

2021 Annual Report

preserving and protecting the lands and waters of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed

From the WPWA Board President

The value of this watershed can sometimes feel immeasurable and hard for me to quantify. This is a case of the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. Sometimes I find myself looking for the right questions instead of the answers. So, bear with me. I wonder what these rivers were like before the first mills went up. I've read about it...but I'd really like to see it. How has the flora changed? What were the shad runs like? What were the salter runs like? Is there more I should be doing for this place? Why does being in these woods sometimes feel more spiritual than physical? There are many who have dedicated their lives to this watershed. There are individual, cultural, and natural histories lived here that are intimately interconnected with these waters.

Am I doing enough to honor their legacy? Are *we* doing enough to honor their legacy? In 100 years will we be proud of what we did for these waters? In 200 years? The Board of Directors for WPWA, the Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council, the staff of WPWA—Chris Fox and Kassi Donnelly, and you, WPWA member and volunteer, are all playing an immeasurable role in honoring this watershed.

If you find yourself asking a lot of the same questions I am, then you might be a good fit for joining our Board of Directors. It's not always the answers that we are seeking; lots of times it's the right questions. If you're interested in learning more, email me at mike@wpwa.org.

Board Retirements—A Special Thank You to:

- **Annie Ragan**—assistance in expanding membership activity.
- **Amanda Columbo**—service and assistance in chairing the Water Quality Monitoring Committee, leading programs, and engaging in multiple board activities.

Board Additions—A Very Warm Welcome to:

- **Monica Rao**—URI MESM Graduate Student with a focus in communications.
- **Tim Piacentini**—URI MESM Graduate Student with a focus in wetlands, watersheds, and ecosystems.
- **Andrew McNulty**—URI MESM Graduate Student and Environmental Scientist with VHB.

First Watershed Wide Weekend —The 7 RIVERS FESTIVAL

June 25 & 26 2022 12 Towns – 7 Rivers – 1 Weekend

Numerous small events—paddles, fly tying and art classes, night bat watch, and guided hikes, for example—will be taking place across the watershed, all celebrating these special rivers we have in our midst. Only 16 rivers along the east coast have this special recognition as Wild and Scenic. Let's get outdoors to enjoy and promote protection of our natural resources. The idea of a watershed wide celebration came from the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council. As a 12-town area it is a huge undertaking to put together, and community support continues to come to the table. Join the celebration and come out and engage in multiple events over this special weekend. Check out: <https://wpwildrivers.org/7-rivers-festival/> for all the details.



A Wild and Scenic Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed

Focusing resources for mission attainment. The WPWA board and Stewardship Council are working together, now helped by funding from the National Park Service (NPS), to preserve and protect the watershed. Together, more can be accomplished than by working alone.



Leaps and bounds in Year Three

The Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council has appointees from towns, Narragansett Indian Tribe, state environmental agencies and key non-profits. The Stewardship Council membership has identified projects to take on, and methods to support partners, including towns.

- Championing projects such as a watershed-wide celebration of the Wild and Scenic designation, planting native gardens, improving public access areas... and more.
- Created Wild and Scenic Community Grants – small awards available to preserve and enhance natural resources.
- Partnered with Univ. of RI's Nonpoint Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) to provide assistance to towns.

Stewardship Council committees are committed!

- Working alongside staff, contractors, and NPS staff, a lot has been accomplished with volunteers.
- There is high volunteer engagement, with monthly meetings of the full Council and of the committees. During 2021, volunteer time reported during meetings alone include: the Projects Committee, 72.5 hours; the Advisory Committee, 68 hours; the Information and Education Committee, 81.5 hours.
- Signs depicting the river or pond name and its status within the Wild and Scenic designated area has gained momentum. Most town and state crossings have river name signs. Many state and public partners are requesting public access signs.
- Members, a National Park Service Natural Resource Specialist, and GIS Consultant have drafted an online map for Conservation and Assessment purposes.
- Horsley Whitten has been chosen as a contractor to design a model River Corridor Overlay District, this may be adapted by any town.



When you see these logos you know the Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council is involved in helping to protect and preserve the watershed



WOOD - PAWCATUCK
Wild and Scenic Rivers

Building Community and the Next Generation of Stewards

In 2021 hundreds of families and school children benefited from WPWA's fleet of boats using them to escape COVID's restrictions by connecting with nature.

WPWA ran programming for high school and college students to explore the upper Wood River, whether they are from URI Hydrology class or studying habitats and human impacts with the Greene School.

The Stewardship Council funded the Youth Adventure Programming. A snapshot of this program: paddles to groups like Movement Education Outdoors and RI National Guard and Military Families; aquatic bug collection and studies for Girl Scouts of Southern New England, and even a hydrology lesson for Envirothon student competitors.

Stewardship Council members provided education and outreach, whether behind a table at farmers markets, presenting for local Conservation Commissions, or leading Mindfulness Walks with local Land Trusts.

Academic level of participants ranged from fourth graders to undergraduate college students.

Program activities—wet and dry—ranged from groundwater and stormwater models to aquatic insect sampling and assessing habitat value in the Wood River from a kayak.

One of the most mission critical activities that we achieve every day is to cultivate future stewards of the watershed. Sometimes that is as simple as empowering a physically challenged member with a helping hand to get into a kayak. Or by leading an educational program for schoolchildren who carry lessons learned from a meaningful experience forward through their entire lives. Experiences like these foster a sense of community.



Everyday WPWA does its part to be a helpful and productive community member. For example, in 2021 Voluntown had a flooding problem they could not resolve because the cause was across the border in Rhode Island creating a gap in authority. WPWA bridged the chasm by facilitating the needed work on the Rhode Island side. It is through these interactions that we build the trust and relationships which make WPWA such an effective steward of the watershed.

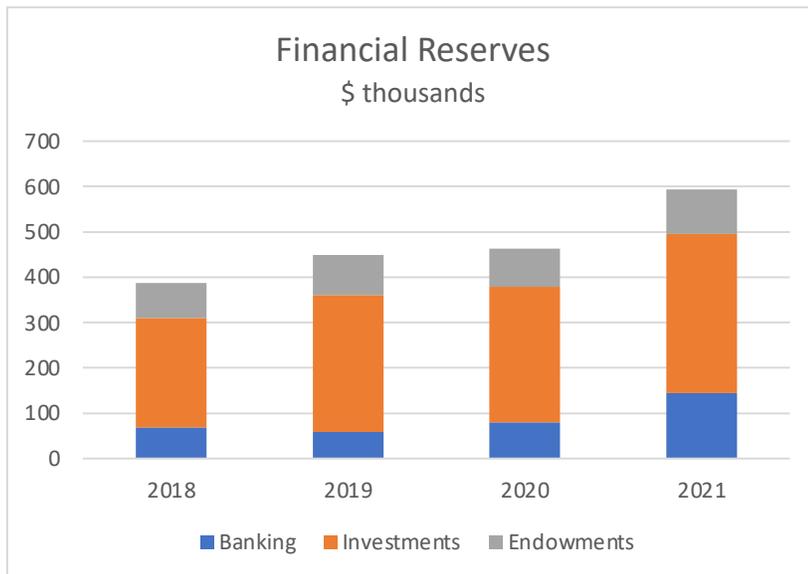
Financial Highlights

We closely monitor two measures of our financial performance:

- Sources and uses of cash to run our organization;
- Trends in the amount of financial reserves.

Sources of Cash		Uses of Cash	
Membership & Donations	94,201	Payroll & Benefits	134,902
National Park Service	81,733	To Financial Reserves	49,967
Grants	66,000	Watershed Projects	40,922
Payroll Protection Program	25,692	Facilities & Administration	35,956
Program Revenue	2,880	Program Expenses	9,344
Other	585		
TOTAL	271,091	TOTAL	271,091

Change in Financial Reserves 130,000



The Financial Highlights table above shows our sources and uses of cash. This does not include gains and losses in our investment accounts and non-cash items such as depreciation.

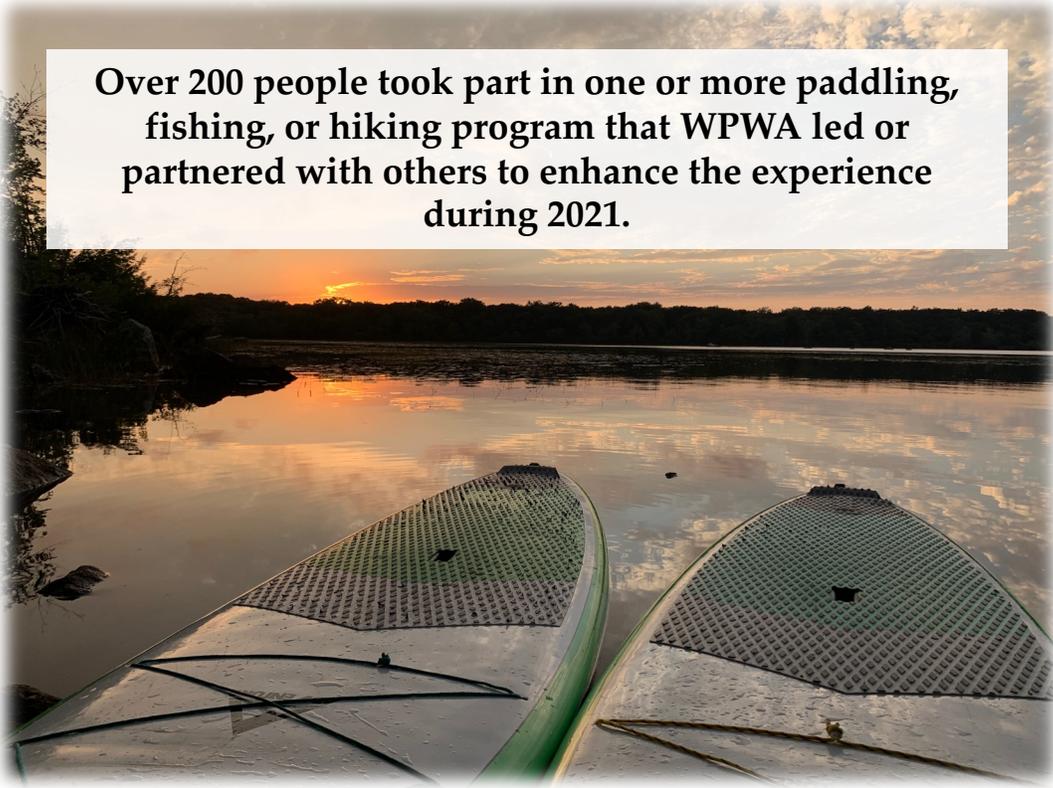
The bar chart shows our financial reserves at year-end. That includes cash in banking accounts, investment accounts, and restricted endowment accounts.

The value of land and buildings is not included. Stock market gains contributed a large portion of the increase in reserves during 2021.

For a more detailed financial presentation, see our 2021 IRS Form 990 available on our WPWA.org website.

Scenic and Recreational Resources

Over 200 people took part in one or more paddling, fishing, or hiking program that WPWA led or partnered with others to enhance the experience during 2021.



The beautiful natural places of the watershed continued to be a refuge from our world of COVID restrictions. These priceless refuges would not exist if not for 38 years of collective efforts by WPWA and so many others to preserve them. The WPWA membership continued to grow as friends told friends to join and gain access to our ever-growing fleet of kayaks, canoes, and assorted recreational gear. Cool, clean water was unusually abundant all summer long making it too dangerous to clear fallen trees (blow-downs). Rest assured—the cutting crew will return in 2022 to open passage through the regions' watery wonderland.



Exceptional Ecosystems

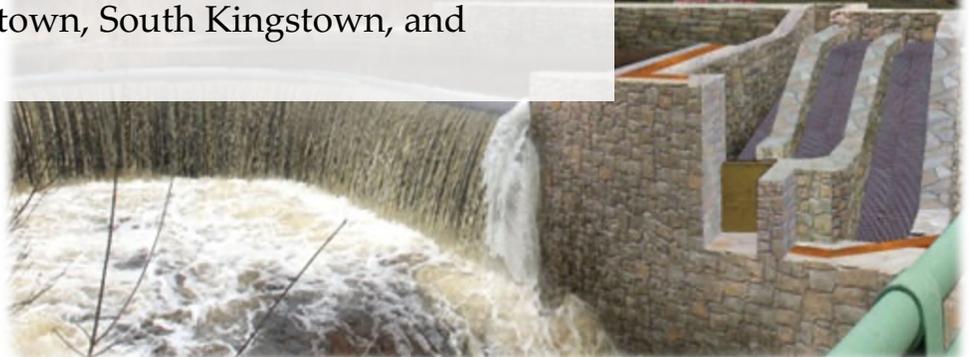


WPWA realizes education about best practices is a very important tool for maintaining quality ecosystems. Preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species is the best management plan. Even a fragment of some plants will cause an infestation. Clean, Drain and Dry boats for prevention.



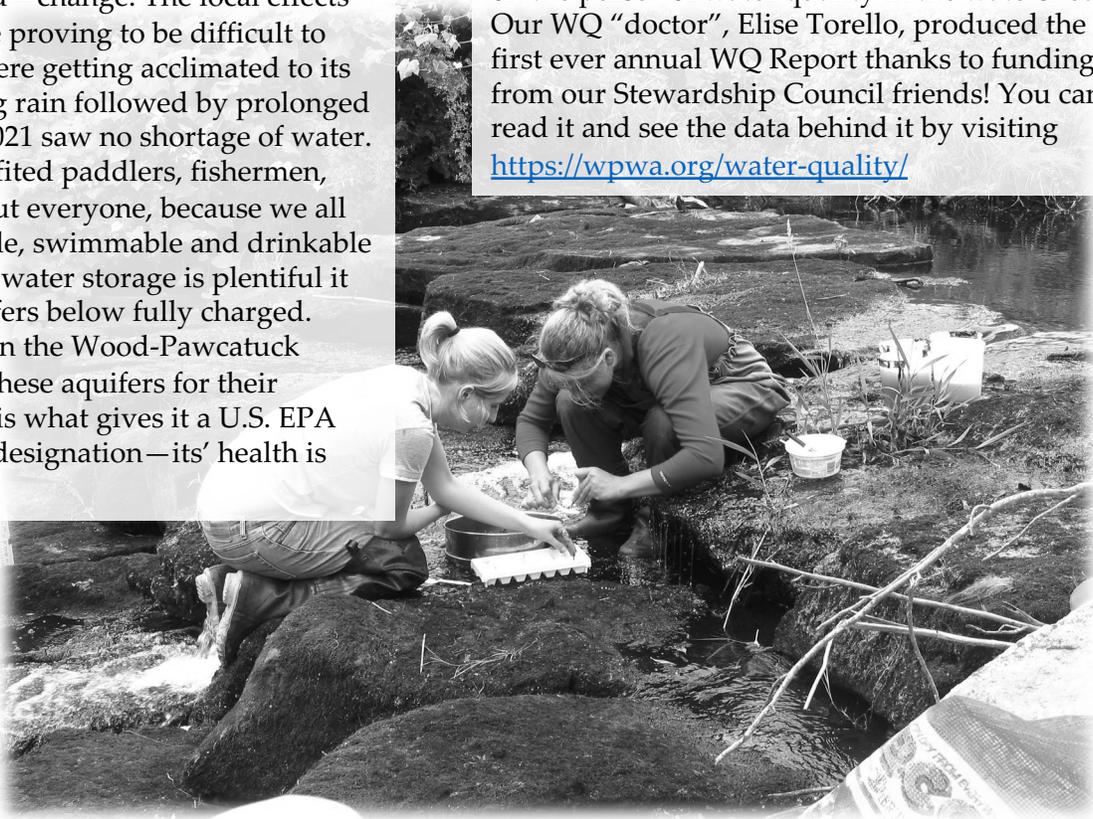
Restoration Project Partnerships

- Beaver River Watershed Assessment—Town of Richmond.
- Potter Hill Resilience & Fish Passage—Town of Westerly
- Comprehensive & Hazard Mitigation Plan Updates- Towns of Richmond, Hopkinton, Westerly, and Charlestown.
- Upper Wood River Stream Temperature Study—Trout Unlimited & RIDEM.
- Watershed Wide Flood Mitigation Project—Southern RI Conservation District, NRCS PL566 Program, Towns of Richmond, Westerly, North Stonington, Stonington, Charlestown, Voluntown, South Kingstown, and Hopkinton.



Hydrology and Geology

If there is one constant in the watershed it can be captured in one word—change. The local effects of climate change are proving to be difficult to predict. Just as we were getting acclimated to its inundations of spring rain followed by prolonged summer droughts, 2021 saw no shortage of water. The abundance benefited paddlers, fishermen, farmers and just about everyone, because we all need access to fishable, swimmable and drinkable water. When surface water storage is plentiful it acts to keep the aquifers below fully charged. Every person living in the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed relies on these aquifers for their drinking water, that is what gives it a U.S. EPA Sole Source Aquifer designation—its' health is vital to our health.



Water quality monitoring continues at 16 sentinel watershed stations to give long-term indicators of watershed health. Volunteers, trained by URI Watershed Watch, continue long term monitoring at 16 sampling stations—10 WPWA, 2 Trout Unlimited, 1 USGS, 1 Watershed Watch. Their strategic locations provide a “finger on the pulse” of water quality in the watershed. Our WQ “doctor”, Elise Torello, produced the first ever annual WQ Report thanks to funding from our Stewardship Council friends! You can read it and see the data behind it by visiting <https://wpwa.org/water-quality/>

Staff

Christopher Fox; WPWA Executive Director

Kassi Donnelly; Wild and Scenic Rivers Coordinator

WPWA Board of Directors

Mike Mowry; President

Alan Desbonnet; Vice President

Jon Waldstein; Secretary & co-Chair Marketing

Kelli Butler; co-Chair Marketing Committee

Tom Ferrio; Treasurer

Brett Still; Liaison to the WSRSC

Monica Rao (joined 11/2021)

Andrew McNulty (joined 11/2021)

Tim Piacentini (joined 11/2021)

Elise Torello; Consultant

Kristy Armstrong; Controller

Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

Neil Wardley; Robert Maietta; Charlestown

Eric Thomas; CT DEEP

Nan Quinlan; Kevin McGovern; Exeter

David Augustyn; Clifford Heil; Hopkinton

Cassius Spears Jr.; Narragansett Indian Tribe

Jamie Fosburgh; Lauren Bonatakis; U.S. NPS

Ahren Cohen; James LeBlanc; North Kingstown

Madeline Jeffery; North Stonington

Tee Jay Boudreau; Michelle Sheehan; RI DEM

Antonia Bryson; Peter August; Richmond

Dave Prescott; Save The Bay

Dennis Migneault; South Kingstown

Roger Gibson; Kim Gunn; Sterling

Fred Wagner; Sara Baker; Stonington

Mark Oulton; Voluntown

Christopher Grube; Patricia Lardner; West Greenwich

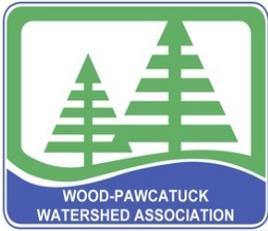
Jon Ericson; Lauren Barber; Westerly

2022 Annual Meeting

May 26, 2022

6:00-7:30 PM

Malted Barley — Westerly RI



AGENDA

6:00-6:15 PM — Social

6:15-7:00 PM — BUSINESS MEETING

Call to Order

1. Welcome - Mike Mowry [5 min]

2. Treasurer Report - Tom Ferrio [5 min]

3. Executive Director Report - Christopher Fox [15 min]

4. Wild & Scenic Rivers Coordinator Report - Kassi Donnelly/Chris Grube [15 min]

5. Election of board members [5 min]

— NEW: Tim Piacentini, Andrew McNulty, Monica Rao

— REELECT: Mike Mowry, Brett Still

ADJOURN

7:00-7:30 PM—PRESENTATIONS OF:

“Water Trails” — a new watershed paddling routes planning tool

“Environmental Resources Map” — explore land uses and resources in the watershed

The Malted Barley is located at 42 High St. in downtown Westerly.

Parking is on street. A new parking lot with ample space is located just past the intersection of Canal St. and Railroad Ave.—the walk is about 2 blocks.