



# 2022 Annual Report

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

## ***From the WPWA Board President***

On behalf of the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, I would like to thank you for your continued support and membership to this wonderful organization. Your contributions are the lifeblood of our mission to preserve and protect the lands and waters of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed for natural and human communities.

Last year, with your help, we continued our role as the voice of the watershed; supporting efforts in stream restoration, providing insights on the importance of unimpeded river mileage, clearing riverways, and funding water quality monitoring throughout the watershed. All of this in addition to maintaining our fleet of kayaks, canoes, paddleboards, and of course our wonderful facility in Hope Valley. We hope you take advantage of all your membership has to offer!

In the coming year we will continue these same efforts, in addition to focusing on our strategic plan, and working on strengthening our relationship with all our vital partners in the watershed.

Here's to you for your continued support of our rivers!

### *Board Retirements—A Special Thank You to:*

- *Tom Ferrio—Treasurer.*

## **7 RIVERS FESTIVAL**

The 7 Rivers Festival was a tremendous effort of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council for 2022. And it was a big success. Thirty events held in 12 watershed towns offered a huge variety educational programs, paddles, hikes in the woods and along the shore, and lots and lots of happy people. The success of these events would not have been possible without the overwhelming support of our partners and business supporters. The 7 Rivers Festival will return in 2024. Stay tuned.

## A Wild and Scenic Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed



### Wild and Scenic Community Grants

Grants of up to \$4,000 can be applied for by towns, non-profits, land trusts, schools and educators, and citizens to help accomplish Wild and Scenic Stewardship Plan goals and objectives. In 2022 four grants were awarded:

- Beaver River Park Invasive Plant Management Plan — Awarded to the Town of Richmond to fund native plant restoration and maintenance of the passive recreational uses in the park.
- The Westerly Land Trust was awarded funds to assist in the procurement of lands along the Pawcatuck River to expand an existing 225 acre preserve containing vernal pools and other important habitat.
- The Charlestown Land Trust was provided funds to assist in the acquisition of parcels containing white cedar swamp habitat contiguous with other preserved habitats.
- Trout Unlimited was provided with funds to assist in their continuing efforts to restore and improve wild brook trout populations in the headwaters of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed.



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*

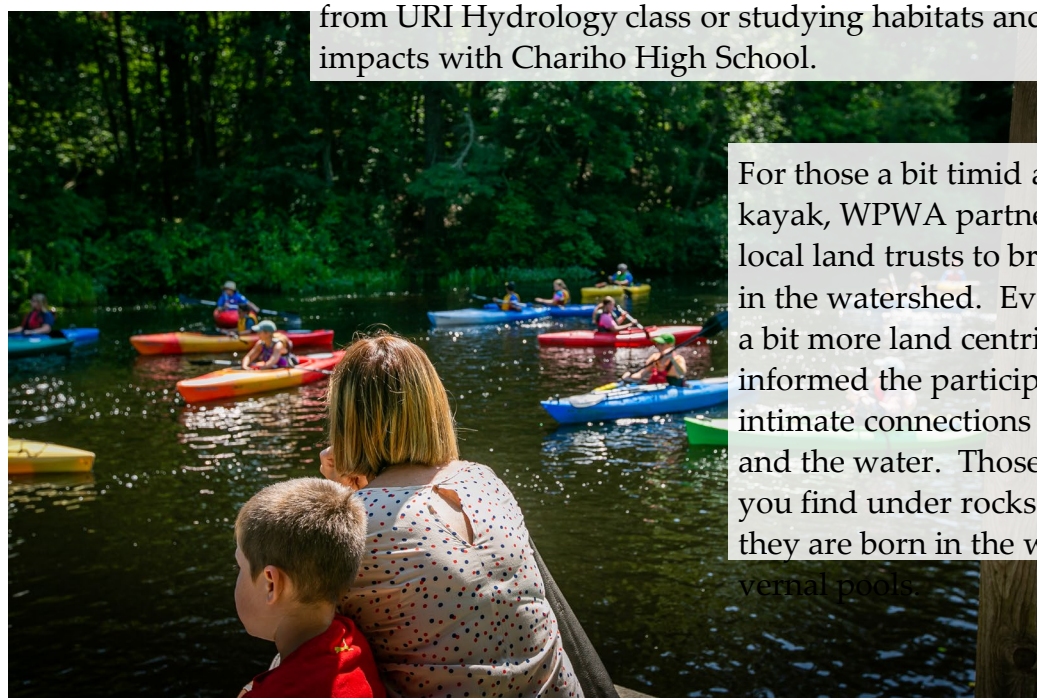
## ***Building Community and the Next Generation of Stewards***

Connecting people with the magnificent resources of the watershed has been a mainstay for WPWA ever since we acquired our property on the Wood River from the Wright and Woodmansee families. We have found there is no better way to ignite people's passions for the watershed's natural resources than through experiential learning.

In 2022 we focused heavily on uniting 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade science students with the local Wild & Scenic Rivers. Students were first taught basic kayaking safety and skills by our own Kassi Donnelly who is a certified American Canoe Association (ACA) instructor. Once they had a grasp of the fundamentals, off they went by boat to conduct macroinvertebrate sampling and identification. Along the way they also learned about riverine wildlife and plant life. Later, on the classroom side, they thought they were just playing with water but in reality, our interactive Stormwater and Groundwater models gave them a better understanding of how water flows over and under their feet.



WPWA also 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 Chariho High School.



For those a bit timid about slipping into a kayak, WPWA partnered with several local land trusts to bring a series of hikes in the watershed. Even though they were a bit more land centric, we always informed the participants about the intimate connections between the land and the water. Those cute salamanders you find under rocks along the trail, yeah, they are born in the waters of our many vernal pools.

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.

## *Financial Highlights*

Below is a summary of the major categories of Income and Expenses for WPWA.

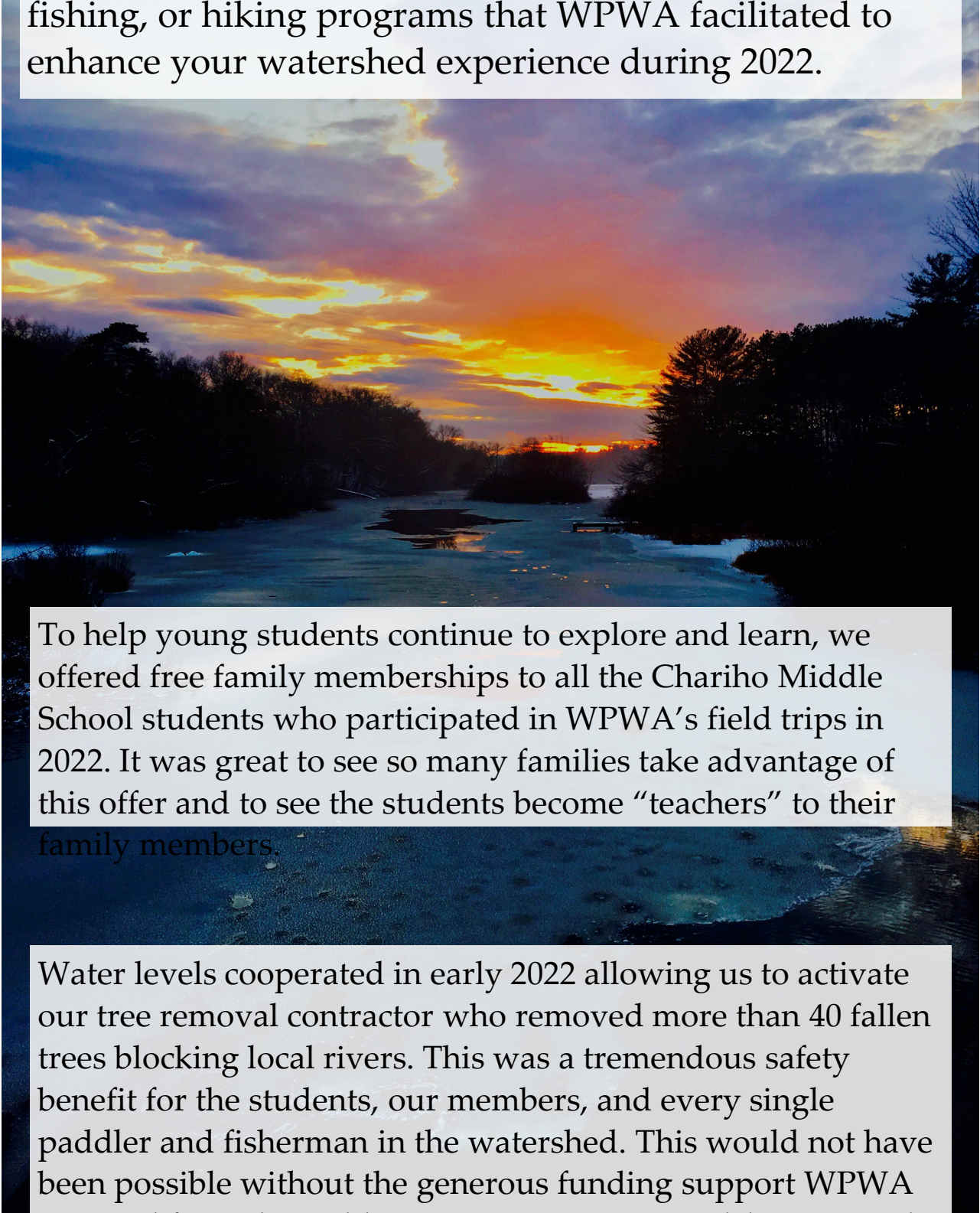
Sources of Cash		Uses of Cash	
Membership & Donations	84,430	Payroll & Benefits	96,545
National Park Service	171,585	Wild and Scenic	172,505
Grants	51,000	Grant Expenses	6,000
Investment Income	15,017	Facilities & Administration	48,358
Program Revenue	4,365	Program Expenses	5,756
TOTAL	327,388	TOTAL	329,164
Cash Assets (banking)	110,000		

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 value of land and buildings is not included.

For a more detailed financial presentation, see our 2022 IRS Form 990 available on our [WPWA.org](http://WPWA.org) website.

## *Scenic and Recreational Resources*

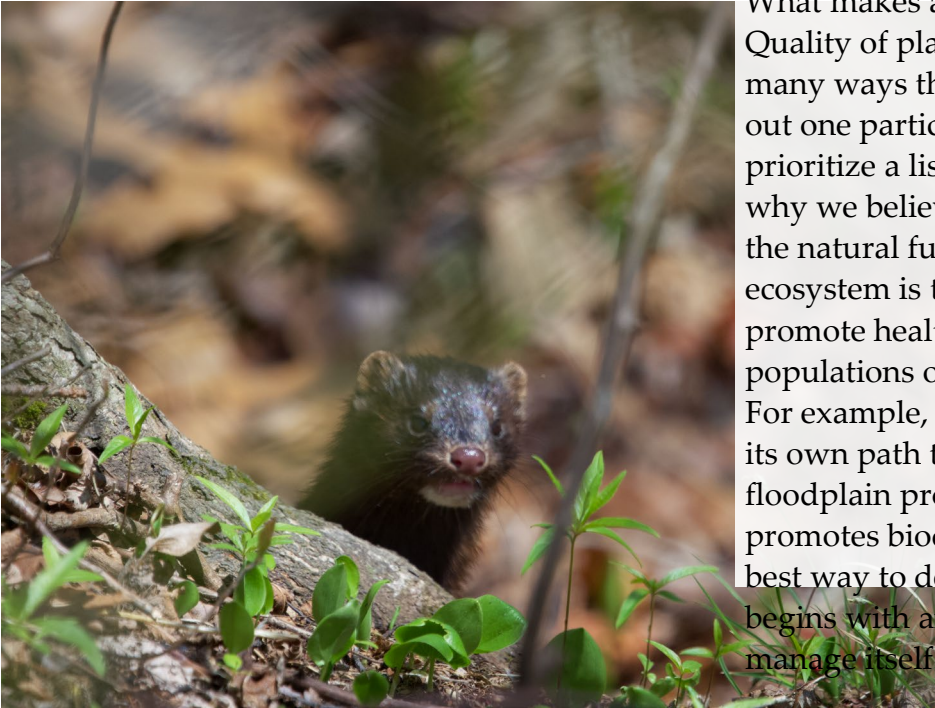
Over 450 people took part in one or more paddling, fishing, or hiking programs that WPWA facilitated to enhance your watershed experience during 2022.



To help young students continue to explore and learn, we offered free family memberships to all the Chariho Middle School students who participated in WPWA's field trips in 2022. It was great to see so many families take advantage of this offer and to see the students become "teachers" to their family members.

Water levels cooperated in early 2022 allowing us to activate our tree removal contractor who removed more than 40 fallen trees blocking local rivers. This was a tremendous safety benefit for the students, our members, and every single paddler and fisherman in the watershed. This would not have been possible without the generous funding support WPWA received from the Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council.

## Exceptional Ecosystems



What makes an ecosystem exceptional? Quality of place can be measured in so many ways that it can be hard to call out one particular element, or to prioritize a list of elements. That is why we believe preserving or restoring the natural functions and values of an ecosystem is the single best way to promote healthy and sustainable populations of plant and animal life. For example, a river allowed to carve its own path through an undeveloped floodplain provides resiliency and promotes biodiversity. Perhaps the best way to define “exceptional” begins with an ecosystem’s ability to manage itself.

### Restoration Project Partnerships

- Beaver River Watershed Assessment—Town of Richmond.
- Potter Hill Resilience & Fish Passage—Town of Westerly
- Cold Water Stream Restoration – RI TNC & RIDEM.
- Upper Wood River Stream Temperature Study—Trout Unlimited & RIDEM.
- Watershed Wide Flood Mitigation Projects
- 23 Letters of Support to Partners
- Over 100 staff hours of technical assistance provided at no cost to ecosystem-based projects undertaken by watershed constituents
- Any so very many more...



## *Exceptional Ecosystems - 2*



In 2022 WPWA launched a Cold Water Stream Restoration program with support from the Narragansett Bay Estuary program. Our partners at the RI Nature Conservancy and RIDEM championed this initiative and urged WPWA to take the lead. We are looking forward to completing our upper Wood & Beaver River assessments this spring which will guide restoration efforts for years to come.



Spend an afternoon hiking in a headwater preserve like Tillinghast in West Greenwich and you will invariably cross a tiny stream. Go off trail and follow that seemingly undisturbed stream with observant eyes and you will see man's long forgotten but persistent influences. One of those influences are the remnant 19<sup>th</sup> century dams that slow down and heat up the cold water stream during the summer months. Some aren't even recognizable as man made structures any more but they continue to negatively impact the species that seek refuge here when mainstem rivers heat up during the summer months. This effort is just one of many ways we did our part in 2022 to support exceptional ecosystems.

## 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.

Our decades of continuous water quality monitoring was again made possible under the direction of Elise Torello, the Wild & Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council and URI's Watershed Watch program. The WPWA Water Quality Monitoring Committee welcomed Dr. Brett Still as its new chair this year and he is still getting his feet wet. Not even one year of WPWA monitoring would be possible without URI's Watershed Watch Program. Their team led by Elizabeth Herron with help from Kelly Addy is what truly makes monitoring happen in the watershed. Without them and the URI program, keeping tabs on the health of the watershed would be far to cost prohibitive for WPWA to sustain. Our deepest thanks to Elise, Brett, Elizabeth, Kelly and all the sample collection volunteers. To learn more about water quality monitoring in the watershed visit <https://wpwa.org/water-quality/> and <https://web.uri.edu/watershedwatch/>. 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;** Treasurer  
**Tim Piacentini;** Secretary  
**Kelli Butler**  
**Brett Still**  
**Andrew McNulty**  
**Elise Torello;** Consultant  
**Kristy Armstrong;** Controller

### Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council

**Robert J. Maietta;** Charlestown  
**Nan Quinlan; Kevin McGovern;** Exeter  
**Clifford Heil;** Hopkinton  
**Ahren Cohen; James LeBlanc;** North Kingstown  
**Madeline Jeffery; Elaine Caldarone;** North Stonington  
**Antonia Bryson; Peter August;** Richmond  
**Roger Gibson; Kim Gunn;** Sterling  
**Fred Wagner; Sara Baker;** Stonington  
**Mark Oulton;** Voluntown  
**Christopher Grube; Patricia Lardner;** West Greenwich  
**Richard Smith;** Westerly  
**Eric Thomas;** CT DEEP  
**Tee Jay Boudreau; Michelle Sheehan;** RI DEM  
**Catie Alves;** Save The Bay  
**Jamie Fosburgh; Lauren Bonatakis;** U.S. NPS  
**Andrew McNulty;** WPWA

# 2023 Annual Meeting

*May 18, 2023*

*6:00-7:30 PM*

*WPWA Campus*



## AGENDA

6:00-6:15 PM — Social

6:15-6:40 PM — BUSINESS MEETING

Call to Order

1. Welcome - Mike Mowry [5 min]

2. Treasurer Report – Jon Waldstein [5 min]

3. Executive Director Report - Christopher Fox [10 min]

5. Election of board members [5 min]

— RE-ELECT: Mike Mowry (2<sup>nd</sup> Term 2025), Brett Still (2<sup>nd</sup> Term 2025), Kelli Butler (2<sup>nd</sup> Term 2026)

ADJOURN

6:40-7:30 PM—PRESENTATION:

"Managing Water Quality: Enough to Try the Patience of an Oyster"

By Dale Leavitt

*The WPWA Campus is located at 203 Arcadia Road, Hope Valley, RI*