



2025-2028

WESTPORT RIVER WATERSHED ALLIANCE

# Strategic Plan

Our Mission -  
Working together to protect and preserve  
the Westport River watershed, now and  
for future generations.



Our Vision -  
A healthy watershed  
where people, wildlife and the river thrive.

## Voices from our community

**"My goal everyday is to be in relationship to the River"**

*"My favorite spot is standing on the Route 88 Bridge looking over to Westport Point and on the other side to the River and The Let. Both the history and the natural beauty are captured in one view."*

**"People don't understand what watershed means – there needs to be much more talk about it, education and engagement around that so people get the bigger picture beyond just the River. Maintaining cleanliness and quality of land/water"**

# Introduction

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A strategic plan is a guide that focuses organizational priorities in response to community conditions now, and with the best forecast of what changes are on the horizon. Having an updated plan enables us to think and act strategically over the years ahead.

We started in the Fall of 2023 to update our previous strategic plan. We committed then to reach out to you, our community, to hear what you think about the River, the watershed, and the Westport River Watershed Alliance. Thank you to the many, many individuals – lifelong and seasonal residents, newcomers, farmers, fishers, government officials, colleagues, members, donors and volunteers - who took time to sit with a member of our planning team to share your thoughts about the river, the watershed and its future.

## WRWA Core Strategies

- We will continue to **investigate** the changes in the River and watershed so that data can drive our action. We invite you to join us in our monitoring and other citizen science projects and support other research we commission.
- Let us **inspire** you – through our adult and family programs, our strong school partnerships, and our ongoing communications with you and our community. We know that people will act to protect what they love and understand.
- And, finally, we will continue to **champion** the public policy and data-driven solutions required to achieve our shared vision of a healthy watershed, where people, wildlife and the River all thrive.



## Strategic Planning - What we learned

First and foremost, we learned about your love of this place: your love for the river, its branches and tributaries and the watershed lands, farms and forests encompassing 100 square miles within Westport, Dartmouth, Freetown, and Fall River in Massachusetts and Tiverton and Little Compton in Rhode Island.

We heard about the many issues you cared about – pollution, recreation, habitat, saltmarshes, and the destructive impact of rising seas, warming temperatures and extreme weather impacts of climate change. You asked for more education, information and communication with you and our communities – not just about challenges, but the good news as well.

In addition to hearing from you, our planning team analyzed the existing scientific data about the condition of the watershed. This analysis, through a climate lens, reconfirmed the work which we have been doing.



# Our strategic goals over the next three years:

As a result of our planning and interviews, our board and staff deliberated and prioritized the following four goals:

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- 1. Water Quality:** Improve water quality throughout the watershed.
- 2. Watershed Stewardship:** Inspire residents and visitors to act as stewards for the health of the watershed.
- 3. Climate Resilience:** Promote actionable plans for strengthening watershed adaptation and climate resilience.
- 4. High Performing Organization:** Build the organizational capacity to advance our mission.



## Goal 1 - Water Quality

<b>Goal 1:</b>	<b>Improve water quality throughout the Westport River watershed.</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>	Due to reductions in land based pollution, water quality within the watershed is measurably improved for drinking, fishing, swimming and other recreation.
<b>Measure:</b>	Environmental Protection Agency and state standards for levels of nitrogen and bacteria, as defined by the Westport River TMDLs (total maximum daily load).
<b>Strategy:</b>	Advance solutions to nitrogen and pathogen pollution while building public support for the benefits and urgency of pollution reduction.



## Goal 1 - Water Quality Actions

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### Investigate

- Continue monitoring water quality, reporting levels of pollution, and partnering with the Buzzards Bay Coalition on nutrient sampling.
- Expand river monitoring to track health of salt marshes, eelgrass, fish and shellfish and other measures of water quality.
- Investigate sources of water pollution and offer solutions.

### Inspire

- Interpret and disseminate the water quality data through school programs, River Center activities, and WRWA communications.
- Build broad public understanding of the causes of watershed pollution and support for solutions.

### Champion

- Collaborate with town and environmental partners to advance local, state, and federal recommendations for water quality related issues.
- In partnership with the Westport Land Conservation Trust and others, advance solutions to pollution from septic, agricultural runoff and threats from climate change.

## Goal 2: Watershed Stewardship

<b>Goal 2:</b>	<b>Educate and inspire residents and visitors to act as stewards for the health of the watershed.</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>	Watershed residents are engaged activities which increase their knowledge and participation in projects which improve the health of the watershed.
<b>Measure:</b>	Increased participation in stewardship activities with WRWA through volunteerism, citizen science and advocacy.
<b>Strategy:</b>	Cultivate knowledge and strengthen relationships with and within the watershed.





## Goal 2: Watershed Stewardship Actions

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### Investigate

- Assess community needs and knowledge to inform our program development.

### Inspire

- Connect residents and visitors to the River, providing physical access and events.
- Increase access to the River Center as a hub of programs and activities that advance public knowledge.
- Provide classroom programs and field studies to Westport watershed schools.
- Increase and diversify adult and family learning programs.
- Reveal the River and watershed online utilizing free access to videos, photography and the WRWA weather station.

### Champion

- Promote citizen scientists and stewardship projects.
- Be an informational resource for public awareness of environmental challenges.
- Advocate for best practices for the environment and lead by example.

## Goal 3: Climate Resilience

<b>Goal 3:</b>	<b>Advance actionable plans for strengthening watershed adaptation and climate resilience.</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>	Westport River watershed has increased resilience to the impacts of climate change.
<b>Measure:</b>	Expand the number of watershed-based resilience activities by providing climate related exhibits, lectures and hands on experiences in the River Center and throughout the Watershed Community
<b>Strategy:</b>	Model methods of climate adaptation at WRWA and partner with other organizations to implement effective adaptations.



## Goal 3: Climate Resilience Actions

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### Investigate

- Monitor and participate in climate resiliency planning for the South Coast.
- Understand areas of greatest vulnerability for the watershed and research and implement strategies for adaptation

### Inspire

- Promote broad public understanding of climate impacts and solutions.
- Increase climate resilience focus to school and adult programs and WRWA communications.
- Continue to partner with community organizations to advance climate resilience efforts within the watershed.

### Champion

- Inform, support and advocate for climate resilience and climate adaptation programs and policies at local, state and federal levels and seek funding for water quality improvements and coastal resilience.
- Implement nature-based solutions and climate conscious strategies.
- Partner with local, state and federal agencies to advocate for climate policies and programs.

## Goal 4: High Performing Organization

<b>Goal 4:</b>	<b>Build organizational capacity to advance our mission.</b>
<b>Outcome:</b>	WRWA has the people, resources and infrastructure to achieve our strategic goals.
<b>Measure:</b>	WRWA achievement of our annual and strategic goals.
<b>Strategy:</b>	Raise sufficient funding to accomplish our mission and implement best practices in operations and governance.



## Goal 4: High Performing Organization Actions

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### People

- Build staff and Board capacity to accomplish WRWA's goals.
- Increase opportunities for volunteering and ensure organizational capacity to support volunteers.
- Increase diversity, access and inclusion in all WRWA operations.

### Infrastructure

- Ensure WRWA attracts and retains high quality staff by providing competitive compensation and benefits, technology and other relevant staff support systems.
- Evaluate and improve organizational branding internally and throughout the watershed.
- Increase the data collection and evaluation capacity of WRWA.

### Resources

- Build the team and adopt a multi-year plan for raising the funds necessary to support WRWA's growth and to accomplish these goals.
- Fund and implement a robust communications strategy that builds awareness of our work and makes the case for protecting and preserving the watershed.

# Community Voices

Thank You To All Who Contributed Their Perspectives

Anonymous  
Kate Anderson  
Richard Armstrong  
Tom Aubin  
Sam Barnard  
Pam and Bob Beck  
Kim Beede  
Julia Blatt  
Andrea Bogomolni  
Carol Bonnar  
Nora Brady  
John Bullard  
Kathy Burdon  
Christopher Capone  
Edward Carey  
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Melanie Edwards-Tavares  
Dr. Patrick Ewanchuk  
Wenley Ferguson  
Linda Findlay  
Edward Flynn  
Steve Fors  
Contance Gee  
Evan Gendreau  
Howie Gifford  
Gay Gillespie  
Karen and Mark Green  
Ginny Greenwood  
Adam Guild

Topher Hamblett  
Dan Harrington  
Jim Hartnett  
Gib Hedstrom  
Lee Higgins  
Lisa Kaminski  
Debby King  
Mike Labossiere  
Richard Lafrance  
Jill Law  
Sean Leach  
Sally Ann Ledbetter  
Al Lees  
Chris Leonard  
Everett Mills  
Ward and Lucy Mooney  
Ross Moran  
John and Carol Moriarty  
Hugh Morton  
Melissa Pacheco  
Marilyn Packard-Luther  
Korrin Petersen  
Lani Peterson  
Norma Pineault  
Andy Pollock  
Gina Purtell  
Ray Raposa  
Mark Rasmussen  
Debby Robbins  
Courtney Rocha  
Senator Mike Rodrigues  
Tanja Ryden  
Mark Schmid  
Paul Schmid, III  
Kate and Tom Schmitt  
Dick Soule  
Dana Stewart  
Shauna Teas  
Mark Thompson

Joe Van Sloun  
Carol Vidal  
Kathy Wattles  
Jim Whitin  
Ellie Wickes  
Ben and Hannah Wolbach

## **WRWA Board Members**

R. Michael Sullivan  
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Sean Mullaney  
Harold Cooper  
Wendy Nicholas Dorsey  
Carol Ann Hayes  
Joanne Leary  
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## **WRWA Staff**

Deborah Weaver  
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The WRWA Strategic Plan Task Force included Board Members Nancy Mobley, Strategic Planning Chair, Wendy Nicholas Dorsey, Gigi Priebe, Michael Sullivan, and Don Swift, staff members Kim Botelho, Roberta Carvalho, and Deborah Weaver. The planning process was guided by Gayle L. Gifford of Cause & Effect Inc.

# Westport River Watershed Alliance Strategic Plan 2025 – 2028



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