



PROJECT  
HEALING  WATERS  
FLY FISHING

*"Fresh air, sunshine and fishing. What a wonderful combination."*

**2014 ANNUAL REPORT**





## Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. 2014 Annual Report

*“Whatever is bothering you disappears! In order to find peace, you have to find a peaceful place, and there’s no more peaceful place than a stream you’re fishing.” -Vermont Veteran*

***Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. (PHWFF) is dedicated to the physical and emotional rehabilitation of disabled active military service personnel and disabled veterans through fly fishing and associated activities including education and outings.***

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing, Inc. (PHWFF) marked a milestone in 2014 by extending our reach to all 50 states with the addition of the Missouri Valley Program in Bismarck, ND. In 2014, the organization served more than 6,300 participants and ended the year with 175 programs in 50 states.

2014 was a strong year financially for PHWFF with revenue exceeding \$2.8 million. Successful fundraising and grant awards were robust sources of revenue growth for PHWFF while the continued support of individual and corporate donors provided steady revenue streams.

### **Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing Organizational Structure**

The PHWFF Board of Trustees establishes the mission and objectives of the organization. The Board’s responsibilities are to set broad policies, provide oversight and ensure sound fiscal policy. Financial management of the organization ensures necessary resources to support the activities of PHWFF.

The national office is located in Waldorf, Maryland where 6 paid staff members, two dedicated volunteers and subject matter consultants oversee the daily administration of PHWFF. Responsibilities include field support services, planning national events, interaction with donors, volunteers, sponsors and oversight agencies.

PHWFF’s 175 programs are grouped into 15 geographic regions, each region led by a Regional Coordinator (RC) with assistance from a Deputy Regional Coordinator (DRC). Each RC provides guidance and oversight for their assigned programs through a Program Lead (PL). Some PHWFF programs also have Assistant PLs. The RCs and PLs plan and conduct the hands-on activities and classes for PHWFF participants; including fly tying, fly casting, rod building, fly fishing skills and safety, as well as fishing outings. The RCs and PLs, who serve in volunteer capacities, are a vital link between headquarters and volunteers providing the regular, ongoing instruction to our participants. Each program under the PHWFF banner is a partnership between PHWFF headquarters and a local fishing club delineated through a signed Memorandum of Agreement. To date, PHWFF programs are operated by 70 local Trout Unlimited (TU) chapters, 60 International Federation of Fly Fishers (IFFF) clubs and 50 independent fly fishing clubs. Strategic alliances with TU and the IFFF continue to be strong with some programs run cooperatively by both TU and IFFF groups.

## 2014 Highlights

### Program Growth and Impact

PHWFF served over 6,300 veterans, an increase of 17% over 2013. We ended the year with 175 programs in 50 states, reflecting an addition of 17 programs over the previous year. New programs were established in Alabama, Florida, Iowa, Massachusetts, Michigan (restarted), Montana, Missouri, New Mexico, North Dakota, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Washington and West Virginia.

2014 was a strong year programmatically speaking. It was a successful year for the National Destination Trips Program and annual Fly Tying and Rod Building Contests. In 2014, 157 PHWFF participants experienced the 'trip of a lifetime' through the National Destination Trips Program.



Trips ranged from 6 participants each to 22 participants each and included locations such as Alaska, Montana, Florida, Colorado, Michigan and trips with our affiliates in the United Kingdom and Canada. PHWFF participants experienced the hospitality of the local communities they visited; they found 'Healing on the Bighorn River' and 'Healing on the Albany' while enjoying great fishing, a restorative, healing connection with nature all the while making memories and friends.

Participants spanned generations and combat conflicts. They enjoyed fishing in foreign waters and learned the art of building their own bamboo rod and tying their own flies.

We hear first-hand from our participants how they overcome obstacles, heartbreak, challenges and adversity through the help of Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing. The following testimonials provide insight into the impact PHWFF is making in the lives of participants, as shared by participants, a volunteer and a support agency:

*"This veteran is here to tell you that Healing Waters is not only a name for this organization, but an experience I will never forget." — West Virginia Participant*

*"I am a retired veteran and have seen first-hand how much you all care about all us vets...It makes me proud as a veteran to know how much we are supported." — Virginia Participant*

*"In the previous eight outings, all male, I had never been asked to buy the ingredients for S'mores and to build a fire....This request was proof to me that healing had begun. For all of our female vets, tears had become smiles, fear had become quiet resolution and nine individuals had become one team." — Texas Program Lead*

*"The partnership that we have with Project Healing Waters has been one of the most beneficial that we have formed. Veterans look forward to their Wednesday with PHWFF more than any other rec program we have and the volunteers are incredible. The success of this partnership shows the community, and Veterans, that we are all in on the same goal, to help Veterans, and we are not in this for greed or ego." — OEF/OIF Combat Veteran, Chief of Staff, Clear Path for Veterans*

Training our volunteers has become a priority, and high level focus has been placed on creating curriculums for both classroom and virtual models. At the 2014 Regional Rendezvous, held in Livingston, Montana, Regional Coordinators and staff embarked upon a work session to put forth ideal skill sets that volunteers should possess, and work plan to enhance our Train the Trainer activities at the Regional and National levels.

### Volunteer Awards and Recognition

The Patriot Award, the most prestigious award given by Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing to supporters, was awarded to Tony Dunay, headquarters Industry Coordinator. Tony, a PHWFF volunteer, works a multitude of hours fulfilling equipment orders for every PHWFF Program in the country. Tamar Franklin, Regional Coordinator, who runs robust programmatic activity for the Mid-Atlantic region also received the Patriot Award. A new award, the Phil Johnson Exceptional Leadership Award, was named for Phil and awarded to him for his tireless service and retirement in 2014.

### Fundraising

Continued growth in fundraising through events was a hallmark this year, both nationally and regionally. More of our regions sought grants and hosted fundraisers. Support from Foundations increased at the national and regional level in 2014 creating an opportunity for more robust programming and activities. Grant funding was received from several veteran services organizations, including Wounded Warrior Project, Disabled American Veterans, USO and the Bob Woodruff Foundation. National events, including the 2-Fly Tournament, Mossy Creek Invitational, Battle at Boxwood, Healing on the Fly (Detroit and New York City) and the Smoky Mountain Grand Slam Challenge, were productive fundraisers.

### PHWFF In News and Media

PHWFF's Founder and President, Ed Nicholson, was named one of Huffington Posts "50 Over 50" which recognized individuals who are making a difference after the age of 50. Josh Williams, a PHWFF participant, was featured in Time Magazine's "Most Inspiring #TimeVet Stories of 2014". Steve Payne, Director of the Battle at Boxwood Tournament, was a finalist in All Sports United's "2014 All-Stars of Giving: Sports" Humanitarian of the Year Award competition.

### Media

PHWFF was featured in numerous media outlets throughout 2014, including the article "Adventure Healing" in *American Way* and featured segments on the Altitude Network, Fox &



Friends and Today.com. The Mental Health Channel series “The Journey Home” produced a powerful short film, “Healing Waters”, which highlighted three PHWFF Participants during the 8th Annual 2-Fly Tournament. The film illustrates how the power of personal relationships, nature and fly fishing has a life-long positive impact on those working to overcome reintegration challenges and heal.

Also of note, “Breaking Through: The Story of Larry Fivecoats”, a movie written and directed by Denver fishing guide-turned-filmmaker Scott Thompson, was a featured film selection for the Fly Fishing Film Tour.

### On-line Media

PHWFF’s on-line media presence continues to expand as noted in a 102% increase in Facebook page likes for the year, as well as a 300% increase in web announcements and blog posts. A Social Media Grant was secured for targeted recruitment of Post-9/11 veterans. In the second quarter, a weekly newsletter launched featuring photos and highlights of PHWFF program activities around the country.

### Personnel

Three longtime Regional Coordinators retired during 2014. Gary Spuhler, from the Rocky Mountain region retired and was replaced by Steve Perry; Mike Chesne, from the South Central region retired and was replaced by David Inbody; and Ray Markiewicz, from the Western New York region retired and was replaced by Skip Hughes. It is through the dedication of volunteers such as these Regional Coordinators that PHWFF has flourished through the years.

Additional changes to Regional Coordinator and Deputy Regional Coordinator positions took place in 2014:

**Heartland:** Jim Gera, DRC

**Mid South:** Curt Bowman, DRC

**Rocky Mountain:** Derrick Dietz, DRC

**South Central:** Bill Adams and Walter McLendon, Co-DRCs

**Virginias:** Bob Crawshaw and Jim O’Brien Co-DRCs

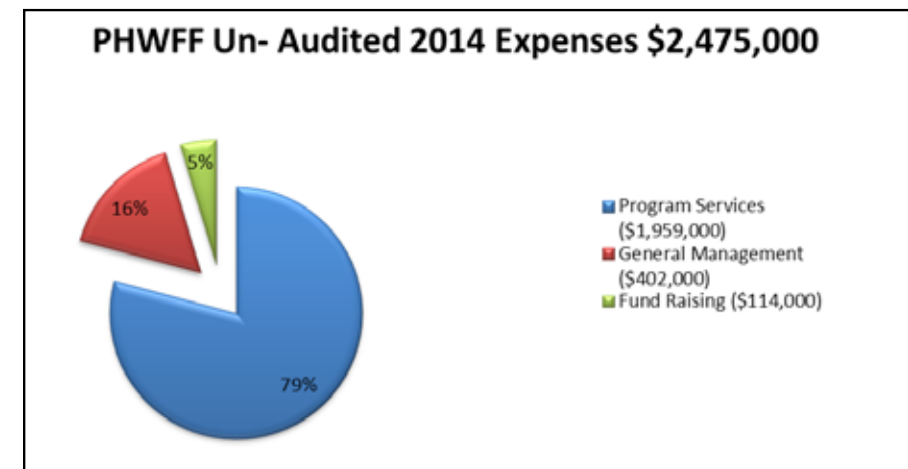
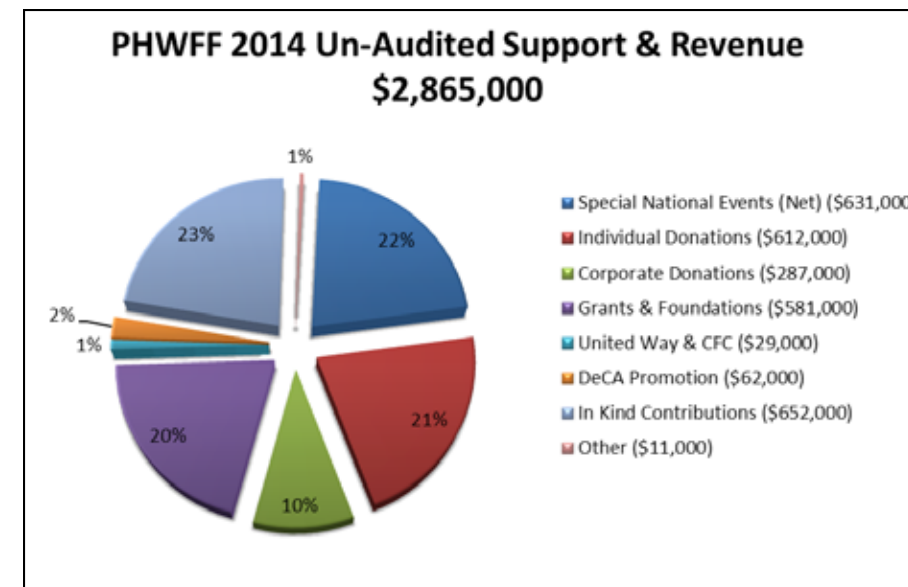
**West Virginia:** Barney Kubisiak, DRC

Through reorganization, Florida was established as a stand-alone region with Dennis O’Brien named DRC.

During the third quarter, PHWFF had the opportunity to add additional support staff at the Headquarters level and welcomed Megan Pierce, Chief Program and Administrative Officer; Leah McConnell, Controller; and Lauren Moore, Accounting Assistant.

### Financials

Revenue increased by 34% in 2014 attributable to a rise in revenue from national events and a significant increase in grants and foundations. Major event fundraisers, individual contributions



and grants and foundations make up the largest streams of revenue. United Way and CFC contributions constituted 1% of PHWFF’s 2014 revenue. Support from grants and foundations doubled in 2014 and provided substantial revenue for programmatic activities.

PHWFF volunteers are very adept at fundraising. Their efforts to raise money at the local level provided additional program revenue resources in 2014. Volunteer dedication and commitment to PHWFF continues to result in increased awareness of our mission and subsequent support in the communities where they operate.

In 2014, PHWFF volunteers (2800+) contributed more than 150,000 volunteer hours. According to Internal Revenue Service calculations, a contribution of approximately \$3.4 million in non-cash value to PHWFF is attributable to the hours dedicated by volunteers. Other non-cash donations, reflecting a wide variety of goods and services was \$652,000, accounting for 23% of the organization’s revenue. These in-kind donations, from fly fishing and fly tying equipment, to donated cabin rentals and professional guide services, have allowed the organization to expand its outreach to more participants and provide them with a wide variety of fishing venues and experiences with minimal cash outlay.

Looking at expenses, fundraising costs were \$114,000, about 5% of expenses, 1 percentage point higher than 2013. Our general management and administration costs were \$402,000, about 16% of expenses, 1 percentage point lower than 2013. These expenses leave our program-to-administrative expense ratio for the year at 79%, the same as in 2013. For 2014, PHWFF overhead expenses for general, administrative and fundraising were 21%.

## The Future

The Board of Trustees, Development Committee, and volunteers are hard at work with the CEO to cultivate new donors, expand events to include a network of tournaments and non-tournament fundraisers across the country, and further develop grant writing initiatives. The potential exists to produce Healing on the Fly (HoF) events in major cities across the country as we move forward. In 2015, HoF events will premier in Dallas, Denver and San Francisco.

The Strategic Plan currently tracks efforts being made to establish 26 new Programs during 2015. Reorganization of programs by state boundaries remains an important initiative for the coming year. Simultaneously, we have an objective to engage more Post-9/11 veterans in existing Programs through social media and activities on college campuses. The CEO is working with the Board of Trustees, volunteers and Headquarters' staff to cultivate a broader base of donors, and is looking especially to explore new realms of giving that technology brings forth. Donation platforms revolving around social media will be of particular focus in the years to come.

While the mission and vision of Project Healing Waters is to serve disabled active duty military personnel and disabled veterans, often there are surprising unintended outcomes to an organization's work. PHWFF inspires more than 7000 people a year to practice conservation. Collaboration is planned with organizations that will fund our efforts to further the goal of a broader population dedicated to a sustainable future.

## Summary

Project Healing Waters Fly Fishing continues to grow and reach new program participants. Healing those who serve remains a tenet of our existence; one on which we focus our fly tying, fly fishing, education and mentoring experiences. Fly fishing often becomes a lifelong endeavor for our participants. As they relocate, they find new programs and some participants transition into leadership roles in PHWFF.

Volunteer training continues to improve in the areas of program management, record keeping and reporting, participant interaction, volunteer selection and evaluation. Opportunities to share best practices in programming and fundraising exist and are being utilized to enhance the growth and development of PHWFF.

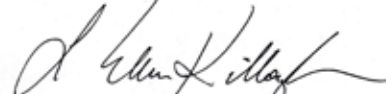
Seeking and obtaining new grants and donor support at the national, regional and local levels will propel us forward in our next decade. Expanding our media presence will help increase awareness of our mission and strengthen our ability to reach new participants and bolster our reputation throughout the veteran services community.



Douglas M. Dear  
Chairman, Board of Directors



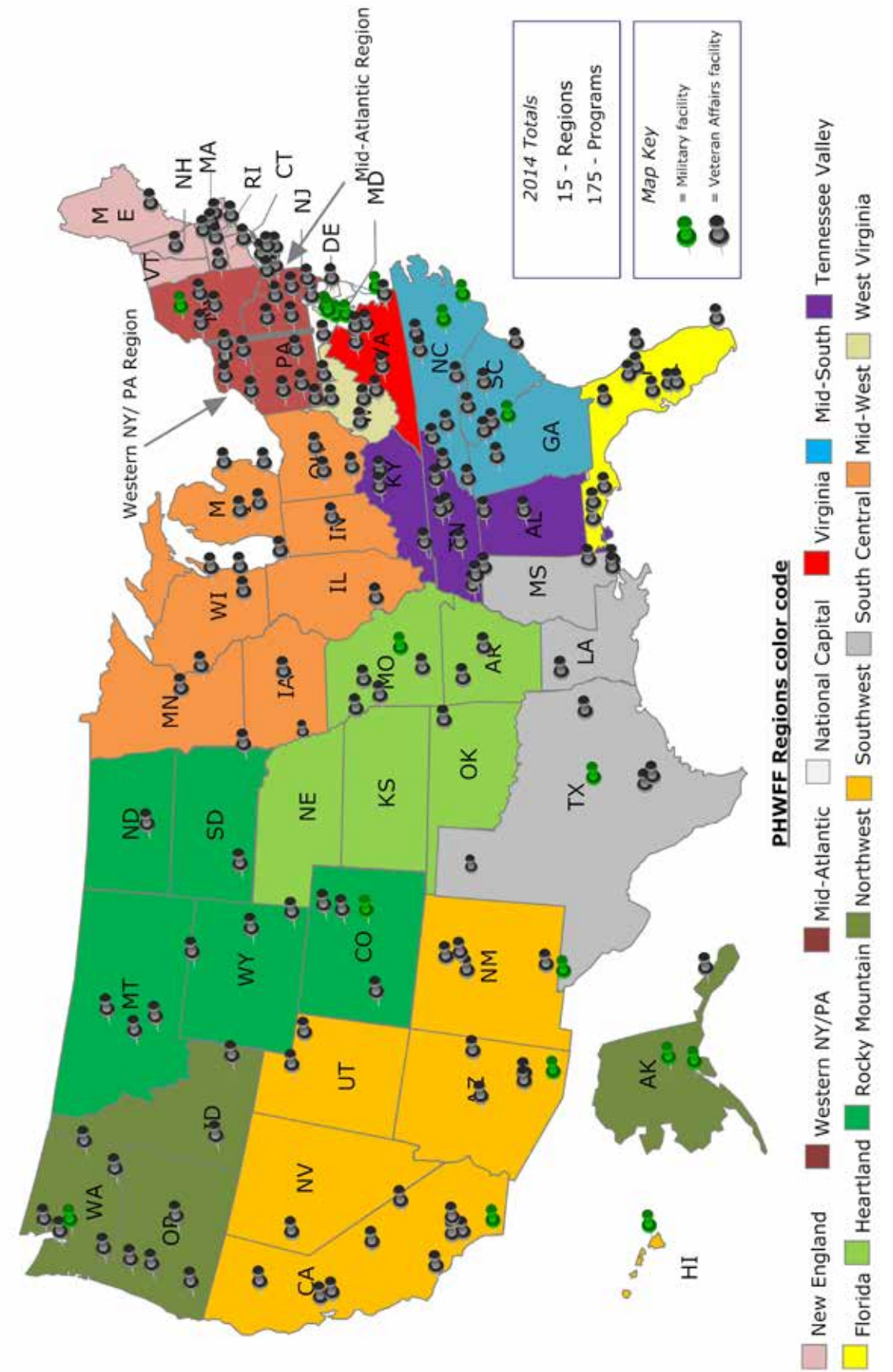
Edwin P. Nicholson  
Founder and President



Ellen Killough  
Chief Executive Officer

PROJECT HEALING WATERS  
FLY FISHING

2014 Regions and Programs map









*"Sometimes I find myself speechless when people ask me what Project Healing Waters has done for me because words are untouchable to what this program has given my life and others. PHWFF saved my life and I'm completely serious about that.*

*That's why I want to do everything I can to give back even though I'm still in recovery myself."*

*— Captain Kimberly Smith USMC*



PO Box 695 • La Plata, MD 20646



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Support our wounded and disabled  
service members and veterans.

**[www.projecthealingwaters.org](http://www.projecthealingwaters.org)**

