



EPN's Pro Bono Capacity-Building Technical Assistance Program

A few specific examples of our work include:

- **Centreville Citizens for Change: Centreville, Illinois:** Centreville, IL, is less than five miles from East St. Louis and located on a Mississippi River floodplain. In 2019, 24/7 Wall St. identified Centreville as the [poorest city in Illinois](#) and one of the poorest cities in the nation. Over 90% of the population is African American. Centreville residents are besieged by persistent flooding and their homes are often permeated with raw sewage when flooding occurs. Two local lawyers, neither with any experience in the area of environmental law, filed suit in the United States District Court Southern District of Illinois to defend the citizens against further environmental, property, and health impacts. Via an introduction by the Anthropocene Alliance, EPN connected the lawyers to one of our volunteers, a recently retired EPA engineer with over 35 years of environmental regulatory experience. This volunteer was not only a senior manager at EPA, but also worked on numerous flooding and sewage issues during his career. He has spoken and corresponded with the lawyers for many months to answer their questions, getting them more comfortable with the Clean Water Act and its power to address this environmental and human health problem this community faces. He has provided the attorneys with the working understanding of how sewer collection, transmission, and treatment should work in contrast to the existing Centreville sewer system so they can explain it to their clients and combat the assertions of the town's efforts where they fall short. He has provided examples of wastewater success stories from around the country to use as examples and of the injunctive relief needed to adequately address Centreville's long standing problems. He continues to provide assistance reviewing the defense's expert reports and suggested lines of questioning in support of their depositions of city officials and their hired consultants.
- **Coosa Riverkeepers, Birmingham, AL:** Coosa Riverkeepers is involved in trying to remedy multiple issues, including PCB contamination in the watershed and sewage pollution from chicken rendering plants. In addition, they are concerned about potential pollution from a proposed graphite mine in the last untouched part of the watershed. Graphite is a critical mineral for electric vehicle batteries and there is a growing demand for zero emissions vehicles. However, graphite mining can be highly polluting, including significant dust emissions and local water contamination. In 2020, Coosa County had a 17.4% poverty rate (compared with the national 2020 average of 14.1%), and a median household income of \$43,571 (compared with the national 2020 average of \$67,521). The local community is struggling with unemployment, environmental contamination—including contamination of fishing and swimming areas, and the unknown impacts of the proposed mine. Via an introduction by the Anthropocene Alliance, EPN connected staff from Coosa Riverkeepers to two recently retired EPA water quality experts, who have been helping them navigate various elements of the Clean Water Act and devising a longer term strategy. EPN also facilitated a call between Coosa Riverkeepers and about 20 EPA alumni, including EPN volunteers with experience in the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and mining. This is a highly complex situation that will play out over many years and decades. EPN is hoping to ensure that the local community has adequate information and support to minimize potential contamination.

- **Freshwater Accountability: Jackson Township, Ohio:** Jackson Township, OH, is a predominantly white community with an over 19% poverty rate, compared to the 2022 national poverty rate of under 14.5%. Via an introduction by the Anthropocene Alliance, EPN connected the community with EPA alumni with expertise in fracking, air monitoring, grants, Superfund, coal ash, and water contamination to provide technical assistance and grant proposal assistance for multiple issues associated with fracking, including the siting of a gas-fired power plant on an abandoned coal mine in the area. EPN volunteers have helped the community connect with and have a productive meeting with EPA Region 5 leadership, validate recent air monitoring results, and apply for an EPA Enhanced Air Quality Monitoring for Communities grant. The community is especially focused on air monitoring as they believe that emissions impacts are increasing for both air toxics and particulate matter from fracking-related operations and new power generation using fracked natural gas. The community is also concerned about the use of the abandoned mine as well as coal ash waste for mine stabilization by the gas-fired power plant that may be contaminating a nearby aquifer and private wells, killing pets, making it unusable for drinking or cleaning, and creating indoor air pollution as multiple hazardous air pollutants outgassed from the water. This is a highly complicated situation where neither state nor federal regulations seem adequate to protecting the health of the community, and EPN volunteers are now exploring connecting the community to pro bono legal assistance while helping them gather more information. EPN also congratulates the community on being awarded an EPA monitoring grant in October.