

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER
WATERSHED COUNCIL





OUR MISSION

Create positive environmental, social, and economic change by revitalizing the Woonasquatucket River, its Greenway, and its communities.

OUR VISION

We envision a clean Woonasquatucket River and thriving Greenway for all to lead healthy lives.

OUR COMMITMENT TO EQUITY

We have built the Woonasquatucket Greenway in collaboration with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) residents within our Woonasquatucket communities who want what everyone deserves: fundamental rights to safe green spaces, accessible transportation routes, fresh air, and clean water. Decades into our work, we continue to improve our corner of the smallest state. We can never be complacent about defending safe places to enjoy nature.

We prioritize BIPOC voices and experiences. As a largely white-led organization, we know that it is our work to dismantle racism to achieve justice for all communities. We reaffirm our commitment to becoming an equitable organization, standing strong for racial justice, and acting to secure and maintain robust BIPOC representation in our leadership and staff. We must continue to listen, learn, and act. We know we have a lot of work to do.

We are grateful to the BIPOC community leaders from our Community Programs for sharing their experiences and their commitment to transformative environmental change in Providence and beyond. We continue to support community members to advocate for environmental justice, and we learn from them how we can grow and change to become more open, accepting, and inclusive in our work. We believe that our nation is at a turning point, led by the next generation that understands that we all need to breathe freely.

All of us at the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council recognize the injustices that disadvantage communities of color. We are committed to be at the table to end racial injustices and disparities. We will continue to listen, collaborate, and share our strength to achieve equity.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Woonasquatucket River Watershed is located in what is now known as the State of Rhode Island, on unceded territory that is within the ancestral homelands of the Narragansett Indian Tribe. The Narragansett Indian Tribe, whose ancestors stewarded these lands with great care, continues as a sovereign nation today.

A LETTER FROM OUR LEADERS

The words and images on these pages tell the story of a thriving and expanding Greenway, and we are proud to lead this collaborative, productive, and persistent WRWC team—which includes each and every donor, volunteer, partner, and friend of Woonasquatucket River Greenway.

As we review the progress that we made in 2023, we also want to share our vision for the future: a swimmable and fishable Woonasquatucket River.

A swimmable river is a blessing on a steamy summer day. Imagine splashing in a cool pond, drifting along in an inner tube, and wading along a streambank. Supported by donors, partners and volunteers, we have made the Woonasquatucket River remarkably cleaner and safer since we began our work more than 30 years ago. Yet the river is not yet completely swimmable. People can safely make contact with the river's water in the northern parts of the



Woonasquatucket, although harmful blue-green algae blooms occur with increasing frequency, resulting in intermittent closures of Smithfield's beloved Georgiaville Pond and other upriver swimming spots. Further downriver, the Centredale Manor Superfund Cleanup Project site in North Providence and Johnston marks a "hard stop" to safe primary contact with the Woonasquatucket River's waters. As the Centredale Project progresses and eventually concludes, we will have made great progress toward a river free from harmful chemicals.

A fishable river offers a habitat for fish that can be safely consumed by humans. The completion of the Centredale Manor Restoration Project Superfund site will increase the likelihood that people can eat river fish. Of course, humans are not the only fish-eating species in the Woonasquatucket River watershed. We currently monitor the river's fish species, keeping an eye on diversity and health as indicators of water quality. As we continue to clean and restore the Woonasquatucket River, the entire ecosystem benefits, making our urban wildlife corridor healthier and more resilient.

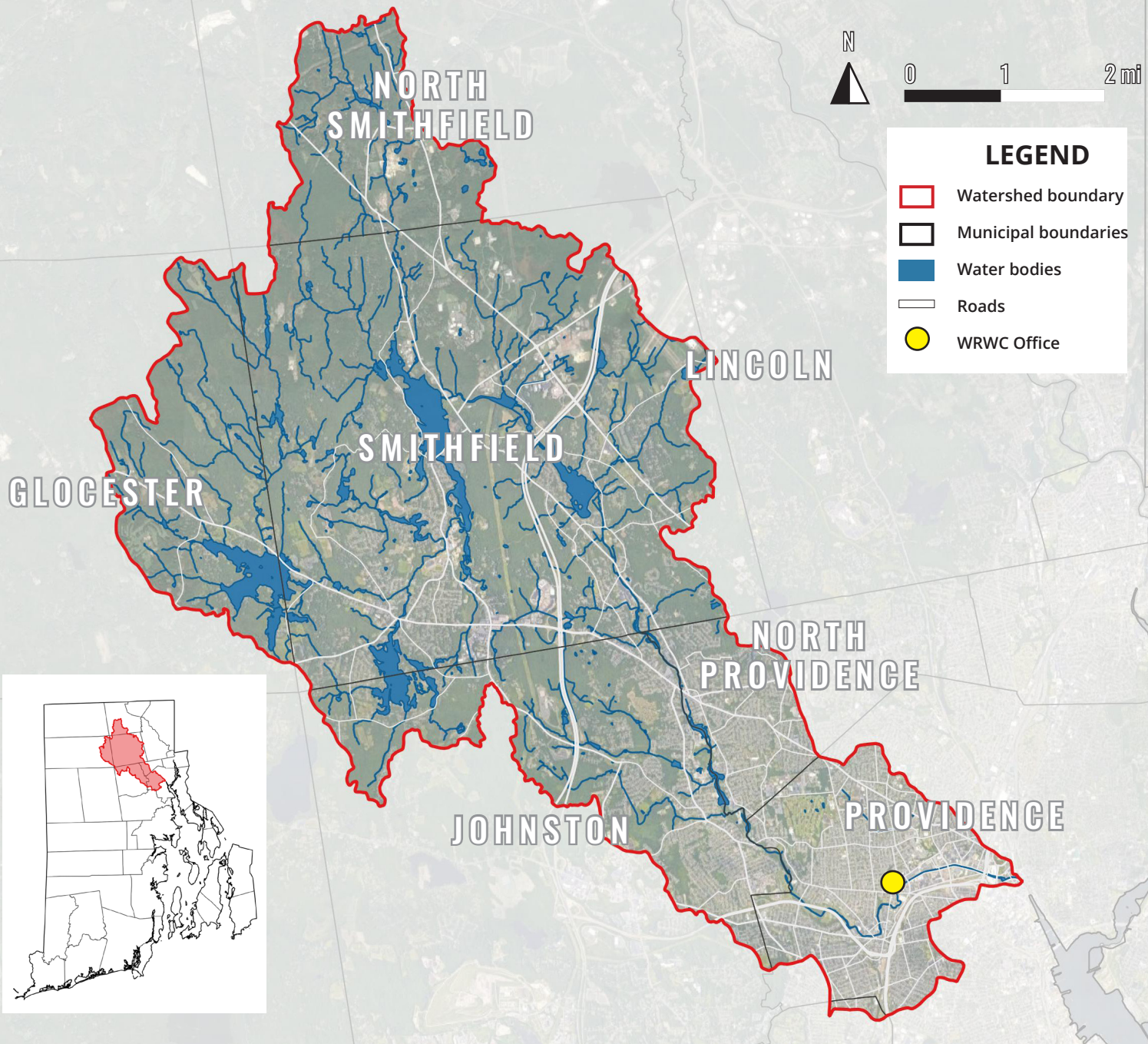
The work featured in this report represents meaningful progress toward our vision of a swimmable and fishable Woonasquatucket River. We are grateful for the federal, state, and municipal governments that partner with us to realize this long-term dream. And we are equally grateful for our donors and program partners. Because of you, we can create inclusive, accessible joy for Rhode Islanders every day. Thank you!

Alicia

Alicia J. Lehrer
Executive Director

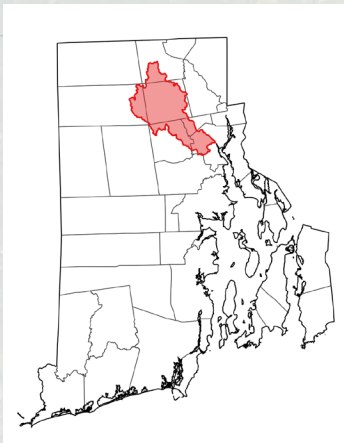
Laureen

Laureen Ratti
President, Board of Directors



LEGEND

- Watershed boundary
- Municipal boundaries
- Water bodies
- Roads
- WRWC Office



THE WOONASQUATUCKET RIVER WATERSHED

The Woonasquatucket River watershed is the land area that carries water to the Woonasquatucket River. The 19-mile long Woonasquatucket River starts in North Smithfield and Glocester and continues south through Smithfield, Johnston, North Providence, and Providence.

In Providence, until the first dam at Rising Sun Mill, the Woonasquatucket River is an estuary—a place where a freshwater stream meets tidal bay water. In the Algonquian language of native Narragansett people, Woonasquatucket means “where the salt water ends.” At Waterplace Park in downtown Providence, the Woonasquatucket joins the Moshassuck River, forming the Providence River that connects to upper Narragansett Bay and the Atlantic Ocean.



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Yvonne Wingard, [Communications Manager](#)
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WHAT WE DO

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COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

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RECREATION

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2023 HIGHLIGHTS

LEO BOUCHARD CONSERVATION CENTER



\$125,000 investment in educational space shared with Smithfield, available for field trips and other place-based environmental education

Stillwater Pond

Georgiaville Pond

RIVER RANGERS & GREENWAY

Our amazing team of River Rangers, planners, and engineers steward, enhance, and expand the Woonasquatucket River Greenway's paths, parks, streambanks, and artwork.

2023's highlights include:

- Launching the installation of the separated off-road path along Promenade and Kinsley in Providence! After more than 20 years of dreaming and planning, this essential Greenway link will increase access for thousands of Providence residents seeking to commute safely between Olneyville and Downtown.



- Designing two Greenway links: a path along Heath Street to improve access to Merino Park, and a path along Buttonhole Drive to connect the Adventure Park to the Greenway.
- Collaborating with the Town of Smithfield to improve the Leo Bouchard Conservation Center. This wonderful space, adjacent to Stillwater Reservoir and Wolf Hill, offers hands-on environmental learning and an exciting new home base for the WRWC in the northern watershed.
- Completing Phase 1 of the Gotham Greens off-road multi-use path, providing access to the river. This project, created in partnership with the City of Providence, offers opportunities for stormwater management and will serve as an important connection to Rhode Island's other trails and paths.
- Designing an outdoor classroom and streambank restoration at Manton Pond in Johnston. The outdoor classroom design will be built in 2024 and will add a Johnston space for learning and enjoying the Greenway.
- The River Rangers installing large steel butterfly sculptures fabricated by Aymar Ccopacoty, along with additional butterfly & flower themed sculptures created by Warren Collins.
- The River Rangers collaborating on workforce development with the Groden Network, Building Green Futures, Garden Time, Rhode Island College, The Met School, and Rhode Island Landscaping & Nursery Association. The Rangers also led Environmental Education field trips and attended Providence Stormwater Innovation Center training sessions.
- The River Rangers teaming up with 15 Minute Field Trips and the Providence Housing Authority on a Greenway reforestation project at Salmon Street in Providence.



SMITHFIELD ESMOND VILLAGE LINEAR NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE PARK

First mile of Woonasquatucket Greenway in Smithfield, currently in design providing river access, safe space for recreation, a multi-use trail and natural stormwater infrastructure.



SHERMAN FIELD IMPROVEMENTS

In partnership with Johnston, we are planning green infrastructure and opening up river access by transforming an unused baseball field. These improvements will be part of the linear natural infrastructure park.

Greystone Pond

CLIMATE RESILIENCE & RESTORATION

Our River Ranger team's primary focus is restoring native habitats and increasing resilience within the Woonasquatucket watershed. This year, we accomplished so much, including:

- Planting more than 1,000 native live cuttings at Centredale Manor Superfund Cleanup Project site in North Providence and Johnston.
- Planting more than 150 trees and shrubs on the Greenway, accompanied by extensive pollinator meadow installations.
- Collecting litter with the help of 500 volunteers during 24 events. During March and April, the River Rangers picked up nearly 2,500 plastic "nip" bottles and much more.

- Finalizing plans and installing Green Infrastructure in critical areas as part of our Greening the Greenway initiative, especially in the Olneyville neighborhood of Providence. This work includes removing impervious pavement, installing rainboxes, adding landscaping and plants, and capturing stormwater.
- Continuing the Centredale Manor Superfund Cleanup Project, removing dioxin and other dangerous chemicals from the Woonasquatucket River. While the cleanup continues, our partner, Loureiro Engineering, is working to identify disposal solutions for the harmful waste that has resulted from the cleanup efforts.
- We are grateful to the many partners, donors, and supporters that make this restoration work possible. Together, we are creating a safer, greener, and more resilient Woonasquatucket River watershed.





Allendale Pond

CENTERDALE MANOR SUPERFUND CLEANUP SITE

Superfund site with cleanup in progress. When completed, this project will open substantial river access and recreation opportunities in North Providence & Johnston.

Lyman Mill Pond

MANTON POND STORMWATER IMPROVEMENTS

Construction begins in spring of 2024:

1. Pavement removal
2. Green infrastructure improvements
3. Beautiful planter boxes to collect roof runoff

START OF THE WOONASQUATUCKET GREENWAY

ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

WRWC's Environmental Education programs encourage curiosity and create positive connections to nature. We worked with more than 2,000 students in 25 schools and programs to build an appreciation for our watershed and its natural resources, and to build a generation that shares in their love for the Woonasquatucket River.

Students of all ages developed a greater understanding of the environment in their communities demonstrated by pre- and post-testing. Young people from Gloucester to Providence explored the watershed and participated in interactive field trips. Our youth created amazing projects for the Woonasquatucket River Greenway and educated others. Projects included: creating pollinator habitats with native plants and pollinator hotels, hosting education programs for students and adults on pollution, creating all-natural beauty products, and planting trees to mitigate urban heat islands.

In 2023, Brookie the Brook Trout enjoyed her second year as a hands-on teaching tool. This seven-foot model helps us demonstrate the anatomy of this important local species. Brookie's celebrity expanded with a feature in *Rhode Island Monthly* magazine and many appearances in schools and at events throughout the watershed.



COMING UP IN 2024: MANTON STREAM- BANK RESTORATION

Stabilize a badly eroding streambank, downstream of Manton Pond, adding native vegetation, and improving wildlife habitat.

COMING UP IN 2024: MANTON OUTDOOR CLASSROOM

Creating outdoor classroom at Manton Pond, for place-based environmental education, to serve students in Johnston, North Providence, & other watershed communities.

IN DESIGN: BUTTONHOLE DRIVE MULTI-USE PATH

Improving safety and access where the off-road Woonasquatucket River Greenway connects to the path along Buttonhole Golf Course in Providence.



COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

In January, representatives of our Community Programs team traveled to Chicago for a collaboration with Bates College and the University of Chicago Institute for Statistical and Mathematical Innovation to develop VECINA, a community- and data-driven advocacy tool designed to connect neighborhood residents to needed services and support systems. VECINA will launch in 2024.

24 residents joined our third Nuevas Voces cohort. This group met for eight months for classroom sessions and outdoor activities to deepen their understanding of climate impacts. They graduated in November at a joyful ceremony at Farm Fresh Rhode Island hosted by Rhode Island Representative David Morales.

In 2023, we launched the two-year Campeones de Combate Climático

(Climate Combat Champions or Campeones) program. This group of 10 Nuevas Voces graduates are learning more about climate adaptation with the goal of becoming leaders for new climate resilience projects in their riverfront neighborhoods. The Campeones collaborate with our River Rangers and Greenway team to identify areas impacted by stormwater, trash, and other hazards. In September, Campeones leaders shared their recommendations at a press event held at the new Gotham Greens path, speaking along with Governor McKee, United States Senators Reed and Whitehouse, and other national, state, and local officials.

We also launched the Monthly Speakers Program. Local environmental and community leaders share their experience, insight, training, and work opportunities with Community Programs participants. As with all Community Programs events, these sessions were bilingual, in both English and Spanish, the shared languages among our resident leaders and participants.



HEATH STREET MULTI-USE PATH

Collaborating with City of Providence to create safe pedestrian and cyclist access to Merino Park.

SAN SOUCI DRIVE STREAMBANK

Adjacent to the San Souci off-road Greenway extension, restoring and improving eroding stream-bank along San Souci Drive in Providence.

GOTHAM GREENS MULTI-USE PATH

Second phase installation of off-road multi-use path adjacent to the Woonasquatucket River at Gotham Greens facility in Olneyville.

WRWC OFFICE



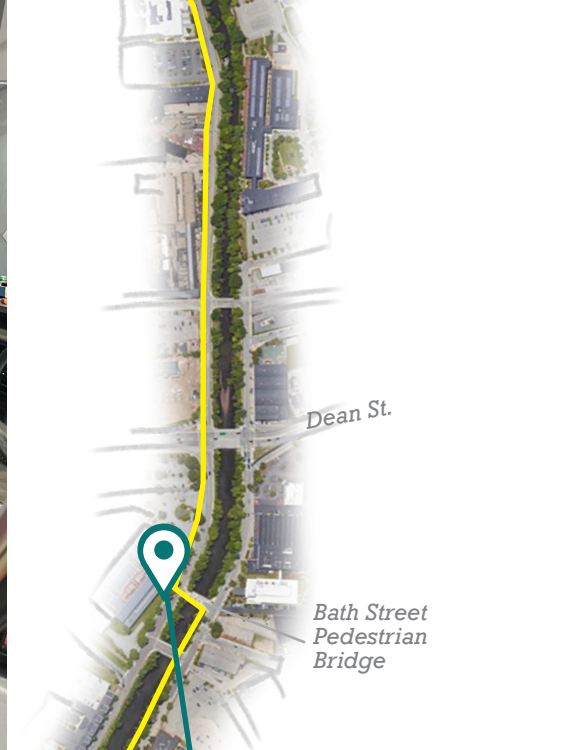
RED SHED BICYCLE PROGRAMS

In collaboration with the Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), we expanded the **Rhode 2 Bicycle Safety (R2BS)** program, bringing bikes, helmets, and cycling education to 1,108 cyclists in 15 schools throughout the state. And R2BS won RIDOT's Highway Safety Champion Award!

The Red Shed became the proud owner and operator of a box truck that transports the R2BS bike fleet to schools. The Red Shed staff also distributed and fitted 1,194 helmets. During spring and summer Bike Camps, the Red Shed staff brought bike skills and thrills to 86 campers. They also gave 50 bikes to kids who needed them.

Through our partnership with Trek Bikes, we trained 32 Met School student mechanics. These students now have assembly certification and skills to find employment in the bicycle industry.





**START OF THE
WOONASQUATUCKET
GREENWAY**



**PROMENADE/
KINSLEY MULTI-USE
PATH**

Plans complete and construction schedule set for off-road multi-use path connecting Providence Place Mall to Eagle Square, providing safe connection between Olneyville and downtown Providence.

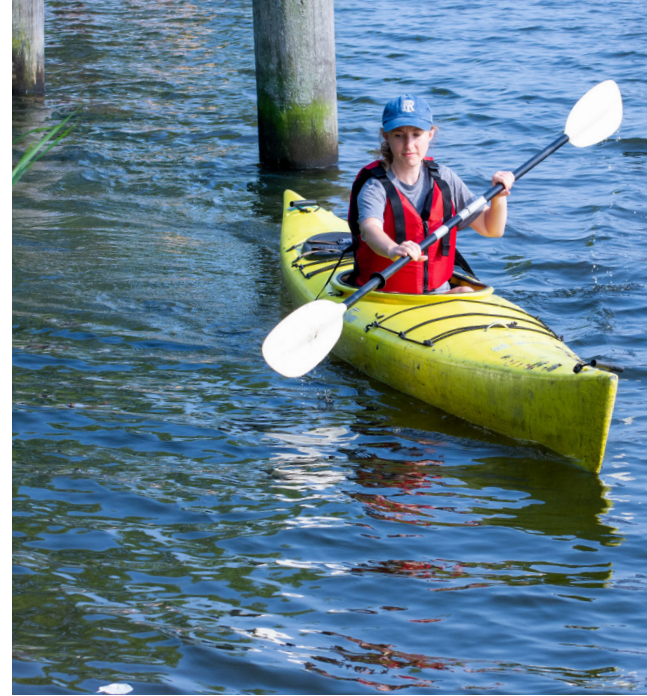
RECREATION

In 2023, our Recreation co-directors planned and led 30+ hikes, paddles, and walks in every Woonasquatucket River watershed municipality. We paddled in Downtown Providence, identified native species on naturalist-led hikes, enjoyed post-hike pizza at Revive the Roots. Participants learned about the ecology and history of watershed sites in Smithfield and Glocester, and much more. 540 people joined our explorations of the watershed's waters and paths and together, we had some truly amazing adventures.



We continued our free Community Paddle Series in Riverside Park, offering short paddle rides to more than 300 riverfront residents on Thursday afternoons throughout the summer. These paddles are the joyful highlight of our summer recreation programming!

The Recreation staff also partnered with Bike and Education programs to offer canoe rides during summer programming in Riverside Park. These paddles invited more than 150 additional young people to see the world from the river—a magical first-time experience for many students.



FUNDRAISING

The following pages tell the story of the multifaceted support and partnerships that keep the WRWC strong, resilient, and growing. We are grateful for every minute volunteers spend beautifying the Woonasquatucket River & Greenway, every commitment of federal investment that powers the Greenway's expansion, every donation from individuals, and every dollar given by local and national corporations and foundations.

We hope that this generosity inspires you to join us. With your generosity, we will be able to keep the Woonasquatucket River and Greenway safe, clean, resilient, and joyful for many years to come.

If you choose to donate online, please visit [wrwc.org/donate](https://www.wrwc.org/donate) and we encourage online donors to consider giving monthly. Monthly donors become part of the **Returning River Herring Society** and will receive a special gift of recognition each December.

Other ways to support our work:

- We welcome checks payable to "WRWC" and sent to: WRWC, 45 Eagle Street, Suite 202, Providence RI 02909

- We welcome grants from Donor Advised Funds. You may need to identify us using the full name of the organization: Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council.
- Donating appreciated stocks and securities is a powerful way for you to support the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council and potentially realize significant tax benefits.
- **If you are 70.5 or older**, consider a tax-free Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) gift from your IRA.
- We invite you to join the **Heritage River Society** by making a provision for the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council in your estate plans to ensure our vision for the future. When you leave a bequest to the Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council, or name the WRWC as a beneficiary of your retirement plan or insurance policy, your commitment to a cleaner, greener Rhode Island lives on in perpetuity.

For more information about ways to give to the the WRWC, please contact Director of Development and Communications Jill Davidson at jdavidson@wrwc.org or visit [wrwc.org/ways-to-give](https://www.wrwc.org/ways-to-give).

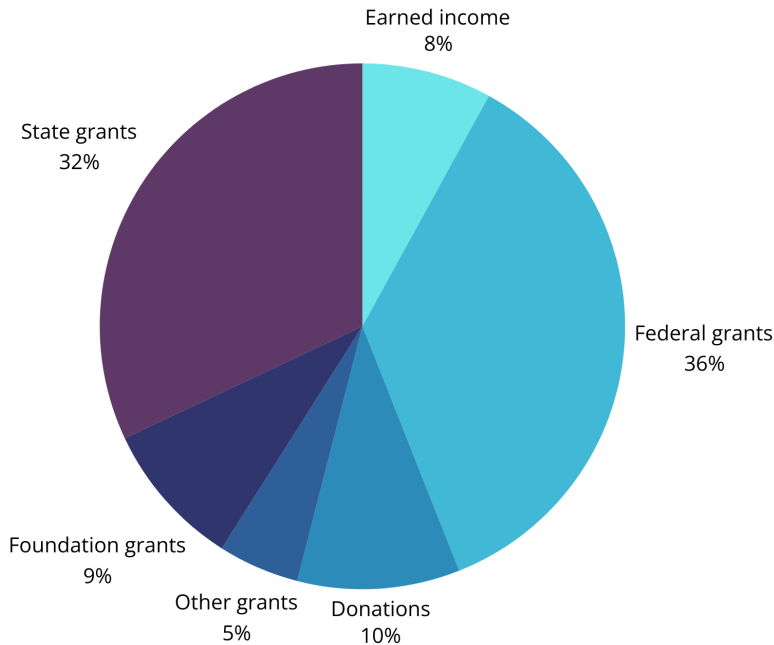
WRWC's EIN is 05-0519694.

FINANCIALS

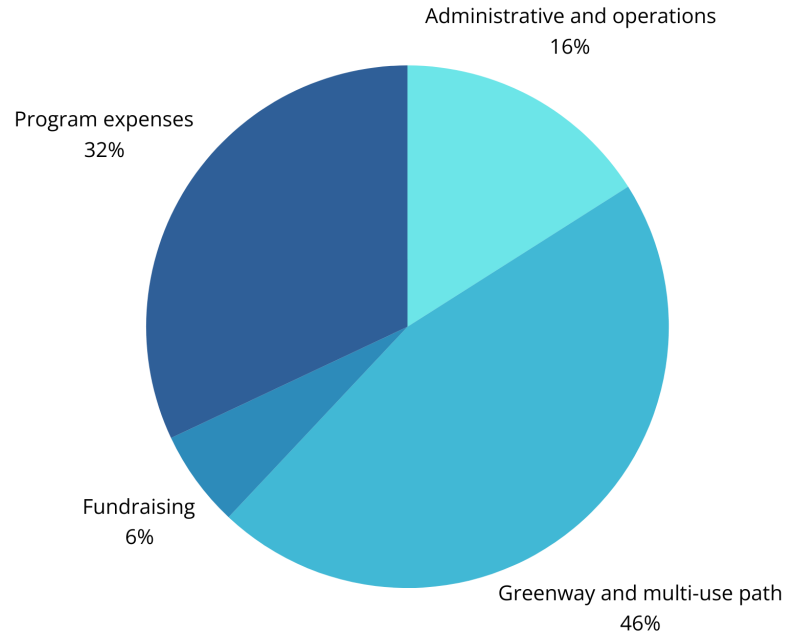
The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council's audited financial statements are available at wrwc.org.

The Woonasquatucket River Watershed Council is a nonprofit tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributions are tax deductible to the extent provided by law.

2023 INCOME — \$2,055,500



2023 EXPENSES — \$2,202,000



PARTNERS

We are successful because we belong to a vibrant and supportive ecosystem of partner organizations. Across all of our program areas, we work with other nonprofits, municipalities, and agencies in the common pursuit of a cleaner, greener, and safer Rhode Island. We are grateful to all of our 2023 partners!

15 Minute Field Trips
Bates College
Building Futures
Central Providence Opportunities Health Equity Zone
City of Providence
Cozy Rhody
Edge & End
Environment Council of Rhode Island
Farm Fresh Rhode Island
Friends of Smithfield Cemeteries
Garden Time
Gordon School
Gotham Greens
Groden Network
Groundwork Rhode Island
Johnston Mayoral Youth Group
Kids Klub
LaSalle Academy
Metropolitan Regional Career And Technical Center
Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
North Providence Public Library
North Providence Public Schools

Nuestro Mundo Public Charter School
ONE Neighborhood Builders
Onward We Learn
Partnership for Providence Parks
Paul Cuffee Lower School
Providence After School Alliance
Providence College
Providence Department of Public Works
Providence Neighborhood Planting Program
Providence Parks Department
Providence Public Schools
Providence Recreation Department
Providence Stormwater Innovation Center
Providence Urban Wildlife Refuge Partnership
Revive the Roots
Rhode Island Bicycle Coalition
Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
Rhode Island Department of Health
Rhode Island Division of Statewide Planning
Rhode Island Energy
Rhode Island Environmental Education Association
Rhode Island Flood Mitigation Association

Rhode Island Green Infrastructure Coalition
Rhode Island Paths to Progress
Rhode Island Rivers Council
Rhode Island Traffic Safety Coalition
Rhode Island Transportation Advisory Committee
Rhode Island Tree Council
Rhode Island Wild Plant Society
River Network
Smith College Statistical and Data Sciences Program
Smithfield Conservation Commission
Smithfield Land Trust
St. Augustine School
TerraCorps
The Greene School
The Groden Network
Town of Glocester
Town of Johnston
Town of North Providence
Town of North Smithfield
Town of Smithfield
Tri-County Health Equity Zone
United States Environmental Protection Agency
United Way of Rhode Island
Wheeler School



CORPORATE, FOUNDATION & INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORTERS

Dozens of funders and organizations are part of our work, and we are grateful for their robust engagement. These supporters contributed to every WRWC program throughout the year, and many of these funders have been part of our work for many years. Thank you!

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Save the Bay, Inc.*
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The Armory Revival Co.
The Dye House*

The Foundry Associates
The Nature Conservancy Rhode Island Chapter
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* Denotes in-kind donor



2023 DONORS

We are grateful for each and every donor! Together, we are creating a clean Woonasquatucket River and thriving Greenway for all to lead healthy lives.

Those donors marked with an asterisk (*) are monthly donors who comprise the Returning River Herring Society.

We offer sincere apologies for any errors or omissions. To suggest changes, please contact Director of Development and Communications Jill Davidson at jdavidson@wrwc.org.

GREAT BLUE HERON SOCIETY (\$10,000+)

Rebecca and Barry Preston

PAINTED TURTLE SOCIETY (\$5,000-\$9,999)

Betty Bourret and Tricia Harris

RIVER OTTER SOCIETY (\$1,000-\$4,999)

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Peter and Lucia Gill Case
Buff Chace
Jill Davis
James and Sandra Dunn
The Eberdaves
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Sally Godfrey	Audrey Kupchan	Arlene Nicholas	Barry Schiller	Hannah and Tyler Wells
Bonnie Gold	Alexis Lamb & Celeste	Terry Novak	Nancy and Scott Schoen	Glenda Wertheimer
Suzanne & David Goldenberg	Caviness	Simone Nunes-Duby	Jeffrey Schreck	Rosanna & James
Elder González Trejo	Louis Langer	Timothy O'Connor	Brad Schwartz	Wertheimer
Keith Graham	Nate Lapidés	Joshua and Stephanie O'Neill	Myra Schwartz	Ian Westcott*
Melissa Greenberg	Laura Latinski	Camille and Bill Pare	Tracy Schwartz	Iris Westcott*
Jill Griffin	Tim Lehnert	Komal Patel	Senator Frank Ciccone	Mark Wilcox
Joanna Grocott	Alicia Lehrer and Jeff Walker*	Daniel Pereira	Tom Sgouros & Celia	Anne and Ryder Windham
Julia Gualtieri	Chaipel Leinster & Mitch	Jennifer Pereira	Gelfman	Corey and Sarah Windham
Melissa Guillet	Gowans	Maria Pereira	Melissa Sherman and	Dorothy Windham
Susan Gunter	Evan Lemoine	Mark Pereira & Daniel	William Young	Nancy Winokoor
Martina Haggerty*	Peter Lockwood	Schwartz	Pam and Michael Sherrill	Maxine Wolfson & Paul
Anthony Hall	Donna Lubrano	Steven Pereira	Teresa Skinkle & Jean	Hossfield
Steven Hamburg & Sarah	Diane Lusas	Lisa Perry	Hibbert	Richard and Mary Worrell
Barker	Suzanne Macahilig	Anna Petronzio	Terry Snook	Claudia Zapelini
Allen Hance	David Madsen	Bruce Phillips	Bradford St. Martin	
Karen Hanley	Elaine Mahanke	Lillian and Anthony Picchione	Amy Stack	
Keri and George Hanley	Caroline Mailloux	Brian and Samantha Platt*	Jennifer Stevens	
Carolyn and David Hansen	Patrick Malone	John Platt	Jonathan Stone	
Jason Harry	Kathryn and Peter Mandel	Kim Platt	Jennifer Stout	
Jennifer Haugh	Anthony Marciano	Shirin Platt	Kris and Everett Stuart	
Barrett and Mary Hazeltine	Juan Mariscal	Joshua Pomplun	Joseph Sullivan	
Bruce Hooke	Hilary Markoe	Liz Price	Laura Sullivan	
Frank Iannarilli	Steve Markovitz & Karen	Judith Queen	Julie Talbutt	
Michael and Cheryl Iannotti	McAninch	Michael Radz	Kurt Teichert	
Kevin Iannucci	Eugenia Marks	Allan Raskin	Douglas Thomas	
Wendy Ingram	Christopher Marsella	Jennifer Recinos	Pamela Tillinghast	
Isabelle Jaffe*	Christopher Martin	Heather Remollino	Erik Tinkhauser	
Jane E. Jellison	Bill Masterson	Polly Reynolds*	Helen Tjader	
Jesse Rye	Robert Matthews and Jack	Ashley Rice	Maria Tortolani	
Edith Johnson	Renshaw	Barbara Rich	Jeanne Tracey-McAreavey	
Thomas and Rosa Jones	Janice McAleer	Norman Richardson	Darlene Vargulish	
David Karoff & Barbara	Heather McCurdy	Margaret Robinson	Rosalynde Vas Dias	
Hunger	Trevor McLain	Kim Rohm	Sharon Waldman & Michael	
Ellen Kellner	Georganna Meyer	Kevin Rolando	Werth	
Meg Kerr and Bob	Cristina Mitchell and Roger	Andrew Romero	Leigh Waldron-Taylor	
Vanderslice	Blumberg	Jeff Rosenberg	Jennifer Walker*	
Daniel Kertzner	Chintan Modi & Nicole Vance	Wendy Roskowski	Judith Walker	
Rebecca Kessler	Karla Moran	Christopher Royer	Alisson Walsh & Adam	
Clare King	Amy Moses	Shannon Rozea	Braver	
Michael Korba	Cynthia and Thomas Mulvey	Daphne Sarcia	Stephanie Walsh	
Brian Kortz	Daniel Musher	Mark Sawtelle	Bettie Weber	

