



# **Mississippi Earthtones Festival Organizers Announce Recipients Of Confluence Conservation Leadership Awards**

September 20 2021 10:52 AM



ALTON - At the 15th annual Mississippi Earthtones Festival on Saturday, September 18, the Sierra Club Illinois' Three Rivers Project and Alton Main Street announced the recipients of the 2021 Confluence Conservation Leadership Awards. Since 2007, the festival organizers recognize community members who have made significant contributions to environmental conservation in the Riverbend region. This year, in honor of the festival's theme "metamorphosis," all three award recipients are emerging young conservation leaders in the region.

Confluence Conservation Leadership awardees include: Allison Rhanor, Director of the National Great Rivers Museum, Megan Cowan, Field Technician with the Great Rivers Field Station, and Megan Dooling Cosgriff, Resource Conservationist with the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District.



Megan Cowan began working as a field technician with the Illinois Natural History Survey's Great Rivers Field Station (GRFS) in 2007. Her diverse duties have included leading field crews on the Mississippi and Illinois rivers for fisheries and water quality sampling, identifying zooplankton, laboratory analyses, and administrative work. Her native pollinator garden and Monarch Waystation on the GRFS property was recognized by Pride Incorporated. Megan is passionate about nature and conserving our natural spaces, as well as the plants and animals it supports.





Megan Dooling Cosgriff worked as a field biologist with the National Great Rivers Research and Education Center for 13 years before joining the Madison County Soil and Water Conservation District as a Resource Conservationist in 2020. Megan's work addresses large river conservation by managing soil and water resources at the field level through soil erosion prevention, nutrient management, invasive species control, and forest management. Megan remains dedicated to conserving our natural resources for future generations and is grateful to make a career conserving the rivers and watersheds she grew up in.



Allison Rhanor has been doing river outreach for eleven years, beginning as a researcher in a stream ecology lab at SIU Carbondale. For the past eight years, Allison has worked closely with local Riverbend area organizations to increase science literacy and promote watershed stewardship within the community. Her career has focused on developing communication and outreach strategies that facilitate a connection between the public and their natural resources, as well as environmental equity and inclusion. Allison currently serves as the Director of the National Great Rivers Museum and as a Research Affiliate for the University of Illinois' Prairie Research Institute.

“All three award recipients work tirelessly to advocate, educate, and inspire action in the areas of environmental activism, sustainable agriculture, and clean air and water initiatives,” says Virginia Woulfe-Beile, Co-Coordinator of the Three Rivers Project. “We are proud to honor the work of these three young leaders! Their work is critical to the continued protection of our region’s natural spaces.”

#### *About the Sierra Club*

*The Sierra Club is America’s largest and most influential grassroots environmental organization, with more than 3.8 million members and supporters. In addition to*

*protecting every person's right to get outdoors and access the healing power of nature, the Sierra Club works to promote clean energy, safeguard the health of our communities, protect wildlife, and preserve our remaining wild places through grassroots activism, public education, lobbying, and legal action. For more information, visit [www.sierraclub.org](http://www.sierraclub.org).*

### *About Alton Main Street*

*Alton Main Street is a community-based, not-for-profit, volunteer-led organization dedicated to securing the economic vitality and aesthetic quality of the historic downtown district. Since 1994, Alton Main Street has led volunteer efforts to transform Alton's Downtown district into a thriving commercial and residential center through education, historic preservation, and coordination of social, economic, and beautification activities. To learn more, visit [www.DowntownAlton.com](http://www.DowntownAlton.com).*