ‘students only’ river trip to both encourage camaraderie between schools and relationships that continue both among RSLC alumni and with RMS members who graduate from other colleges and universities.

WHO WE ARE

BOARD & STAFF

RMS is managed by a national Board of Directors according to the RMS [Constitution and Bylaws](#). The members of the Board are President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Chapter Presidents, At-Large Board Members (limited to three people with specialized expertise) and Ex-Officio Advisors (appointed by the Board for specific expertise).

The Board is responsible for the management of the organization.

The Executive Committee made up of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer and the Chapter President Representative, elected by the Chapter Presidents, is responsible for oversight of the ongoing day-to-day affairs of RMS.

Objectives to support the RMS Board:

- Conduct a Board health survey and identify possible burnout of board members at least once during the term of this strategic plan.
- Provide an annual Board retreat to increase Board effectiveness and improve Board function.

The Executive Director serves as the chief executive officer for RMS, providing leadership under the general direction of the Executive Committee. The Executive Director is the face of RMS and provides leadership in all aspects of the organization including administration, partnerships, fundraising, promotion and communication.

RMS staff include the National Rivers Project Coordinator, River Training Center Coordinator and Communications Coordinator.

Objectives to support and grow RMS Staff:

- Convert contract hires into permanent, full-time employees or hire additional staff/subcontractors to accomplish tasks.
- Hire interns to accomplish work when they are the most effective resource while encouraging the exploration of experiences commemorate with the interns career goals.

PARTNERS

Partners provide our runway for growth. They include strategically aligned organizations whose members and staff are responsible for the management of rivers in non-traditional contexts such as Water Trails and watersheds. Partners include active leaders or influencers in national or regional river and natural resource-based planning organizations whose missions complement RMS's strategy such as the Society of Outdoor Recreation Professionals, National Association of Boating Law Administrators, and Ohio River Basin Alliance.

Partnerships provide opportunities to collaborate on projects which are mutually beneficial. Partners may also offer opportunities to participate in initiatives that complement their mission and for which they do not possess the necessary expertise.

Partnerships can benefit RMS by:

- Increasing exposure and awareness of RMS services that engage, encourage and serve new audiences for whom we offer value;
- Increasing the effectiveness of creating a product or fielding an initiative that supports the pursuit of the RMS mission;
- Developing non-traditional, new resources that support revenue diversification.

MEMBERS

Members provide the air we breathe. Member interests and priorities drive program development and delivery. Members support chapter and national accomplishments by communicating updates, hosting events, contributing mightily to multi-regional events such as the Symposium and represent the vast majority of private donations.

Categories of membership reflect an updated value proposition and reflection of a shift in the nature of those interested in RMS membership.

- Individual/Lifetime – Federal, State, NGO, private consultants, river businesses
- Student
- Organization – agency, NGO
- Associate – Avocational enthusiasts

Membership Goals:

- RMS becomes the nation's go-to organization for authoritative information and expertise regarding river management and river-based expertise, best practices and collaborator for governmental, quasi-governmental and public-serving organizations.
- All levels of RMS membership believes that RMS cares about each individual as current, past or future river professionals, and that RMS listen to suggestions, worries, celebrations and recognizes accomplishments of those who contribute to a future of healthy river management and stewardship.
- RMS will seek to increase our membership +5% each year to approach 800 by 2027.

Membership Objectives:

- The Board and staff are responsible for increasing and diversifying membership, identifying future chapter leaders, chapter officers and national officers and developing membership donorship. Specifically, intentionally seeking 20% representation of underrepresented communities on the national board and chapter officers by 2027 on a path to 50% participation by 2040.
- Conduct an annual member survey to understand the value of benefits and recommend adjustments to leadership
- Develop a measurement method to determine engagement, conversion and retention to learn why people join, renew or leave RMS, to advise RMS on how to build on RMS successes.
- Identify and mentor future leaders of chapters and Board, notably students and early career professionals who are demographically representative of the populations they serve.
- Conduct monthly chapter officer outreach efforts to new, renewing and lapsed members.
- Strengthen external relationships such as RSLC, NRP, WSR Coalition, River Network, NWSI, AO, IWSRCC, etc.
- Conduct outreach to:
 - State Parks and Recreation Leaders
 - Executive Directors and professional staff of water trail organizations
 - Early career professionals, river guides, seasonal and temporary agency employees
 - Others, individuals who care about and support protecting rivers.

MARKETING & OUTREACH

RMS raises awareness about the RMS brand, products, programs and services through media outlets. This includes publishing articles in RMS publications; posting to social media; sharing news releases with regional and national media; conducting activities or partnering with organizations that promote both their work and our participation; reaching out to potential members and partners, and sharing through word-of-mouth on trips and in workshops.

The Communications Coordinator will work with Chapter Vice Presidents or their designees to develop a marketing plan to be implemented within the 5-year period of this plan. This team will evaluate the success of outreach and update goals and objectives as appropriate. The Marketing and Outreach Committee will develop and annually review the strategy to achieve meaningful objectives and actions that are measurable and significant.

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
<p>Increase membership and retention through meaningful engagement by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Share compelling stories of member successes○ Strengthen relationships and raising awareness about RMS on river trips and at events○ Share articles of interest to river managers and encouraging conversation○ Fill all chapter officer positions and encouraging active leadership○ Continue monthly chapter outreach○ Organize an outreach campaign via the membership committee○ Establish mutually beneficial relationships with existing partner networks such as the National Rivers Project, River Studies and Leadership Network, River FIELD Studies Network, Wild and Scenic Coalition, Durable Rivers Protection Coalition, River Management Roundtable attendees, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Increase training and special event attendance by 16% a year.○ Host at least 23 training events a year.○ Develop River Manager Core Competencies

PUBLICATIONS

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
<p><i>RMS Journal</i> (quarterly) - Produce the quarterly on-time and with articles that educate and inspire RMS members.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Recruit co-editor responsible for working with chapter members and other authors to submit on-time material to the editor.○ Seek advertisers when RMS has published the Journal on time for four consecutive issues.

<p>RMS News Digest - RMS members are encouraged to provide interesting and relevant links the RMS News Digest.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Produce biweekly RMS News Digests 100% of the time. ○ Increase visits by 7%
<p>RMS Website – Maintain, improve and update the RMS website.. Increase website visitors and become the go-to portal for river professionals' training, professional development, career opportunities and networking information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Consider more contemporary, intuitive options for members-only website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase the use of the RMS website by 20% a year. ○ Improve ease of access through consistent style, intuitive software, and elimination of jargon.
<p>National Rivers Project & National River Recreation Database – continue to develop; seek sponsorship(s) for long-term funding – benefits members and river users (i.e., customers of sponsor(s)).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop a plan to achieve a level of river representation and traffic that will attract advertising interest. ○ Develop a plan to reach specific river mileage levels and a funding strategy to support staff, NRP-related programs, partnerships and celebrations. ○ Build database to over 3,000 river segments and 20,000 access points by completing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BLM Wild & Scenic River data entry. ▪ BLM rivers data entry. ○ Pursue the development of an App for NRP access on iPhone & Android. ○ Leverage quarterly Featured Rivers spotlight. ○ Continue to foster relationships with data partners, large and small. ○ Obtain at least 1 corporate sponsor with 3-5 year commitment by the end of 2024. ○ Strive toward a NRRD that is a hydrologically representative resource of current and potential recreational rivers across the continent. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Complete Ohio River Basin Project in AL, TN, GA, NC, VA, KY-2022 ○ Complete Ohio River Basin Project in WV, IL, IN, OH, PA, MD, NY-2023 ○ Build database to over 3,000 river segments and 20,000 access points by completing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ BLM Wild & Scenic River data entry. ▪ BLM rivers data entry. ○ Increase number of partners from 61 to 75 ○ Reach NRP 274 visits a day ○ 80% NRP partners become RMS members ○ Increase database visitation 20,000 users and 15,000 individuals a year.
<p>Social Media</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support the RMS brand with compelling stories and helpful information. Increase event attendance and membership through effective engagement. ○ Balance self promotion of events and accomplishments with sharing successes of members and partners. 	<p>Increase use of RMS Social Media by 20% a year</p>
<p>Hydropower Expertise and Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identify and pursue programs and funding that stem the decline of stakeholder expertise. This may include support for the development and sharing of core competencies; adding hydropower summary information to the current resource and host conversations about issues impacting hydropower globally: water 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Create and post an annual list of permits and FERC expiration dates. ○ Develop Hydropower summaries quantifying impacts. ○ Obtain external funding sources to support work in Hydropower.

resource depletion, greenwashing of the hydro industry, balancing of renewable energy resources, river management agency responsibility and political will when counterproductive to prevailing industry interests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Develop Hydropower Manager Core Competencies by 2024○ Collaborate with the US Forest Service and National Park Service to create an interagency FERC relicensing training that includes WSR section 7 analysis by 2024.
Quantify appeal or impact of: <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Better Boater Bathrooms○ River Permit Summaries	

AWARDS

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
Recognizes the accomplishments of RMS members, partners and collaborators who contribute to a future of healthy river management and stewardship.	Awards are presented annually

Membership Services

RIVER TRAINING CENTER

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
<p>Become “the” source for agency WSR training through collaboration with the IWSRC.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Accelerate career development through content, processes, technologies and ongoing interactions and improve access to experts. ○ Host in-person and virtual multi day workshops, webinars, mentorships, resource development and distribution, video channels. ○ Increase the number of instructors involved in the RTC and support instructor cadre through Instructor Development Training opportunities, biannual virtual calls and mentoring opportunities. ○ Develop communities of practice, tools, and resources. ○ Increase Wild & Scenic River trainings offered. ○ Expand training opportunities to include topics relevant to agency priorities as well as align with Core Competencies for River Professionals. ○ Expand the training audience for WSRs to include non-agency individuals and groups. ○ Expand training topics beyond WSR-related training to include restoration, climate change, river access planning, visual resource management, user capacity, field skills, hydropower, and other relevant topics. ○ Promote RTC events via RMS publications, social media, with partners, and in national and regional media. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase training and special event attendance by 16% a year. ○ Host at least 23 training events a year. ○ Develop River Manager Core Competencies by 2024. <p>Wild and Scenic River</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Offer 3-4 multi-day WSR trainings per year. ○ Offer 6 WSR webinars per year. <p>General River</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Offer 2 multi-day non-WSR trainings per year ○ Offer 6 non-WSR webinars per year. ○ Support A-DASH Collaborative to provide training that encourages safe and equitable workplaces for river professionals
<p>Listserv and Listserv Archives become the resource for river research.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve content and data management to track and engage participants and instructors. ○ Design learning content with accessibility in mind to clearly and concisely deliver content to, and for everyone. ○ Develop a business and marketing plan to grow institutional participation, support RSLC Advisors, and strengthen the RSLC alumni network. 	<p>Increase use of Listserv and Archives by 10% a year.</p>

RIVER MANAGEMENT SYMPOSIA

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
Host RMS Symposia events every three years with an eye on co-hosting events to increase attendance and relevance for the river management profession.	<div>2023 Symposium, San Antonio, TX<ul style="list-style-type: none">Establish Advisor participation to engage members and invite various perspectives.Minimum of 150 attendeesProfit of at least \$10,000</div> <div>2025 Symposium<ul style="list-style-type: none">Identify site, develop steering committee and recruit partner organization for 2025 Symposium</div>

RIVER MANAGEMENT ROUNDTABLES

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
Grow RMS capacity to host and increase participation levels in Workplace Culture sessions including facilitated professional development discussions related to tenets of growing diversity among a homogenous workforce, tackling challenges and welcoming an involved space for tomorrow's organizations.	Increase RMS non-white membership profile by 20% by 2027.
Develop tools that will improve the promotion and planning of roundtable events.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Develop panelist timelinesDevelop Theme months, seasons to improve branding and event promotion.Develop annual program plans that respond to members' interests and engage members, potential members, partners, and donors.
Grow our capacity to host and increase participation in "On the River" sessions that encourage dialogue among peers regarding issues common to field-based operational management.	Increase the roundtable membership profile by 5% a year.
<div>Seek Roundtable funding for:</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">program developmentmember engagementcapacity to address relevant workplace issues and discussions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Increase funding by 15% a year.Obtain \$200,000 in additional funding through 2025.

RIVER STUDIES & LEADERSHIP CERTIFICATE

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
<p>Develop a business and marketing plan to grow institutional participation, support RSLC Advisors, and strengthen the RSLC alumni network.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide ongoing guidance and support through biannual virtual calls, mentoring and resources. ○ Continue reaching out to minority schools with programs that support river management objectives to encourage them to join the RSLC program. ○ With marketing content and partnerships with the school communications departments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase the number of instructors involved in the RTC by 25% ○ Retain 100% of RSLC advisors unless the advisors leave the associated school. ○ Increase minority participation in RSLC profile by 20% by 2027.
<p>Secure a sustainable means of funding for student participation in Symposia by applying for foundation grants and other revenue streams to support early career peer initiative that will allow RMS to invest time and other resources in this new community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Obtain contributions earmarked for scholarships through GoFundMe. ○ Obtain a foundation grant to support early career peer initiative that will allow us to invest time and other resources in this new community.
<p>Expand participation to at least one graduate with an RSLC certificate per institution per year and create opportunities for the RSLC graduates to meet mentors or acquire future placements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Engage RSLC students with on-going training to include river-related career through webinars, virtual job shadowing, mock interviews and more ○ Leverage RSLC partnerships to offer internships directly to RSLC students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Track RSLC student success rates in obtaining river-related careers ○ RSLC students have a 75% in obtaining river-related careers ○ Partnerships result in being able to offer all RSLC students internships

SCHOLARSHIPS

Scholarships support members by creating a fund for event attendance and other needs.

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
<p>Provide scholarships to support and encourage the development of current, past or future river professionals.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide at least 10 scholarship opportunities a year by 2027 ○ Provide scholarships to support diversity and inclusivity of river management professionals.

RMS JOB BOARD

The RMS Job Board provides a listing of river management careers for job seekers, and a forum to share job opportunities. The search criteria was updated in 2022 to align with current members’ positions and relevant keywords.

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
Engage employers so they will utilize this resource and post jobs:	Measure and utilize the results of our efforts to inform future engagement initiatives
Engage job seekers so they will benefit from a more robust job board and career services.	Measure outreach performance to understand the impact of our efforts.

CHAPTER PROGRAMS & SERVICES

Chapters host annual river trips, workshops, presentations, and networking opportunities. They also participate in monthly chapter outreach to new, renewing and lapsed members.

Objectives - Are they? If not, move them to Actions	Actions, Metrics
River Ranger Rendezvous	NW and SW chapters host annually
River Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Each chapter would host at least one trip annually.
Chapter officers will be encouraged to utilize website-based communications tools and social media to improve engagement with their members and consider partnership opportunities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Chapters establish an event calendar.Submit “Chapter Update” articles for the <i>RMS Journal</i> four times per year.Identify the upcoming year’s major events and activities by the annual fall board meeting.
One representative from each Chapter is actively involved in membership development.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">80% NRP partners become RMS membersIncrease non-white membership profile by 20% by 2027.Continue monthly chapter outreachEncourage active leadership to fill chapter officer positions.

RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

RMS operates with fees for services, membership dues, symposia and workshop profits, donations, and grants (usually for specific products or as a pass through). Our main sources of uncommitted funds are profits from symposia and workshops. Chapters generally raise funds for their own use through river trips and revenue sharing at national events. Our annual budget has been in the range of \$200,000-\$350,000 during symposium years or less the last several years.

Objectives	Actions, Metrics
<p>Seek opportunities to diversify funding sources:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Grow and sustain initiatives in the areas of diverse workspaces, river access and climate change resilience and preparedness. ○ Create an RMS endowment or estate planning process. ○ Expand training content that is appealing, attracts revenue or grant support outside of the traditional agency audience. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Obtain \$5,000 in sponsorships and/or advertising, as well as long-term funding sources. ○ Average \$20,000 in sponsorships during symposia events.
<p>Develop a fundraising plan to increase donations, sponsorships and scholarships by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Leveraging river trips ○ Leveraging specific initiatives or projects as an opportunity to garner grant solicitations ○ Hosting annual fundraising campaigns ○ Encouraging donations through event registration and membership renewal forms ○ Seeking capacity-building funds to train staff on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gift solicitation ▪ Sponsorship development ▪ Estate planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Obtain contributions earmarked for 10 scholarships a year through GoFundMe or other sources. ○ Obtain at least two annual scholarship grants ○ Complete the development of <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Gift program ▪ Estate planning process.
<p>Diversity, equity & inclusion work and safe workspaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Incorporate exploration of funding opportunities in each program area: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RTC (expand training outside agencies) ▪ NRRD - Support for history or story-based water trails ▪ RSLC - Support for internships for students from underrepresented communities

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">■ RMS - Topics related to culture, tradition, awareness, and communication
River Studies & Leadership Certificate	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Identify and secure funding to provide certificate program sustainability.○ Apply for foundation grants to support early career peer initiative that will allow us to invest time and other resources in this new community.
Capacity	Hire grant-seeking professional(s) to support the growth of staff awareness of grant-seeking opportunities.