



# Westport River Watershed Alliance

*Our mission:*

*to restore, protect, celebrate, and sustain the natural  
resources of the Westport River and its watershed*

2017  
Annual Report

*Photo: Mark Goulding*





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# Dear Members and Friends:

*Letter from WRWA President and WRWA Executive Director*

2017 proved both challenging and rewarding: challenging in the sense that the WRWA not only maintained and expanded on programs, projects and initiatives. Our Board and Staff spent considerable time, energy and resources thinking about and working on our future. It was rewarding because with the help of remarkable friends, members, supporters and volunteers, we accomplished and in many cases exceeded all our objectives. 2018 promises to be a “Watershed” year (pun intended) as we plan for and execute transition to new offices and resources at the Head of Westport, and a renewed commitment to sustain and improve the health of the Westport River Watershed as well as the communities it connects.

## **Science**

- Continued ongoing summer water quality monitoring including the partnership with the Buzzards Bay Coalition Baywatchers Program.
- Established a new Science Committee, including Board members and scientists from other organizations.
- Partnered with UMASS Dartmouth on 2 projects in Cockeast Pond:
  - 1) multi-year study for the assessment of the ecological health of the Pond;
  - 2) four year EPA funded study of the impact of oysters on nitrogen reduction.

## Education

- Continued Partnership with Westport Community Schools, pre K—senior high school, in-class lessons and field studies.
- Provided three \$1,000 scholarships to local high school seniors.
- Partnered with Lees Market to support 5<sup>th</sup> grade field study: Dune Grass Restoration.
- Partnered with OnPoint Realty to support Commonwealth Corps Service Members, two members serving as Environmental Educators and Volunteer recruiters.

## Advocacy

- Promoted monthly local meetings with leaders of other area non-profits.
- Worked with Town officials to develop and secure a grant from the Seaport Economic Council to pay for the costs of improving the Head Landing.
- Annual meeting guest speaker George Heufelder spoke on the benefits & designs of de-nitrifying septic systems.
- Printed and widely distributed an article on costs of de-nitrifying septic systems, authored by Dave Cole & Cathy Lanier, long time WRWA members.
- Printed and mailed town-wide an educational flyer for residents on how to prevent stormwater pollution at home.

## Community Engagement

- Oars & Paddles Winter art show at the Dedee Shattuck Gallery—over 45 donated works.
- Annual River Day brought in over 700 people and 40 vendors and exhibitors.
- Sold out Summer Music Concert in partnership with the Narrows Center for the Arts, hosted & sponsored by the Westport Rivers Winery.
- Hosted two Electronic recycle Days in partnership with IndieCycle—8,000lbs of material kept out of local landfills.
- Held three Beach Clean-ups—over 100 volunteers participated.

## River Center

- Worked closely with virtually all Town boards and committees, completed a three-year permitting odyssey.
- Matched a \$100,000 gift, thanks to many generous donors, members and non-members.
- Hired Page Construction, our building partner. Page most recently completed the new Education center for the Whaling Museum.
- Began implementing an exciting education and information resource center for the entire community.

**“Bottom line”:** Healthy finances, both operational and endowment (see charts)



Tom Schmitt  
WRWA President

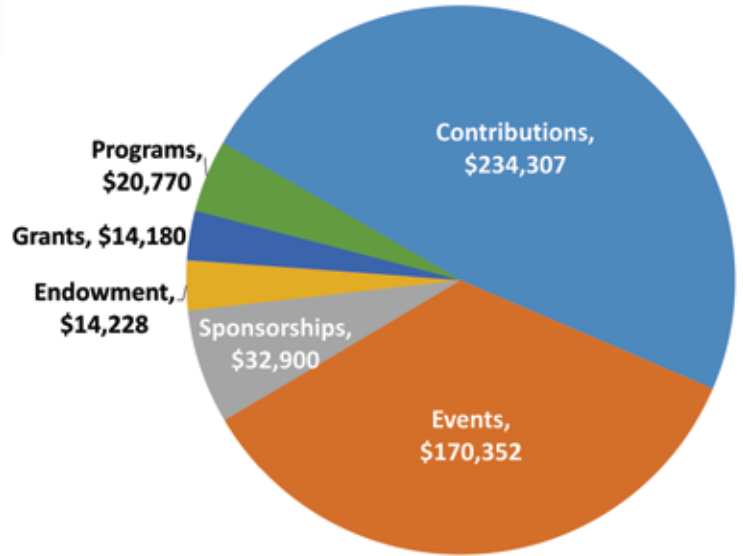


Deborah Weaver  
Executive Director

# Westport River Watershed Alliance 2017 Finances\*

## Sources \$486,737

- Education revenue up
- Three successful events
- Membership, Gala, and Annual Fund exceeded goals
- Endowment use **reduced** from 5% to 2.5%



## Uses \$482,749

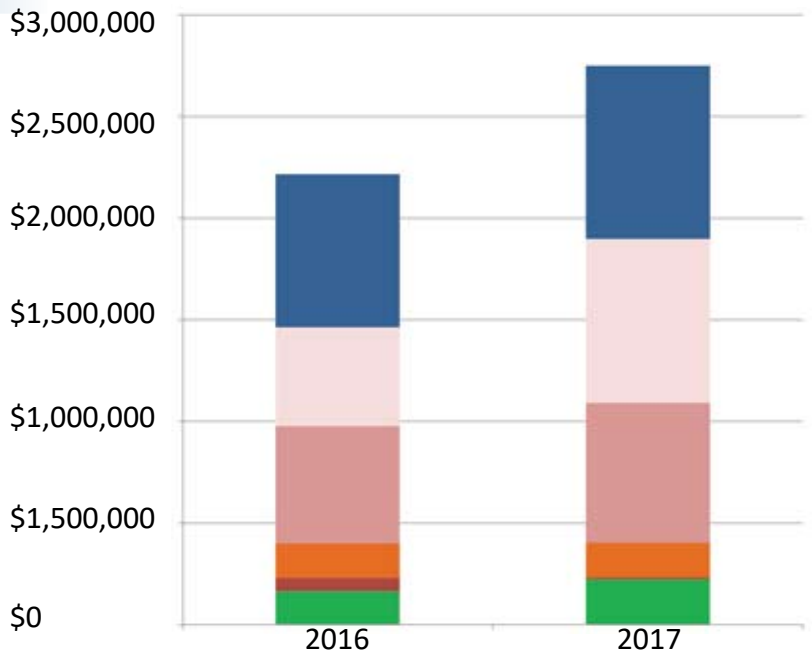
- Personnel costs **down**
- Scholarship awards tripled
- Event costs lowered
- More funds spent for watershed projects



## Assets

- Assets over \$500,000 higher
- Endowment up \$100,000
- Pledged River Center grants and gifts up \$400,000
- River Center fundraising near \$2.0 million

- River Center Pledges & Grants
- River Center Accounts
- Endowment
- Fixed Assets
- Other Current Assets
- Operating Accounts



\*Unaudited



# 2017 Education Programs

Over 2,000 school children participate in WRWA's watershed education programs annually. Our award-winning program enhances the existing school curriculum with hands-on, science lessons and field studies in order to build a sense of local stewardship for our amazing natural surroundings.

During 2017, the WEP Program continued to improve throughout the year by reaching the following goals:

- WRWA was again awarded 2 Commonwealth Corps volunteers to help expand our education programs. Our service members, Angela Hilsman and Victoria Quenessen, have done an excellent job educating local students on a variety of watershed topics.
- WRWA continues to expand and update our curriculum with the latest science topics, including integrating the effects that climate change will have on the living things throughout the watershed.
- The 27<sup>th</sup> year of Adopt-a-Watershed was led by our staff in collaboration with Dan Harrington's Environmental Science class at the Westport High School. Students learn about water testing and biological tests that scientist used to determine the health of the river.
- Fifth graders at Westport Middle School planted the 17,000<sup>th</sup> dune grass seedling as part of the Dune Restoration Project. Students also researched the plants and animals that are adapted to survive in the dune's climate.
- WRWA has continued the successful partnership with the Westport Historical Society to provide a field study for 6<sup>th</sup> grade students at the Head of Westport. The field study teaches students how wetlands help protect the Westport River and the history behind the land use at the Head.
- Again this year, WRWA received funding from BayCoast Bank to host 2 local college interns to assist with our summer education and water quality monitoring programs. Our two interns, Rachel Pacitto and Alexie Rudman, were great with students and had a passion for sharing their environmental knowledge.
- Summer science education programs for children were very successful this year. We held seven weeks of summer programs, reaching over 100 participants ages 3 to 16 throughout the season. We partnered with the Westport Cultural Council to offer 8 student scholarships to attend the summer program.



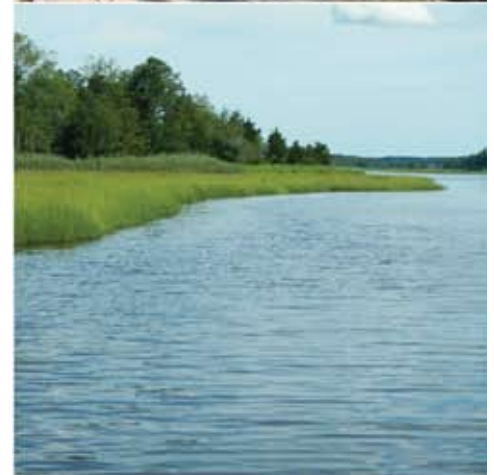
# 2017 Science and Advocacy Programs

WRWA's Water Quality Monitoring Program assesses bacteria and nutrient pollution in the Westport River. Since 1991 WRWA has been regularly measuring pollution levels in the River. WRWA collects water samples from boat and land at up to 20 locations throughout the watershed from June - August. In addition, WRWA and volunteers take part in the Buzzards Bay Coalition's Baywatchers, a volunteer water monitoring project that demonstrates the progressive problem of nitrogen loading in our rivers and bays. WRWA's goal is also to serve as a leader in bringing people together to protect and understand the local environment. The WRWA strives to serve as a hub in sharing information between Town regulatory bodies.

It's great news that during dry weather, bacteria levels are low enough that it's safe for swimming, boating and shellfishing (in approved areas). Bacteria levels are typically elevated during wet weather events. The big news is that we've seen great improvement in the last 15 years. However, we continue to see elevated fecal coliform bacteria levels during storm events, especially in the upper East Branch. In 2017, over 120 samples were collected to analyze salinity, temperature, pH, turbidity and fecal coliform bacteria. Our dedicated volunteers are out testing, rain or shine. These water quality samples are also a means for us to evaluate the effectiveness of remediation projects, such as the raingardens and storm water systems at the Head of Westport.

In 2017, WRWA continued to serve as a resource to the Town of Westport and the state as well. Our yearly testing results are sent to the Commonwealth's Division of Watershed Management-Watershed Planning Program and used to assess the ecological conditions of the River. We also worked closely with Town offices and committees to interpret and evaluate draft reports related to the nitrogen Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) in the River as well as municipal stormwater permit compliance.

This year we experienced unprecedented collaboration as WRWA staff worked with Town Boards effecting positive results such as: an Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination Bylaw, progress on compliance for the Town of Westport's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System permit compliance, and taking part on a subcommittee with the Town of Westport Water Resources Committee on denitrification requirements for onsite wastewater systems. While 2017 did not have much positive news for environmental topics on a national scale, the staff at WRWA continue to work to solve the environmental problems facing the watershed. WRWA often partners with other environmental advocates to prevent measures in the state legislature that if passed, would weaken environmental protections.







# 2017 Annual Giving

In an effort to acknowledge the many ways our contributors support WRWA throughout the year, members are listed according to their total annual giving. Gifts in this total include memberships, Annual Fund contributions, matching gifts, memorial contributions, endowment gifts, Summer Gala contributions (excluding auction purchases) and other donations from January 1 - December 31, 2017. Every effort has been made to ensure that these are accurate and inclusive. If you see an error, please contact the WRWA office.

## **\$15,000—\$30,000**

R. Jeremy & Hannelore Grantham  
Massachusetts Service Alliance  
(Commonwealth Corp.)  
Rupert C. Thompson Fund

## **\$10,000—\$14,999**

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Rick Hunt  
John & Carol Moriarty  
The Van Sloun Foundation

## **\$5,000—\$9,999**

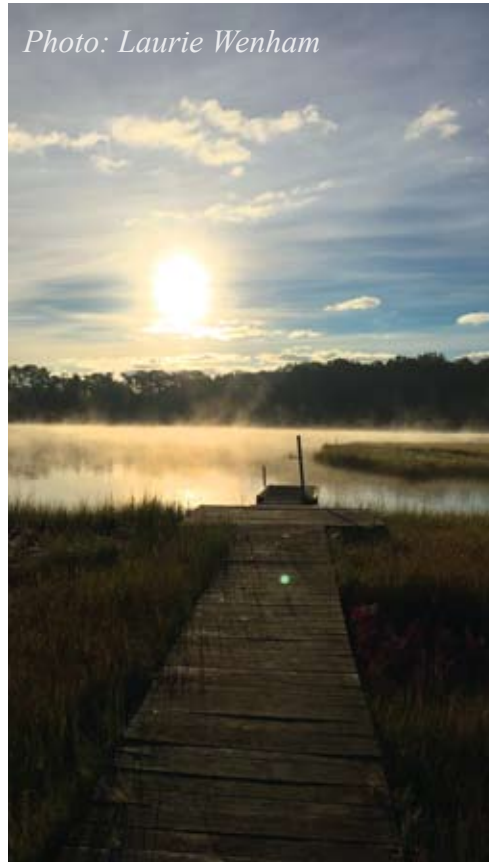
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## **\$2,500—\$4,999**

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## **\$1,000—\$2,499**

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*Photo: Laurie Wenham*

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# Oars and Paddles Art Show

Our fourth annual winter art show had the theme of “Oars and Paddles” in 2017. Hosted at the Dedee Shattuck Gallery from February 25 - March 4, this was our best attended event yet, and the artwork was extraordinary.

We collected forty-five old wooden oars and paddles, and gave them to area artists, whose imaginations transformed them into beautiful works of art, ranging from whimsical to inspirational. We are so pleased that this winter art show has become a popular regional event. The gallery was packed for the reception and silent auction.

In conjunction with the Oars and Paddles art show, we hosted another Brushes and Brews art event, with artists Pam Clarkson and Barbara Healy offering a two-hour workshop, creating a lovely painting of a Westport water scene.

Our thanks to Dedee and Bill Shattuck, for their generous donation of the beautiful and bright gallery space for our show.

Wine and beer were generously provided by Westport Rivers Winery and Buzzards Bay Brewing.

## Artists

Phyllis Dobbyn Adams  
 Ashley Ainsworth  
 Ray Audet  
 Debbie Bianco  
 Dennis Broadbent  
 Liane Byrnes  
 Susan Czernicka  
 Rose Esson-Dawson  
 Maureen Fleming  
 David Formanek  
 Gail Fredell  
 Jan Freddo  
 Rita Gardent  
 Gay Gillies  
 Christina Glaser

Annie Griswold  
 Sandra Hall  
 Shirley Hardison  
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 JC Cummings  
 Trintje Jansen  
 Caitlyn Kenney  
 Elizabeth King  
 Fred Kracke  
 Perrin Gardent  
 Nick Jansen  
 Susan Medyn  
 Jim & Nancy Whitin  
 Jennifer Rashleigh  
 Barbara Slaight  
 Mac Stanton  
 Lucy Tabit  
 Abigail Test  
 Michael Walden  
 Faith Wilbur  
 Corey Windham  
 Sarah Tappen Windham  
 Helen Woodhouse  
 Brenda Wrigley-Scott  
 Carolyn Waters

# River Day



WRWA's 2017 River Day Festival took place Saturday, June 10<sup>th</sup> at the Town Landing at the Head of Westport on one of the first beautiful days of Spring. This free, family-friendly festival in celebration of the Westport River drew over 700 community members and visitors. The poster contest winner was third grader Anna Herliczek.

Over 40 exhibitors and vendors presented at the event including area nonprofits, local farmers and environmental companies.

#### Activities included

- fish T-shirt printing
- wee boat building
- stilt building
- face painting
- historic tour of the Head of Westport
- live Raptor show
- poster winner awards
- native American demonstration with Donna Mitchell
- live music by The Gnomes

## 2017 River Day Sponsors

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# Summer Concert at the Westport Rivers Vineyard



WRWA held its second annual sold-out summer concert with Dar Williams and Chris Smither on July 15, 2017 at the Westport Rivers Vineyard & Winery.

Co-presented by the Narrows Center for the Arts in Fall River, over 650 people attended from all over New England.

A Stand-Up Paddle Board was raffled at the event—Owen Costa, age 7, was thrilled to draw the lucky winning ticket for Kathleen McGinn!

Following the concert, the Winery hosted a Champagne reception for members and sponsors to meet the performers in the Cask room.

## Summer Concert Sponsors:

### Westport Rivers Vineyard & Winery



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# 2017 Summer Gala



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Special thanks to Dick & Betty Fitton for hosting the event overlooking the West Branch of the Westport River. Gala invitation design & illustration by UMASS Dartmouth student Kira Hallberg.



# 2017 River Center—Capital Campaign Supporters



*“We must sail sometimes with the wind and sometimes against it. But we must sail and not drift, nor lie at anchor.”—Mark Twain*

The earlier part of 2017 saw gentle winds moving us forward. In January the Facilities Committee, under the leadership of project manager Charley Appleton, hired Page Building Construction Company as the River Center contractor. The team from Page worked closely with the architects to finalize the design and engineering plans. Throughout the year, numerous meetings with Town boards culminated with securing all the necessary permits.

The wind certainly filled our sails as we ended 2017 with a successful fundraising campaign. In the fall, a member made a generous \$100,000 gift that had to be matched by mid-December. With over 40 contributors we exceeded the match, bringing us ever closer to our \$2M goal!

We begin the New Year with a new well, a building permit, and the promise of starting construction in March. We are certainly not “drifting nor lying at anchor.”

## Contributions 2014-2017

**Gifts over \$10,000 will be acknowledged on the River Center Donor Wall**

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*Photo: Greg Stone*

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*Photo: Barry French*

The Westport River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) is a nonprofit environmental education and advocacy group, formed in 1976 to protect and conserve the natural resources of the Westport River and its 100-square mile watershed located at the entrance to Buzzards Bay in southeastern Massachusetts. The Westport River watershed includes the communities of Westport, Dartmouth, Fall River and Freetown in Massachusetts, and Tiverton and Little Compton in Rhode Island. WRWA has established itself as a leader in the environmental grassroots movement of New England, and is considered a role model for other similar organizations.

WRWA's primary purpose and goals are:

1. to promote the environmental integrity of the Westport River watershed and its environs on Buzzards Bay and Rhode Island Sound;
2. to advocate for the wise use and preservation of natural resources for the aesthetic, recreational, and economic benefit of watershed citizens; and
3. to inform the public of the intra-relationship among water, soils, plants, and animals, especially humans.



## Westport River Watershed Alliance

1151 Main Road  
P.O. Box 3427  
Westport, MA. 02790-0703

508-636-3016  
508-636-8884 (FAX)

<http://westportwatershed.org/>



*Photo: Jack Wilkens*