

2024 Annual Report

Preserving and protecting the lands and waters of the Wood-Pawcatuck watershed for our natural and human communities since 1983



WPWA Board of Directors

Brett Still; President

Mike Mowry; Vice President

Jon Waldstein; Treasurer

Tim Piacentini; Secretary

Andrew McNulty

Kim Ohnemus

Hector Barreras

Olivia McGranaghan

Elise Torello; Consultant

Kristy Armstrong; Controller

Staff

Christopher Fox; Executive Director

Kassi Donnelly; Program Director

Board Retirements

Mike Mowry (2025)

Jon Waldstein (2025)

Olivia McGranaghan (2024)

Welcome New Board Members

David White (2025)

From the WPWA Board President

As we reflect on another year of progress and impact at the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed Association, I am proud to highlight the dedication and accomplishments of our team, partners, and supporters who continue to champion our mission to protect and promote the health and beauty of our watershed.

Our Executive Director, Chris Fox, has once again led the charge with his successful grant writing and project management. His efforts have secured vital funding for our ongoing river restoration projects, which enhance aquatic habitat connectivity, improve climate resilience, and strengthen the ecological integrity of our rivers. Chris's work in coordinating with local and regional partners ensures that these efforts extend beyond WPWA, advancing shared goals of conservation, water quality improvement, and expanded recreational access.

Program Director Kassi Donnelly brought our mission to life this year through a vibrant series of education and paddling programs for both adults and children. These initiatives engaged new and returning participants in hands-on experiences that deepen understanding and appreciation of the lands, wildlife, and waterways within the watershed.

We are also deeply grateful to Elise Torello, URI's Watershed Watch Program and the Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council for their steadfast support of our long-standing water quality monitoring program. Elise's leadership in data management and the Council's financial backing are critical to the continued success and integrity of this vital work.

This year, we bid farewell and express our heartfelt thanks to two departing board members: Mike Mowry, former President and current Vice President, and Jon Waldstein, our Treasurer and the board's longest-serving current member. Thank you for your many contributions and unwavering commitment to our mission.

Finally, to our members, thank you for your continued support. You are the heart of this organization, and we are excited to celebrate with you at our upcoming member appreciation river celebration, to be held this September at the WPWA campus. This family-friendly event will feature food, live music, educational programs, raffles, giveaways, and of course, paddling adventures on the river. Stay tuned for more details.

We look forward to seeing you there and to continuing our shared journey in protecting the Wood-Pawcatuck Watershed.

With Gratitude,

Brett Still, PhD

*URI Director of the Master of
Environmental Science and
Management Program*

From the Executive Director

Each year WPWA seems to pivot with the changing times and 2024 was no exception. The board of directors adopted a new strategic plan that will carry us through 2030. Following our thoughtful, yet broad strategic plan, we decided to make changes both programmatically and operationally. In the here and now we are all working hard to implement those changes. Uncoupling ourselves from the fiscal agency of the Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council has provided bandwidth for the board and staff to refocus our priorities on our membership, projects and programs. I am ever so grateful for the diversity this position affords me and am excited to begin another new chapter in WPWA's 42-year legacy.



Our Cold Water Stream Restoration Partnership with the RI Nature Conservancy and RIDEM's Division of Fish & Wildlife continued to grow and flourish in 2024. We are close to completing the design of a new culvert that divides the Beaver River thanks to the continued funding support of the Narragansett Bay Estuary Program. To date they have provided nearly a half million dollars toward advancing multiple restoration projects in the watershed which will remove barriers that have completely obstructed the movement of aquatic wildlife.

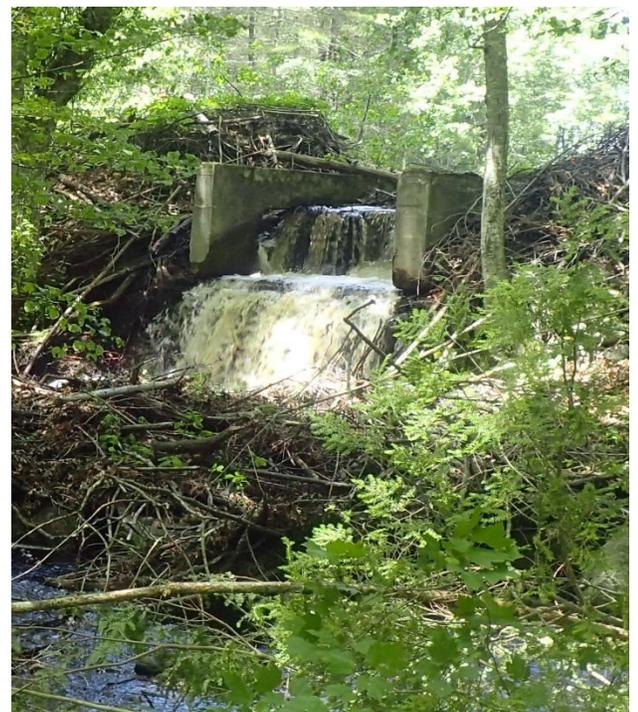
Hudson Pond (pictured above) can evoke feelings of tranquility to the human observer. But if you look closer, through the eyes of a resident fish, you'll see this is habitat that needs our help. If you were a freshwater fish swimming up the Kelley Brook from the mainstem Wood River, the picture below is what you would be faced with. The insurmountable barrier that is the Hudson Pond Dam preventing you from exploring the brook any further. The Kelley Brook is a cold water refuge for freshwater species in the hottest of summer months. For over a century the dam has blocked the movement of fish and the pond it creates gets too hot for fish to survive. We are grateful to our partners for their help in removing this barrier. Hopefully WPWA's 2027 Annual Report will feature "after" pictures of the upcoming restoration work on Kelley Brook.

Planning and implementing expensive restoration projects like these are fraught with red tape, politics and lots of stress. So I always look forward to the break our members provide for me when they visit the campus to borrow our boats in the warm months of the year. I can't wait to see your smiling faces out on the water this paddle and fishing season!



Warm Regards,
Chris Fox

A drill rig probes the ground beneath the existing Hillsdale Rd. Culvert on the Beaver River. Special thanks to the Wild & Scenic Council for their funding support in this phase of the new culvert's design!



Financial Highlights

Jan. 1, 2024 to Dec 31, 2024

Revenue		Expenditure	
Membership & Donations	\$68,503.54	Payroll & Benefits	\$120,907.23
Grants	\$413,511.19	Grant Expenses	\$365,930.19
Investment Income	\$51,495.57	Facilities & Administration	\$69,184.05
Program Revenue	\$30,023.96	Program Expenses	\$8,304.35
Total	\$563,534.26	Total	\$564,325.82

As you can see from the table breakdown, our 2024 financial year was balanced. On the surface, we had just enough revenue to pay for our expenses. The big contributors to this result was our focus on a major grant project (Coldwater Stream Restoration) and our new programs initiative (Kassi's focus).

Our membership & donations also partially came from the previous year's annual appeal which means 2023 was reporting low in that category. What is not accurately shown here is that our growth is still stagnant and un-sustainable.

When budgeting for the upcoming year of 2025, we identified areas where we need to start growing to sustain our organization for the future. This includes: raising membership prices to account for inflation, renting out our office space to offset facility costs, finding more opportunities in our current grant projects, and continuing to increase our programs revenue.

After a long couple years of organizational auditing, consulting, and restructuring we have a new energy that is focused on our sensible plan to increase revenue for sustainability. To realize these goals, there will be a collaborative effort between our staff and board.

Respectfully,
Jon Waldstein, Treasurer

The Financial Highlights table above shows our major 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 also not included.

For a more detailed financial presentation, see our 2024 IRS Form 990 available on our WPWA.org website.

From the Program Director's Waterfront Desk

Guided Paddle Trips are fantastic recreational opportunities on the pristine Wood River. Groups which enjoyed this experience for the first time 2024 included the State-Wide 4-H Program, home school communities such as RI Guild of Home Teachers and Three Chicks Farm, recreation departments including Hopkinton and North Kingstown.



Over 550 youth and adults have engaged with WPWA Programs. Individuals dedicated their time as kayak safety guides and fishing instructors, giving an amazing 300+ hours in sharing skills and hobbies. In this photo, siblings practice kayak rescues for their Scouts Merit Badge.

In 2024, Kassi became a Scouts Merit Badge Counselor. Scouts worked with WPWA Volunteer Safety Guides for their Kayaking Merit Badge and with the wide RI fishing community for their Fly-Fishing Merit Badge. (Instructors from RI Trout Unlimited, Fly-Fishers International, United Fly Tyers of RI, Rhody Fly Rodders).



These two boys delighted in finding stoneflies, caddisflies and mayflies... sampling benthic macroinvertebrate.

In May, 2024 WPWA hosted guided kayak trips across the watershed! Wander a Wild and Scenic Watershed was a partnership with boat transportation company Water Wanderers LLC and funded by the Wood-Pawcatuck Wild and Scenic Rivers Stewardship Council. WPWA boats, volunteer safety guides and staff expertise were instrumental in providing paddle destinations, safety and environmental education.

Programs that made a comeback in 2024: hosted two Almost Full Moon Paddle Trips, provided kayak trips for an entire 7th grade during their field-day at Browning Mill Pond, WPWA hosted two series of fly-tying classes.

Education took place at Westerly Middle School, Westerly Boat Launch (for Southern RI Conservation District), University of RI Bay Campus, Browning Mill Pond in Exeter and at WPWA's riverside campus.

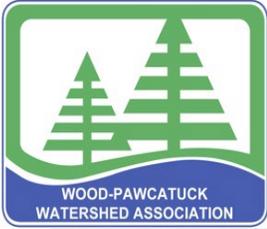


Kassi Donnelly keeps kids excited & engaged on all her educational programs.

2025 Virtual Annual Meeting

May 15th, 2025

6:00-6:40 PM



<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/4902847975?omn=81658446507>

Meeting ID: 490 284 7975

Passcode: 5399017

AGENDA

6:00-6:40 PM — Business Meeting

Call to Order

1. Welcome – Brett Still
2. Treasurer Report – Jon Waldstein
3. Executive & Program Directors Reports - Chris Fox
4. Election of Board Members – Brett Still

ELECT: David White (1st Term 2028)

DEPARTURES: Mike Mowry, Jon Waldstein, Olivia McGranaghan

5. ADJOURN

6:40-7:30 PM— September Open House Event Planning

The General Membership is Welcome to Participate