



Westport River Watershed Alliance

2022 Annual Report

Our mission:
Working together
to protect and
preserve the
Westport River
Watershed now
and for future
generations.

Photo by: Brian Mullaney



The Westport River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) 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.

A Voice for the River

Since organizing in the mid-1970s we have listened to the River and its waterways: the sounds of water, wind, and the creatures with which we share this magical corner of the world. Members often tell us they feel privileged to live in this special place, one that encourages reflection, relaxation and renewal. Our sole objective is to protect the environment we all share, and to assure that our children and theirs will be inspired to preserve this treasure as well.

How do we do we do that?

- **Through observation.** An active volunteer network led by our professional staff gathers data on and performs frequent tests of water quality throughout the entire 100 square mile watershed.
- **Through collaboration.** Together with Town of Westport and regional environmental groups and officials, we observe, assess and advise on trends that indicate potential threat(s) to the River's fragile ecosystems.
- **Through advocacy.** By nurturing relationships with local, regional and state officials we seek to influence decision making, development of regulations and legislative initiatives that will sustain River water quality and where needed, to improve it.

WRWA's Guiding Principles

- A healthy watershed with its natural beauty is an asset for the entire community.
- Recreational and commercial use of the River is part of our heritage and culture.
- Human activity has a major impact on River health.
- A clean River and clean drinking water are linked.
- Science guides our actions and advocacy for the watershed.
- Building collaborative relationships with government and community groups helps to achieve shared goals.
- Educating our youth ensures the continuation of responsible stewardship.

Westport River Watershed Alliance 2022 Board of Directors

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Deborah Weaver, *Executive Director*

Roberta Carvalho, *Science Director*

Steve Connors, *Community Engagement Manager*

Shelli Costa, *Education Director*

Jennifer Lynch, *Development and Finance Administrator*

Michaelah Vasconcellos, *Education Educator*



Photo by: Brian Mullaney

Dear Members and Friends:

The Westport River Watershed Alliance had a banner year, despite another year of dealing with the ups and downs of COVID. Our staff continued to demonstrate their creativity and resilience through ever-changing circumstances. Our finances are in excellent shape—thanks to the support and generosity of our loyal membership and careful management by our leadership.

Our innovative education program continued in the Westport schools, as things have gotten back to normal, post-pandemic. Our children's summer programs were full, and we provided eight full scholarships to children in grades 1-4. We are very proud to have expanded our education staff by adding a new full-time position, now filled by a former Westport School student Michaelah Vasconcellos, who was influenced by our environmental lessons in school. The River Center was regularly open to the public, and we held several speaker series and educational workshops on relevant topics— both remotely and in person.

Our science team continued to work on important research projects, including looking for solutions to two major challenges facing our River: salt marsh degradation and excess nitrogen. We worked closely with the Town, knowledgeable volunteers, and other nonprofit and research organizations to study these serious problems.

We have begun 2023 in a strong position, with adequate resources to continue our commitment to serve the Westport River Watershed community in the areas of education, research, and advocacy.

Thank you to all our members and supporters. Together we can make a difference in the water quality of the beautiful Westport River.



R. Michael Sullivan
WRWA President



Deborah Weaver
Executive Director



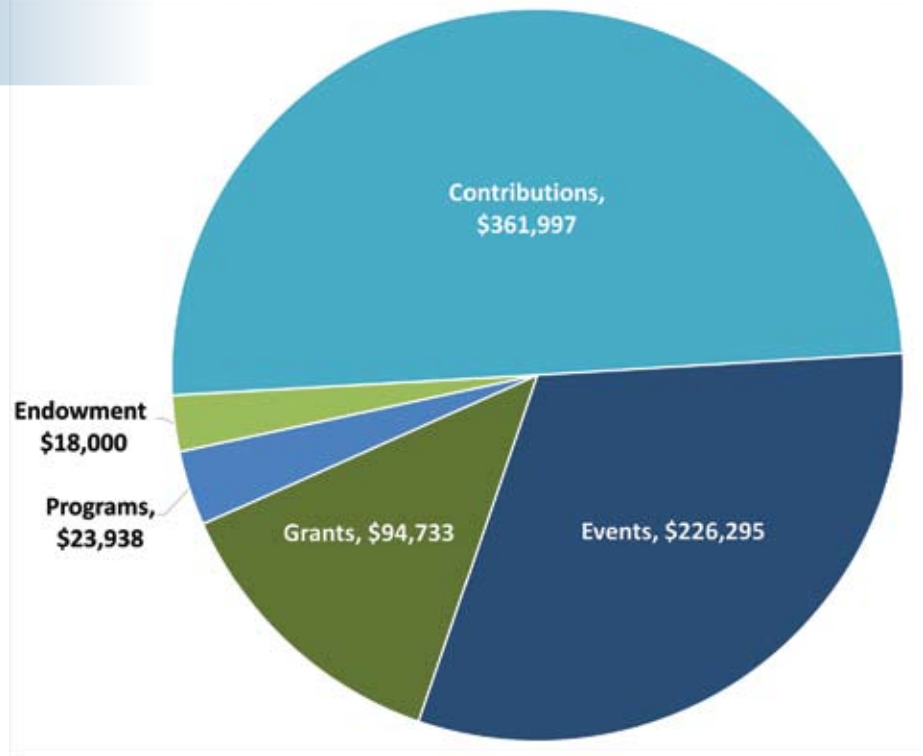
Westport River Watershed Alliance

2022 Finances*

2022 Operations showed a Net Income of \$196,206. Operating Income was about \$20,000 above 2021 Operating Income. Events Income increased by \$71,000 thanks in part to a very successful Summer Concert and (thanks to our many volunteers) a very successful Gala and Silent Auction. 2022 Operating Expenses were about \$8,000 less than 2021 Operating Expenses. All staff continued Full Time and we added a new position of Environmental Educator in charge of River Center Programming. Spending increased for Education in the Westport Public Schools, and for Science and Advocacy. The draw from the Endowment to Operations continues to be the minimum (1.4%) that WRWA is required to make use of in the given calendar year.

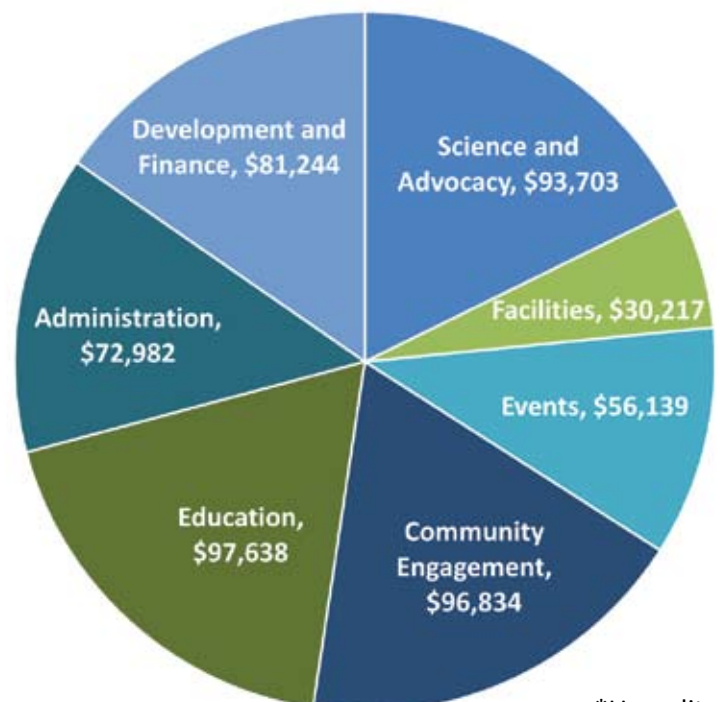
Revenue \$ 724,963

Contributions	\$361,997
Endowment to Operations	\$18,000
Events	\$226,295
Grants	\$94,733
Programs	\$23,938
Total	\$724,963



Expenses \$ 528,757

Administration	\$72,982
Community Engagement	\$96,834
Development and Finance	\$81,244
Education	\$97,638
Events	\$56,139
Facilities	\$30,217
Science and Advocacy	\$93,703
Total	\$528,757



*Unaudited

2022 Education Programs

Shelli Costa, Education Director and Michaelah Vasconcellos, Environmental Educator

Over 2,000 school children in grades Pre-K-High School participated in WRWA's Watershed Education Program (WEP). Our award-winning program enhances the existing school curriculum with hands-on, science lessons and field studies. WEP's main goal is to build a sense of local stewardship for our natural surroundings.

2022 was a remarkable year for the WEP Program, which continued to improve throughout the year by completing the following goals:

- WRWA hosted one full-time TerraCorps Member to build our education and outreach programs. Our Service Member, Michaelah Vasconcellos, has created new outreach programs and added new lessons to our existing WEP Curriculum.
- WRWA has expanded the education staff by hiring Michaelah Vasconcellos as a full-time Environmental Educator. She has brought new energy and ideas to our in class programs, field studies, as well as family programming at the River Center.
- WRWA continues to build our program offerings with the first floor of the River Center outfitted with new tools to engage visitors. We hosted several scout troops, home school groups, and open house events in 2022.
- The education staff continued to support an organic school garden with the Westport Kindergarten students. Students were led on a field study to a local site, Westport Land Conservation Trust's Mill Pond Site as part of their science learning.
- Our youngest learners in PreK had monthly visits in 2021 to expand their awareness of the creatures that live in the Westport River through lessons, books, crafts and hands-on activities.
- Fifth graders at Westport Middle School planted more dune grass seedlings as part of the Dune Restoration Project. Students also researched the plants and animals that have adapted to survive in the dunes climate.
- WRWA has also continued to educate students about the importance of local wetlands like vernal pools with in class lessons and the annual vernal pool field study held at the Westport Elementary School.
- WRWA continues to receive support from BayCoast Bank to hire 2 local college interns to assist with our summer education and water quality monitoring programs. This funding supported two interns, Hannah Chamberlain and Kiara Cruz-Gonzalez. They were a great addition to our education team for the season.
- Summer science education programs were almost completely booked for the 2022 season. We offered seven weeks of summer programs, reaching over 100 participants ages 3 to 16 throughout the season. WRWA continued to build the Gay Gillespie Summer Scholarship Fund through generous donations. Seven children received full scholarships in 2022.



2022 Science and Advocacy

Roberta Carvalho, Science Director

Water Quality Monitoring

In 2022 the region experienced drought conditions in June-August there was a total of 6 inches of rain recorded, much lower than typical amounts. We monitor a type of bacteria used for swimming and shellfishing standards, which have specific concentrations of bacteria that are considered safe for humans, reported in cfu or colony forming units. This summer areas in the upper East Branch failed standards for recreational contact many times due to the droppings of a population of non-migrating Canada Geese. WRWA also participates in the Buzzard's Bay Coalition's Baywatchers project, which continues to monitor nitrogen levels in the River. Nitrogen pollution is a major threat to the river's overall health. We continually improve our ability to share our data with government agencies, planners, and other environmental groups.

WRWA Water Quality Results 2022								
Test Dates	Head of Westport	Doctors Point	Hix Bridge	Cadman's Neck	Westport Point	West Branch near 448 River Rd	Charlton Wharf (mouth of River)	Rainfall in last 48 hours (inches)
1-Jun	64	26	8	10	2	2	2	0.00
8-Jun	2040	14	8	2	20	4	6	0.20
15-Jun	88	28	44	2	2	2	2	0.60
22-Jun	44	10	8	4	2	2	2	0.00
29-Jun	200	38	16	4	2	2	2	1.09
6-Jul	122	10	4	4	4	2	2	0.00
13-Jul	220	44	4	12	4	4	6	0.00
20-Jul	180	14	10	2	4	2	2	0.04
27-Jul	190	16	10	6	2	2	2	0.00
3-Aug	390	16	6	4	1	1	1	0.16
10-Aug	4300	440	32	26	4	2	2	0.65
17-Aug	830	-	10	2	2	2	2	0.00
24-Aug	330	-	10	4	4	16	4	0.04
31-Aug	10000	18	-	486	28	16	10	1.12

Numbers indicate colonies of fecal coliform bacteria per 100 mL of water
 Numbers in **RED** exceed Massachusetts threshold for swimming (200+ per 100 mL)
 Massachusetts threshold for shellfish is 14+ per 100 mL and for drinking water is 0 per 100 mL

Salt Marsh Resilience Studies

- Continued to work with researchers from Providence College to survey salt marsh conditions in the River.
- 10 tide measurement stations deployed this summer in both branches of the River.
- Months of data collected to measure tide height and temperature.
- Tide information to be combined with marsh elevation measurements to determine marsh inundation rates.

Hix Bridge Rubble Removal

- WRWA Volunteers SCUBA dive to examine natural oyster population in scour holes
- Meetings with Army Corps of Engineers and Town officials to assess project status and viability

Collaboration with the Decision Makers

- Worked with Town committees and consultants to insure scientifically valid approaches to environmental issues affecting the watershed.
- **Climate Resilience Committee**—WRWA volunteers worked with the Town to understand how the River is changing. The climate is changing, and our land uses in the watershed must be less impactful to help the River and our community at large regain its health.
- Comments to DEP about proposed changes to Title 5 —We agree with MassDEP's goals for nitrogen reduction, yet there are a number of concerns about details of their proposal. WRWA is working with the Department and the Town of Westport to determine appropriate and acceptable approaches for meeting water quality goals for the River.



2022 Community Engagement Programs

Steve Connors, Community Engagement Manager

We emerged from hibernation in 2022, with the Covid pandemic having less of a dampening effect on our community engagement activities than the past two years. WRWA resumed many of our traditional community engagement events and programs. At the same time, we continued making interesting and informative videos with our education staff and Terracorps service member, and presented some very popular Zoom lectures in the winter, including *Climate Emergency: What's at stake, and what we can do about it*, with Dr. Heather Goldstone of the Woodwell Climate Research Center, *Sustainability in Westport* with Jamie Jacquart from UMASS Dartmouth, *Invasive Asian Shore Crabs* with Renee Montanaro from UMASS, *More than just the buzz: Using ecological data to restore native pollination systems (and why it matters)* with Dr. Robert Gegeer from UMASS.

Clean-ups

Our springtime activities included getting back to our twice-annual beach clean-ups at Cherry & Webb Conservation Area, with over fifty volunteers filling bags with trash. We also continued our partnership with C.O.W. – Clean Our Westport—for town-wide clean ups of roadsides, and scores of volunteers collected hundreds of pounds of trash from all around Westport. WRWA acts as fiscal agent for C.O.W., accepting donations on their behalf and hosting their meetings.

Electronics Recycling

And the electronic waste keeps on coming! We filled two large box trucks with old computers and electronic equipment, dropped off by residents of Westport and nearby towns. This event has proved to be a very popular and valuable twice-annual event, conducted along with IndieCycle, a nonprofit organization dedicated to recycling all the materials from electronic devices. Over the years, we have helped recycle close to 40,000 pounds of recyclable electronic waste.

The Wonders of the Watershed

In the month of June, we again featured a whole month of outdoor activities. We called it Experience WOW, the Wonders of the Watershed, and members and friends came out to enjoy bird watching on Gooseberry with Paul Champlin, hiking to the headwaters with Everett Castro from Green Futures, a dune hike with WRWA, and oyster tasting at Westport Sea Farms.

Family Programs at the River Center

We opened up our well-equipped education center for Saturday programs many times in 2022, with our environmental educator Michaelah presenting interesting science-based activities and presentations for kids and adults alike. It was a pleasure to share this wonderful public engagement asset with the community, and we expect that the events will continue to grow in popularity.





2022 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, 2022. 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 and above

Harvey Family Fund at The Rhode
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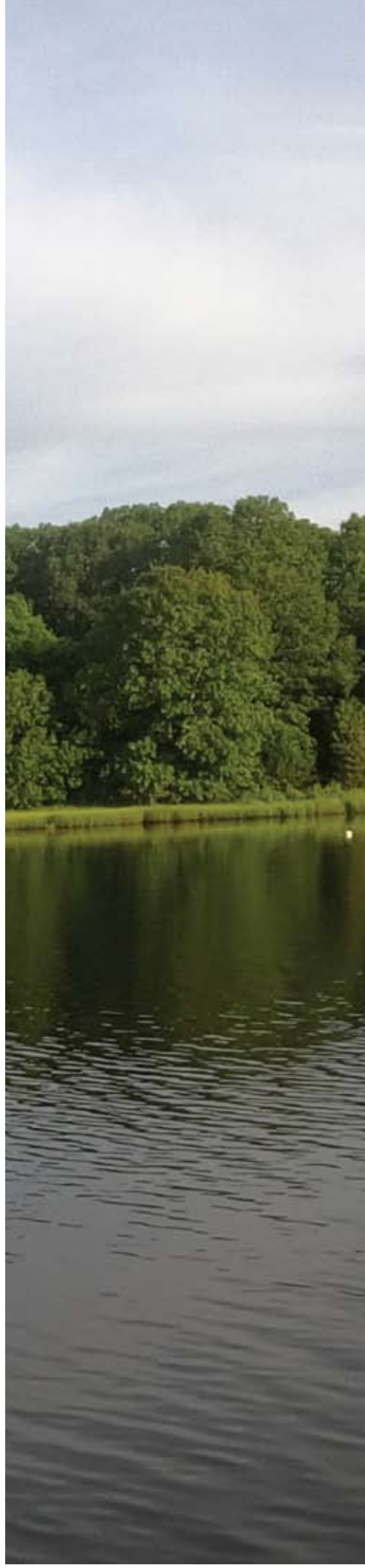
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Mark and Ann Young



Photo by: Rich Couse

Winter Art Show 2022

We were thankful to utilize the beautiful Dedee Shattuck Gallery for our 9th Annual Winter art show in late February. The theme for the art works was Above and Below, and this concept inspired some truly creative pieces.

Forty artists participated, delivering to us a remarkable variety of artwork inspired by our coastal environment. We estimate that over four hundred people visited the show, and with the help of online bidding through 32 Auctions.com, we brought in more income than in all previous years.

Artists

Ray Audet
Carol Bliven
Jennifer Borden
Marianne Boucher
Alex Buchanan
Cheryle Cantin
Janet Carney
Pam Clarkson
Merri Cyr
Susan Czernicka
Phyllis Dobbyn Adams
Midori Evans

Rita Gardent
Gay Gillies
Heidi Hallemeier
Sandra Hall
Barbara Healy
Anna Hitchcock
Emily Hoeffel
Trintje Jansen
Paula Kochanek
Jill Law
Betsey MacDonald
Dick Manchester

Alexandria Mauck
Robin Nunes
Nathan & Rebecca Orié
Jennifer Rashleigh
Dabba Stearns
Doug Stearns III
Caroline Unruh
Elizabeth Wade
Michael Walden
Nancy Whitin
Faith Wilbur
Brenda Wrigley Scott



Summer Concert 2022

WRWA's Summer Concert at the Westport Rivers Vineyard took place on a lovely July evening, with a cheerful sellout crowd thoroughly enjoying our featured artist Livingston Taylor. Livingston strolled among his fans on his way to the stage and exchanged hugs and handshakes. Always the entertainer and storyteller, he pleased his audience with his banter and musical prowess.

This was WRWA's eighth annual summer concert, another great success for our organization. We are grateful to Westport Rivers and the Russell family for their generosity in hosting the event, and to our generous business sponsors DSK Architects and Planners, Bayside Restaurant, Lees Oil Service and Milbury and Company Real Estate. Our raffle items were generously provided by our good neighbor Osprey Sea & Surf Adventures.





2022 Summer Gala

Over 520 people attended the Summer Gala, hosted by Richard & Cece Armstrong at Quansett Farm, off Horseneck Road, with magnificent views of Allens Pond and Buzzards Bay. The catering by the Westporter was sublime, the music from the Joe Mulholland Trio brought a sense of peace to the evening, and the Silent Auction was the best ever presented! We thank the hosts for welcoming us, the Benefactors, Patrons and Sponsors who make it a financial success, and the many volunteers who plan and staff the event in all areas.

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Photo: Rich Castenson

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Erin Lonas

Sayre Weaver

High School Merit Scholarships

The Westport River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) has been awarding a merit scholarship for graduating seniors living in the watershed for over 23 years. The merit award offers an opportunity for WRWA to honor students who have demonstrated their concern to protect our watershed environment.

Through generous donations over the last few years, WRWA has been able to award two scholarships to local students. WRWA is fortunate to have additional funds this year to give out a \$1,500 first place award and a \$500 second place award for two deserving applicants.

This year's merit award winners are Madison Benson for the first place award and Evan Garcia for the second place award. Madison Benson is senior from Westport High School and plans to attend Salve Regina University in the fall to study environmental science. Evan Garcia is a Dartmouth High School senior who has been accepted into the College of the Holy Cross to study political science and pursue a career as a lawyer who will assist with environmental conservation.

The Westport River Watershed Alliance Merit Award was created to celebrate the lives of William and Ruth Heath and Margo C. Boote. William and Ruth Heath were committed to environmental issues and protection of the natural world, as well as to social justice and global peace and harmony. Margo C. Boote was very involved in her community and the world around her. She not only portrayed an active commitment to the environmental mission in her actions, but also had a deep spiritual connection with the environment as was shown in her poetry.



Madison Benson, Westport High School



Evan Garcia, Dartmouth High School

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Photo: JC Cummings

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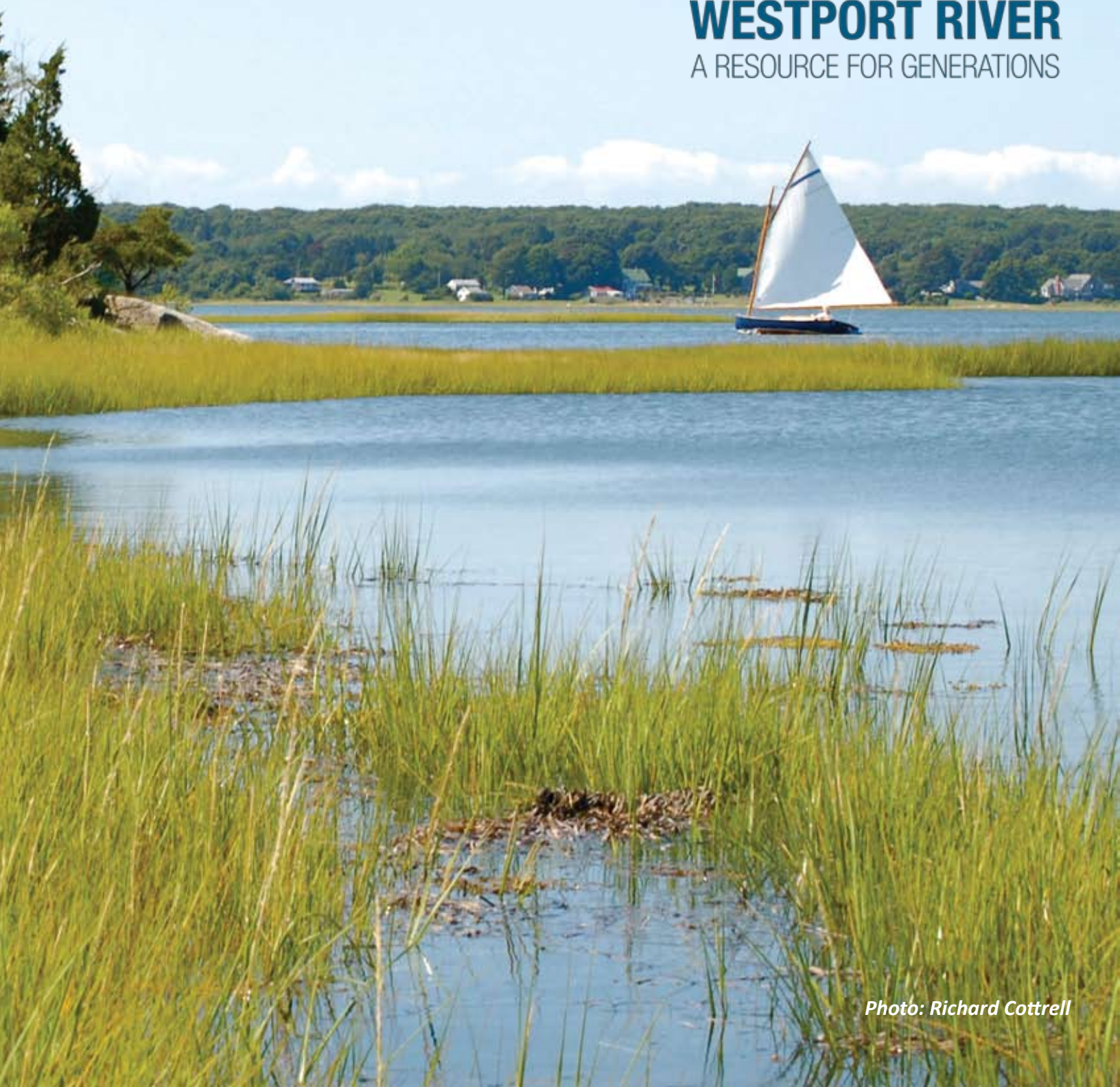


Photo: Richard Cottrell



Westport River Watershed Alliance

*Our Vision—
a healthy watershed
where people, wildlife and the River thrive.*



Visit Us
WRWA River Center
493 Old County Road
P.O. Box 3427
Westport, MA. 02790-0703
508-636-3016
<http://westportwatershed.org>

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