

TAKE ME THERE

THE RIVER GUARDIAN OF IRAQ



A GREAT BIG STORY

Annual Report

2017

Protecting Iraq's rivers and
water resources and the
communities that depend
upon them.



پاریزهرانی ئاو عیراق
WATERKEEPERS IRAQ
المحافظین علی المیاء العیراق

پاریزەرانی ئاو عیراق

We are Waterkeepers! We work as a voice calling for the protection of the rivers, lakes, marshes and waterways of the Tigris & Euphrates River Basins in Kurdistan and Iraq. We support local communities in the sustainable use of these natural resources.

1. We advocate for the proper planning and management of Iraq's water resources; addressing transboundary water issues; pushing for equitable water policy solutions; working for strong, water-related legislation; and organizing activities for the prevention and removal of dams that damage rivers and river-dependent communities.
2. We monitor water quality contaminants that pollute our waterways and push for citizen involvement in seeking innovative solutions that protect and promote the health of both Iraqi waterways and the human communities that depend upon them. We study and advocate for the protection of aquatic systems, species and habitats.
3. We use a variety of traditional and non-traditional advocacy, education, and outreach tools to raise awareness and educate all levels of our community from school children to scientists to our top government decision-makers.



A message from the Iraq Upper Tigris Waterkeeper

It's been a busy and challenging year for Waterkeepers Iraq and for the country as a whole. The Kurdish and Central governments have been focused on the conflict with Daesh (ISIS) and dealing with an enormous refugee crisis as well as a major economic downturn due to low oil prices and internal conflicts. This has put a tremendous strain on local communities in the watersheds of the Upper Tigris Basin in Iraqi Kurdistan as well as throughout the country.



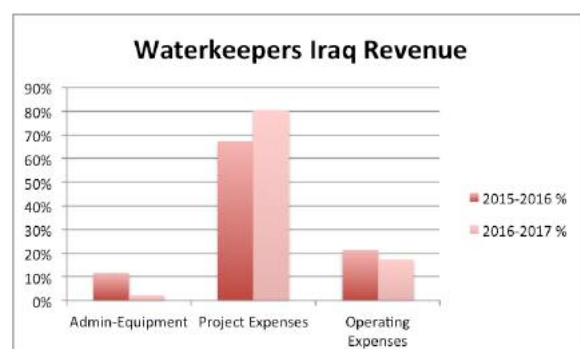
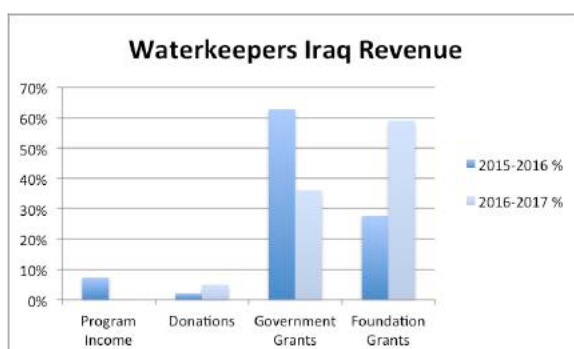
There has been little support for the type of work we do; which entails promoting clean and healthy rivers and supporting the communities that depend upon them. Yet we fear that when the conflicts finally end, the rivers and water quality will be destroyed. What kind of world will we be left with when the refugees can finally go home? How will they live if their environment is destroyed beyond repair? This will only be the seed of future conflicts. And we already see this happening as Turkey and Iran continue to build dams that damage rivers and livelihoods downstream. We see a decline in flows on both the Sirwan and Lesser Zab River because of water management in Iran. Also Turkey is getting closer to completion of the Ilisu Dam next spring. It is already destroying ancient natural and human monuments in the ancient city of Hasenkeyf in preparation for the flooding of the area behind the dam. Kurdistan also has plans to build over a dozen dams of its own, which we worry will cause future negative impacts on the rivers and communities and even more conflicts with the Central Iraq government. Other concerns are the state of the Mosul Dam, which is under repair but remains a risk for catastrophic failure.

This year Waterkeepers Iraq along with many other local and international groups and organizations joined the Save the Tigris & Iraqi Marshlands Campaign. We wanted to add our voice to the call for equitable, regional water management that saves our rivers and restores the Mesopotamian Marshlands of southern Iraq, a biodiversity powerhouse for Iraq. This past year we have also been working on fish conservation in the Halgurd-Sakran Park Area (funded by the **Conservation Leadership Programme**) and developed several short films for our environmental education YouTube Channel (funded by the **Swiss Development Agency**). Today, we hope that under a new project dedicated to Mesopotamian Youth for democratic governance, social cohesion and reconciliation in Iraq, which started in March of 2017 and is funded by the **European Union**, we can mobilize groups and individuals to take some concrete steps towards working for their rights to clean water and healthy rivers.

While Waterkeepers Iraq remains a small group with just one waterkeeper, myself, as the Iraq Upper Tigris Waterkeeper ... under the new Mesopotamian Youth project we'll be actively looking to recruit new waterkeepers. Our partner in Baghdad, Humat Dijleh (literally, Tigris Keeper) is convinced that the idea of a guardian for a local river is gaining ground in the country. WI is also actively seeking individuals and groups that want to join the Working Group on Water Rights. We are also looking for members, supporters and of course, contributors. You can donate to support our efforts by visiting our website at www.waterkeepersiraq. Also check us out on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter.

With deepest appreciation, Nabil Musa

Waterkeepers Iraq Financial Performance



A Year In Review ...

During the 2016-2017, Waterkeepers Iraq completed the "**River Ecosystems Health Project of Iraqi Kurdistan**", which was funded by the Rufford Small Grants Fund. Under this project, we addressed objectives of the Lesser Zab Action Plan we created in 2012 to address two major threats to river ecosystems and biodiversity in Iraq: gravel mining and dams. There were four project outcomes:

1. Community outreach was done at the villages of Delezha (affected by the Delezha Dam) and Goptapa (affected by several major gravel mines) as well as various other community stakeholders in Sulaimani.
2. Two films and factsheets in Kurdish were produced and distributed as part of these outreach efforts. These two films ("Damming our River" & "Gravel Mining Destroys Our Rivers") are both available on the WI Environmental Education YouTube Channel. These represent the only films in the Kurdish language that discuss the significant environmental threat that dams and gravel mines pose to local rivers.
3. We published two case studies of a Dam and Gravel mine sites on our website in English and Kurdish.
4. Finally, a Odonata survey (Dragonflies and Damselflies) was also done on the Lesser Zab and Delezha Rivers.



In addition, WI wrapped up the production of 6 additional films for the **WI Environmental Education YouTube channel**, funded by the Swiss Development Agency. WI has continued to add more films on a variety of environmental topics to the channel, promoting them through social media as well. These films include:

- Education + Action = Desire - A film that documents the work WI has been doing together with the students of the American University of Iraq - Sulaimani and the student group *Environment Keepers*
- Water is the most important resource for life - A plea for young students working to protect water
- Before Human Touch - After Human Touch - A short Public Service Announcement about what a local stream looks like before and after human impacts
- Halgurd - Sakran Park - A film about a new regional park in Kurdistan, northern Iraq
- Where does your sewage go? - A film to answer this important question.
- Gravel Mining Destroys our Rivers - A film that describes some of the common impacts of gravel mines on rivers in Iraqi Kurdistan.



In addition, the **Horse & Bamboo Theatre Group** of the UK produced a short animation inspired by the Waterkeeper in Iraq. This animated cartoon, entitled "Enki", has been produced in English, Kurdish and Spanish (Arabic will be up on our YouTube Channel soon) and is available on the WI YouTube Channel. It depicts the ancient Sumerian God of Water, Enki, and his opinion on how humans have managed the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

Since September of 2016, Waterkeepers Iraq has been working with a team from the Halgurd-Sakran Park on a "**Watershed Assessment for threatened fish in Halgurd-Sakran Park, Iraqi-Kurdistan.**" This project is funded by the Conservation Leadership Programme and includes training and extensive field surveys in the rivers and streams of the Halgurd-Sakran Park in the Erbil Governorate near the town of Choman and the Iranian border. The project focuses on threatened fish species and fish habitat. Most of the survey work took place over the spring and summer of 2017. This project will end in December of 2017.

In 2016, Waterkeepers Iraq also officially joined the **Save the Tigris & Iraqi Marshlands Campaign** and participated with other activists from Iraq and Iraqi Kurdistan in a coordinating meeting in the spring of 2017.

An important new development at Waterkeepers Iraq is the start of a new 3-year project funded by the European Union. The project, which started



in March 2017, is called "**Mesopotamian youth for democratic governance, social cohesion and reconciliation in Iraq**". Waterkeepers Iraq is in charge of the Kurdistan Working Group for Water Rights and the protection of Mesopotamia's rivers. WI will be partnering with the Information Center and Humat Dijleh (literally the Tigris Keeper) in Baghdad, who will work on a additional Water Rights group in Central & Southern Iraq. The activities of the working groups include:

- a) Educational and awareness activities organized for people and youth along Iraqi rivers, including cleaning days and rafting trips to appreciate the natural environment.
- b) Producing a collaborative, monthly environmental newsletter focusing on issues such as water conservation, recycling and reducing pollution; and spread articles on these topics throughout the media.
- c) Assessment of existing environmental laws, problems related to their enforcement, and new laws required to protect rivers (e.g. imposing environmental taxes on polluting industries).
- d) Workshops with NGOs and government/local authority officials to increase their awareness on environmental protection and encourage them to take practical steps in this direction, &
- e) Finding and promoting the recruitment of more Waterkeepers or Waterkeeper affiliate programs by NGOs and communities.

While this project doesn't fully support the Waterkeeper staff, it provides a solid foundation and some much needed space to expand our programs and our network for the next three years.

Other WI Actions & Activities during 2016-2017



Tanjero City Dump Oil/Garbage Spill Tracking - For years, there has been un-regulated dumping of oil waste and other toxic materials in the Sulaimani city dump. Last year it reached a critical mass and started moving towards the Tanjero River, pulling garbage from the city dump with it. Like a slow moving blob, it enveloped the farmland near the river and despite WI's efforts to bring attention to the problem and several, weak efforts by the municipality to stop the flowing ooze, the spill reached the river by the Winter of 2016. This is a problem that was long brewing in Kurdistan as there are no lined sanitary landfills available for municipal and general industrial wastes and few facilities designed to handle oil waste or other toxic industrial

materials. Over the past year, WI has continued to reach out to several waste recycling and clean-up companies and worked to raise awareness in the community and with the government about this on-going problem.

River Clean-ups - WI has worked with Environment Keepers (an organization comprised of students from the American University of Iraq) & the head of the Surdash Area to organize stream and river clean ups along Chamy Rezan (a tributary to the Lesser Zab River) and Dukan Lake. WI also worked with the head of the Surdash area and the Mayor of Dukan to provide garbage bins for picnickers to use at Chamy Rezan and the Surdash region, to reduce the amount of trash thrown on the ground near rivers and streams.



Enki, Sumerian God of Water - Along with the animation film created by the Horse & Bamboo Theatre about the Sumerian God of Water, a 16-foot high street puppet of Enki was also created by a group of artists in the United States to promote clean water. Nabil was not able to travel to participate in the 2017 Annual Waterkeeper Alliance Conference in Park City, Utah this year because of new visa regulations, so Enki (shown here with Robert F. Kennedy Jr, President of the Waterkeeper Board of Directors) attended in his place!

Waterkeepers Iraq Structure



The Board of Directors oversees the functioning of WI and currently consists of 3 members who work on a voluntary basis. The Board members include a board chair, a treasurer and a secretary, all of whom are elected by the Board. Besides overseeing the operational activities of WI, the board appoints the Executive Coordinator (currently Nabil Musa) and assists in WI's fundraising efforts. The Executive Board convenes at least quarterly.

The Advisory Board provides on-going program support and technical advice to the Executive Coordinator and Waterkeepers of WI. The Advisory Board convenes as necessary.

The WI Board of Directors and Advisory Board are committed to increasing WI cultural, social and gender diversity and are considering new applicants to join both the Board of Directors and Advisory Board. Please contact info@waterkeepersiraq.org to find out more or contact one of the following:

Founding Board Member s

Shirwan Ali Hamajan - canshirwan@gmail.com

Renas Hasan - renas.b@botmail.com

Karzan Omer - karzanomer@gmail.com

Advisory Board Members

Anna Bachmann - bachmanna@gmail.com

Virginia Tice - virginia.tice@gmail.com

WI wants to thank its volunteers and staff for their contribution to our work.

Abdullah Salah, Agnes Kullos , Anna Bachmann, Azar Othman, Begard Sherwan, Charlotte Wells, Cris Guajardo, Danyar Abdulla, Dekan Sdiq, Hana Barzinji, Hastyar Mahmood, Hevy Hemn Hevy, Hoshyar Jamal, Karwan Shekhani, Karzan Fazil, Kawan Faraj, Lana Sherzad, Lona Nadhif, Nab Shexany, Nabil Musa, Naz Nishtiman, Nishtiman Arif, Noor Abdul Alstarr, Pommelien de Silva Cosme, Pzho Kamil, Rachel Weishaupt, Ranj Hussen, Rawezh Najmaddin, Raz Hassan, Renas Hassan, Rozhan Faraidun, Rozhgar Muhammad, Safe Muhammad, San Shaduman, Sara Tahir, Shalhar Mohammed, Shamir Salar, Shano Aram, Shirwan Khan, Shkar Awat, and Virginia Tice.

2016-2017 Donors & Sponsors



Partners & Supporters



Past Donors & Partners





2016-2017 By the Numbers

Six films made for the Waterkeepers Iraq
YouTube Environmental Education Channel

Over 13 public presentations made about
Waterkeepers Iraq activities promoting
water resource protection both in Iraq and
the U.S.



Over nine media interviews and articles
about Waterkeepers Iraq's work



Four clean up projects at Chami Rezan &
Lake Dukan and with approximately 500 Kg
of garbage removed from 5 Km of riverbank
and lakeside

Twenty field surveys for threats and
threatened fish habitat in the Halgurd
Sakran Park area.



Over forty volunteers working with
Waterkeepers Iraq

1360 members on our Waterkeepers Iraq-
Kurdistan Facebook Group and Waterkeepers
Iraq-Kurdistan Page initiated in June of 2017
with currently over 300 followers & 59 followers
of the [@WaterkeepersIQ](https://www.instagram.com/WaterkeepersIQ)



Contact Waterkeepers Iraq at:

+9647703594408 - info@waterkeepersiraq.org - www.waterkeepersiraq.org

Mailbox: Iraq Sulaymaniyah Post Office, Waterkeepers Iraq, PO box 1154/63,
Sulaymaniyah, Iraq