



Westport River Watershed Alliance

2024 Annual Report

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

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



The Westport River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) environmental education, advocacy and research 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 1976, 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 this?

- **Through research.** 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 the 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

2024 Board of Directors

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2024 Staff

Deborah Weaver, *Executive Director*

Kim Botelho, *Education Director*

Nora Brady, *Membership and Events Coordinator*

Roberta Carvalho, *Science Director*

Steve Connors, *Community Engagement Manager*

Jennifer Lynch, *Development and Finance Administrator*

Michaelah Vasconcellos, *Lead Environmental Educator*

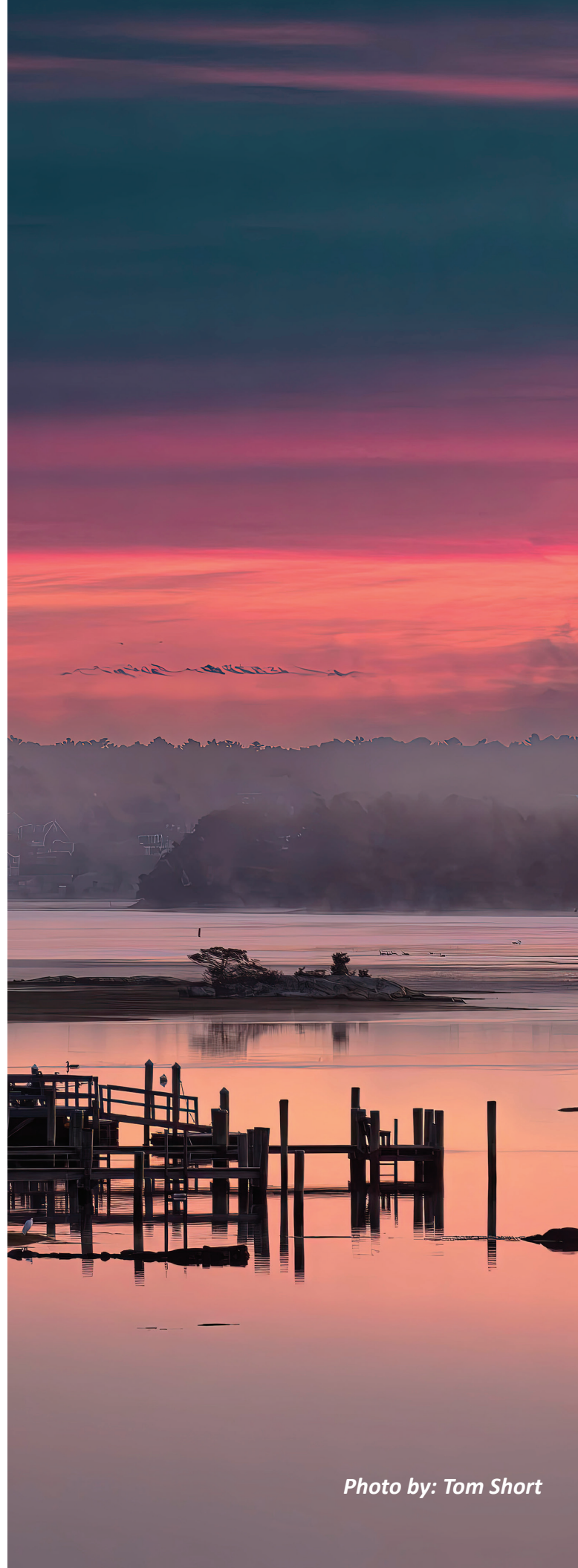


Photo by: Tom Short

Dear Members and Friends:

As we reflect on 2024, we are grateful for the collective effort that has strengthened the Westport River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) and advanced our mission to protect and celebrate the Westport River and its surrounding environment. This year, we embarked on a transformative journey to create a multi-year strategic plan, engaging our Board of Directors, staff alongside over 80 community members. Their valuable insights helped shape WRWA into a more effective, inclusive, and engaging organization as we move forward.

Collaboration has been a key theme of our work, and we are proud to have partnered with the Westport Conservation Land Trust and local farmers on the **Cover Crop Project**. This initiative, in its inaugural year, has provided support to four farmers, helping them preserve topsoil over the winter months by planting a winter crop that would otherwise be uneconomical. By reducing runoff and enhancing soil health in areas close to the River, this project is a critical step in ensuring a more sustainable growing season for years to come. WRWA supported 75% of this initiative costs and the farmers contributed the remainder.

Additionally, 2024 marked the launch of our free river tours, a program designed to provide local families—who may not have had the opportunity—to experience the river's natural beauty and ecological significance firsthand. Due to its success, we are excited to double the number of tours next year, expanding opportunities for more families to explore the unique and special areas of the Westport River. Additionally to ensure that everyone, including those with physical challenges or limited access to boats, can experience the river's beauty, WRWA will debut a new video that captures the essence of a river journey, blending breathtaking perspectives from the water's surface with stunning aerial views, much like those seen by an osprey in flight.

Building upon our past educational initiatives, WRWA has strengthened its partnerships with local schools, expanding our curriculum to provide deeper insights into climate change, resilience, and conservation. We welcomed new collaborations that help broaden the scope of environmental education for students and adults alike.

Our financial standing remains strong, thanks to the unwavering support of donors, members, area businesses, corporations, generous foundations, and grant opportunities. We were also honored to receive unexpected bequests from dedicated members, further solidifying our ability to sustain and grow our programs.

Looking ahead, we are eager to continue our beloved **annual events**, including **River Day, the Summer Concert, the Gala, and our Summer Educational Programs**. As we approach WRWA's 50th anniversary in 2026, we recognize the incredible journey that has led us here and remain dedicated to strengthening our impact for future generations. We encourage you to stay connected—visit our website, engage with our emails, and keep up with our latest initiatives through the online **River News**.

Thank you for your continued support, passion, and commitment to preserving the Westport River Watershed. Together, we are making a lasting impact on our environment and our community.

With gratitude,



R. Michael Sullivan
WRWA President



Deborah Weaver
Executive Director

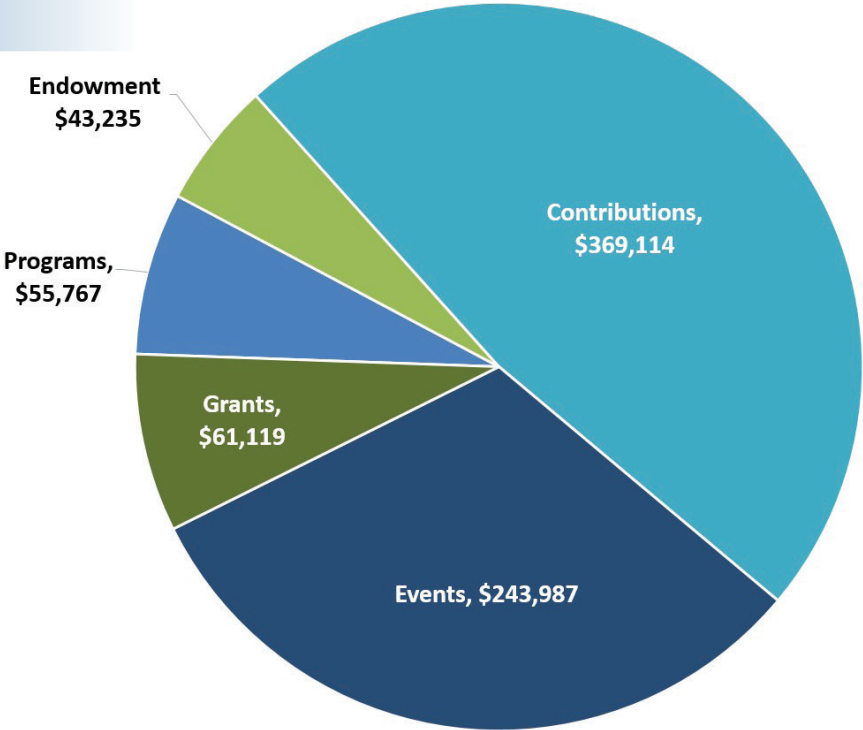
Westport River Watershed Alliance

2024 Finances*

In 2024, Operations showed a Net Income of \$72,638, or approximately 9.4% of Operating Income. Total revenue increased to \$773,222, driven by strong growth in Contributions (\$369,114) and Events Revenue (\$243,987), along with higher Grant Revenue (\$61,119) and Program Revenue (\$55,767). While Endowment to Operations decreased to \$43,235, overall revenue growth outpaced the prior year. Expenses rose to \$700,584, reflecting continued investments in key areas, including Community Engagement (\$116,054), Education (\$144,021), and Science and Advocacy (\$113,189). Notably, Education saw the largest year-over-year increase, emphasizing the organization’s commitment to outreach and learning initiatives.

Revenue \$ 773,222

Contributions	\$369,114
Endowment to Operations	\$43,235
Events	\$243,987
Grants	\$61,119
Programs	\$55,767
Total	\$773,222



Expenses \$ 700,584

Administration	\$105,393
Community Engagement	\$116,054
Development and Finance	\$99,729
Education	\$144,021
Events	\$82,867
Facilities	\$39,331
Science and Advocacy	\$113,189
Total	\$700,584



*Unaudited

2024 Education Programs

Kim Botelho, Education Director and Michaelah Vasconcellos, Lead Environmental Educator

Alex Cameron—Aquarist, Kaitlyn daSilva and Zoey Reis—Summer Educators

The Westport River Watershed Alliance (WRWA) connects children to the Westport River and its watershed through the Watershed Education Program (WEP), a model for district-wide environmental education. In 2024, we made great strides updating the WEP curriculum to better address required state standards while focusing more specifically on the ecological importance of habitats within the watershed, climate education, and civic engagement. We also began expanding into other watershed towns, updating evaluation tools and processes, and increased free opportunities for the public in the River Center. This year, WRWA provided over 200 programs to nearly 5000 students in grades Pre-K - 12 in Westport and Fall River, MA. Here are some highlights:

- We provided monthly programs for every Pre-K and Kindergarten class at the Macomber Primary School. Preschoolers learned about different animal groups found in the watershed and kindergartners learned about plants, their life cycles, and helped us plant a new native pollinator garden in the schoolyard.
- At the Westport Elementary School, WRWA provided bimonthly programs for every first and second grade class, monthly programs for every third grade class, and one classroom program for fourth graders. We also provided field studies for all four grades.
- At the Westport Middle High School, fifth graders participated in a new classroom series focused on climate impacts to coastal ecosystems and civic engagement activities that informed the Westport Climate Resilience Committee. They also participated in a dune field study and restoration project.
- Every seventh grade class received a program focused on the anatomy, life cycle, and importance of horseshoe crabs for coastal birds, the bait industry and medical applications. Every eighth grade class examined plankton, their unique adaptations, and worked in teams to design a new plankton species.
- Kim Botelho was invited to present the fifth grade program as a global example of restoration education for the United Nations' Decade of Restoration at the North American Association for Environmental Education's international conference in November.
- In 2024, WRWA completed its 27th summer of science programming. At the same time the River Center was open for seven weeks during the summer, Thursday - Saturday, completely free-of-charge. Each week featured a different theme with related hands-on activities. We also provided monthly open days the first Saturday of each month and special open days during school vacation. We tripled the number of participants from the previous year!
- The GG summer scholarship program was modified to reach families in need and to provide discounts to families with multiple children. WRWA provided nearly \$3000 in scholarships to more families than ever before.
- The summer Watershed Discovery Programs were a huge success, filling 77 out of 80 spaces.
- WRWA launched a River Tour pilot season and provided 12 tours to families enrolled in the summer program that do not have their own access to the River.



WRWA's 2024 Education Program is made possible by generous support from:

BayCoast Bank

Gay Gillespie Scholarship Fund

Heath Family Fund

Lawrence Family Fund

Lees Market

North American Association of Environmental Education

Science Near Me

Tom and Kate Schmitt

Van Sloun Foundation

Wattles Family Fund

Westport Education Foundation

2024 Science and Advocacy

Roberta Carvalho, Science Director

This was a year of meaningful progress, collaboration, and discovery as staff and committees focused on strategic planning and worked together to take actions to improve the health of the Westport River. Through scientific research and community partnerships, we've made strides in understanding and addressing the challenges facing our watershed. Here's a look at what we worked on in 2024.

Water Quality Monitoring—From June through August, we conducted weekly water quality testing at multiple locations along the Westport River. These tests measured fecal coliform bacteria levels to evaluate compliance with swimming and shellfishing standards. We also continue to partner with the Buzzards Bay Coalition to perform nutrient monitoring in the River.

2024 Data Highlights—Bacteria levels show improvements over time. Fecal coliform levels appear lower overall compared to 2022 and 2023, with fewer extreme spikes. The highest recorded value in 2024 was 970 colonies/100 mL at Head of Westport, which is significantly lower than the peaks in previous years. Rainfall levels were generally lower in 2024, which may explain the reduced fecal coliform levels compared to previous years.

Salt Marsh Resilience Studies—WRWA Board President Mike Sullivan and volunteers continued with tidal measurements in the Westport River. This year, three tide measurement stations were deployed. Collected Data Includes: tide height, current velocity, and River water temperature. These measurements, combined with marsh elevation data, will inform analyses of salt marsh inundation rates, critical for understanding the long-term resilience of these vital ecosystems.

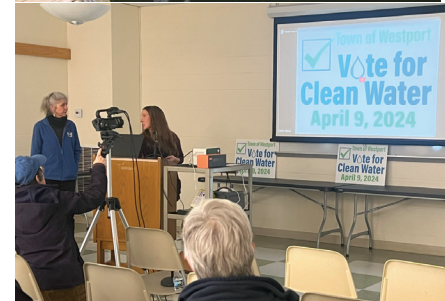
Community Collaborations—WRWA actively worked with local committees, consultants, and regulatory agencies and individuals to address environmental challenges affecting the watershed. In 2024 many hours of science related community conversations were had to develop our 2025-2028 Strategic Plan. Other actions taken are listed.

- **Public Advocacy:** WRWA published articles emphasizing the importance of the Route 6 water and sewer project for improving water quality in Westport.
- **Community Engagement:** WRWA collaborated with organizations like the Buzzards Bay Coalition to fund and give time to outreach efforts, aiming to educate residents on the environmental and public health benefits of the proposed sewer system.
- **Informational Campaigns:** WRWA's president, R. Michael Sullivan, authored pieces explaining the necessity and timing of the sewer project, addressing community concerns and highlighting the project's long-term advantages.
- **Funding and promotion of agricultural land-use practices** in partnership with the Westport Conservation Land Trust that reduce disruption to the watershed and enhance the River's resilience.

2024 Data Summary

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)
19-Jun	64	2	2	2	2	2	2	0.00
26-Jun	130	2	2	6	2	2	2	0.01
2-Jul	120	424	532	64	6	28	4	1.54
10-Jul	74	10	2	10	2	2	2	0.00
17-Jul	150	56	56	2	6	6	4	0.00
24-Jul	124	4	2	2	2	2	4	0.17
31-Jul	970	18	12	8	2	2	2	1.30
7-Aug	140	20	20	26	2	2	4	0.37
14-Aug	84	38	22	2	2	2	2	0.39
21-Aug	106	8	8	4	2	2	2	0.88
28-Aug	72	50	38	2	2	2	2	1.45

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



2024 Community Engagement Programs

Steve Connors, Community Engagement Manager

Programs with outreach and programs, with successful events catching on with the public at the River Center and more creative ideas taking shape, thanks to our environmental educator Michaelah Vasconcellos and education director Kim Botelho.

Winter Art Show

We were thankful to utilize the beautiful Westport Art Group Gallery for our 11th Annual Winter art show in late February. The theme for the art works was “Love Your River”, and this concept inspired some truly creative pieces. Forty artists participated, delivering to us a remarkable variety of artwork inspired by our beautiful coastal environment. We appreciate the extraordinary talents of our regional artists and enjoy the opportunity to share great art with our members and guests each winter. Many thanks to all the donating artists.

Pollinator Party with Butterfly Effect Farm, May 19, 2024

The culminating event for a partnership launched in 2024 to promote native pollinator plants. A fun day for the family included plant sales, insect activities, face painting and more. Over 50 people attended.

Clean-ups

Our springtime activities included our twice-annual beach clean-ups at Cherry & Webb Conservation Area, with many volunteers scouring the beach for trash. We also continued our sponsorship 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 at the River Center.

Electronics Recycling

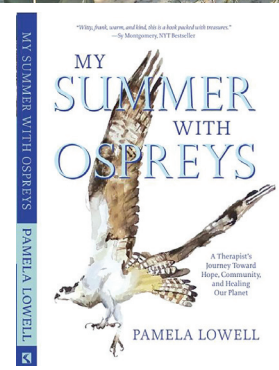
We filled two large box trucks with old computers and electronic equipment, dropped off by residents of Westport and nearby towns. This event has proved to be a very popular and valuable twice-annual event, conducted along with IndieCycle, a nonprofit organization dedicated to recycling all the materials from electronic devices. Since 2015, we have helped recycle close to 60,000 pounds of electronic waste that would otherwise end up in landfills.

The Wonders of the Watershed

In the month of June, we again featured a whole month of outdoor activities. We call 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.

Speaker Series

Local artist and author Pamela Lowell has released her new book, **My Summer with Ospreys**, at a special event that took place at the River Center on May 18th. The book includes original watercolor paintings and describes Pam’s working with Mass Audubon and the WRWA while monitoring nests and chicks. The book is available in paperback. A percentage of sales from all Pam’s works is donated to support Ospreys and their habitats.





2024 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, 2024. Every effort has been made to ensure that these are accurate and inclusive. If you see an error, please contact the WRWA office.

\$10,000 and above

Pam and Bob Beck
Ralph and Heidi Derbyshire
Mary Lou and Tom Kearns
Mary Ellen and Ed Flynn
Laurens W. Goff and
Andrea Krida Goff
Andreas and Diane Halvorsen
Jill and Matt Kelsall
John and Carol Moriarty
Joop and Ria Nagtegaal
Christopher Thompson
Mike and Martha Sullivan
Don and Maggie Swift

\$5,000 to \$9,999

Anonymous
Katherine Burdon and Karen Weiss
Bill Kern and Mariye Inouye
Richard and Nancy Mobley
Judith and Alan Pemstein
Gigi and David Priebe
Michael and Judy Rosow

\$2,000 to \$4,999

Joel Altstein and Nan M. Laird
Joel and Lisa Alvord
Richard and Cece Armstrong
Bruce A. Bauman and
Denise D. Selden
Mary Berg
Tom Boreiko and Alison Coolidge
Deborah and David Brown
Blair and Nancy Burlingame
Harold and Geraldine Cooper
Allyn and Mary Copp
Charles Cowing and Katherine Gibson
Michele Demarest and
John D. Patterson, Jr.
Linda and Charles Findlay



Photo by: Amy Tripp

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Joanne Leary
Leona Kern
Sarah and Ted Lodge
Paul Maeder and Gwill York
Stacy and Sean Mullaney
Thomas and Katharine Schmitt
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\$1,000 to \$1,999

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Kathy Wattles
Robert and Weezie Lawrence
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Ward and Lucy Mooney
Brian and Cricket Mullaney

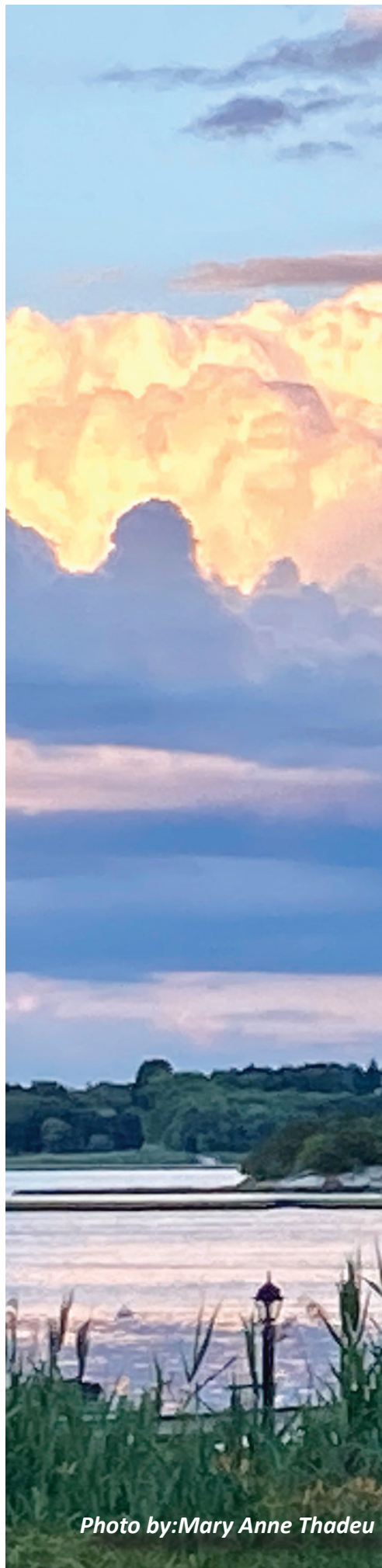


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Sharon Nolan and Jim Rosenfeld
Marilyn Packard-Luther and Jeff Bull
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Andrea M. Powning
Robert Pozzo
Randy Goodhue
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Debby Robbins and George Andrews
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Lin Beck and Bill Pardee
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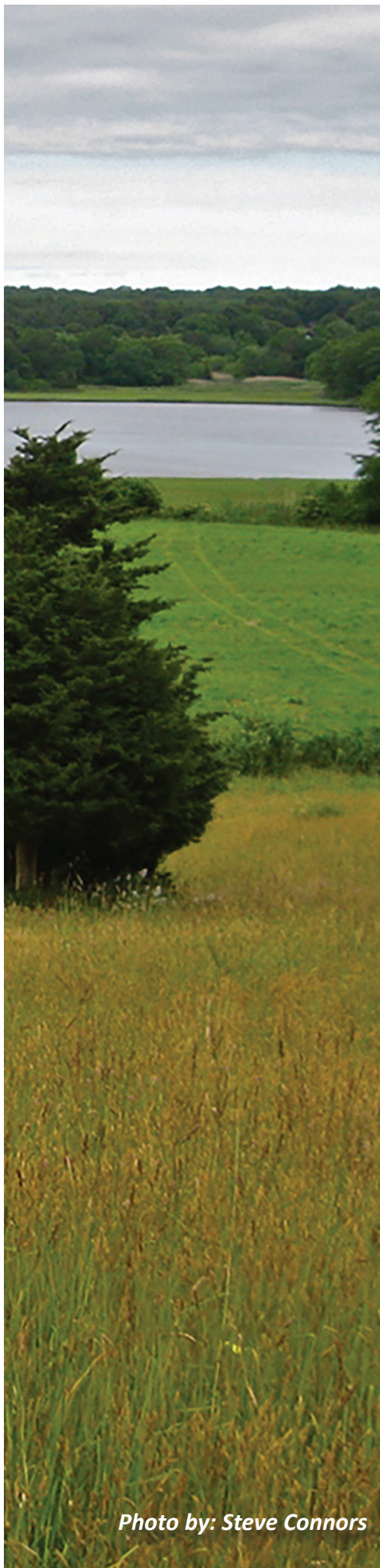


Photo by: Steve Connors

Deborah Weaver and Philip Weinberg
Bob and Mary Ellen White
Jim and Nancy Whitin
Pam Wilde
Ginny and Jack Wilkens
Jim and Robyn Worthington
Stephen Wuori

Up to \$500

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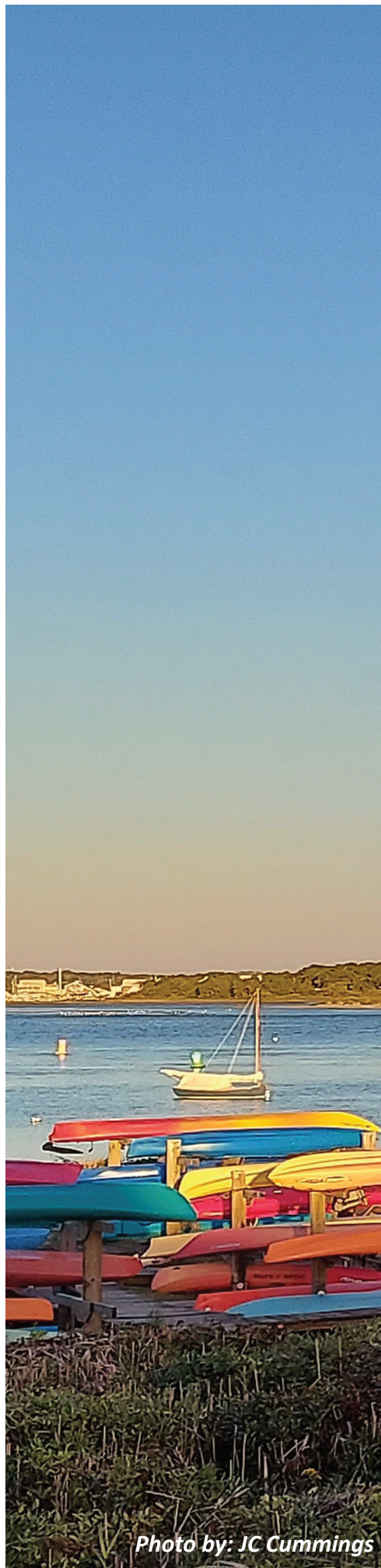
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Photo by: Judith Frampton

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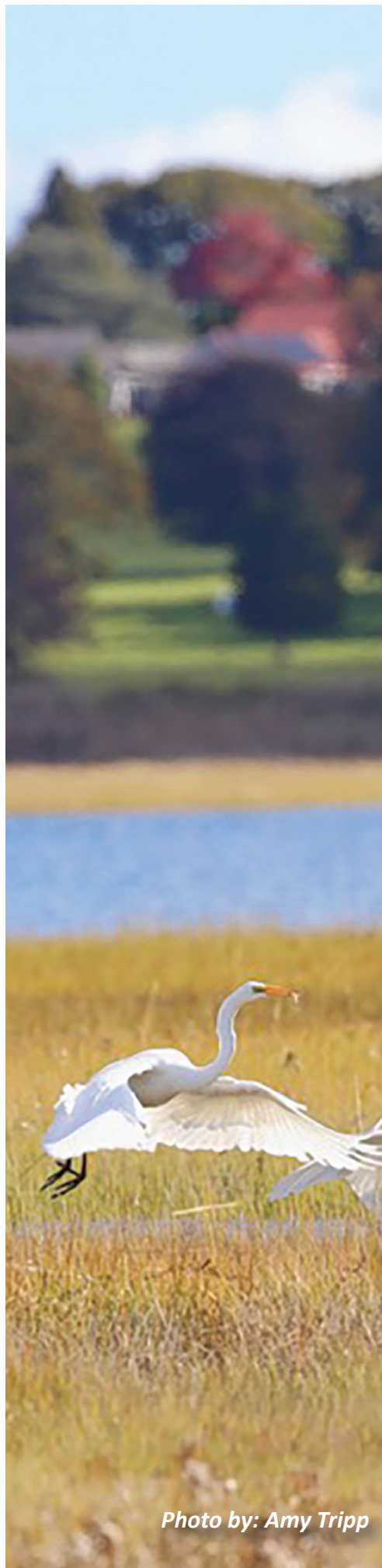


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Winter Art Show 2024

Our 11th Annual Winter Art Show The show ran two weeks. Our community of artists really came through for us, and we had a great showcase of talent in 2024. We appreciate the extraordinary talents of our regional artists and enjoy the

opportunity to share great art with our members and guests each winter. We were thankful to utilize the beautiful Westport Art Group Gallery for our 11th Annual Winter Art Show in late February. The theme for the art works was “Love Your River”, and this concept inspired some truly creative pieces. Forty artists participated, delivering to us a remarkable variety of artwork inspired by our beautiful coastal environment. We estimate that over two hundred people visited the show, and again had online bidding through 32 Auctions.com.



Artists

Ray Audet
Michele Barnes
Dot Bergen
Carol Bliven
Marianne Boucher
Cheryle Cantin
Janet Carney
Pam Clarkson
Susan Czernicka
Bob Daylor

Robert Dec
Brad Drury
Janet Dubuc
Nadine Flowers
Rita Gardent
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Robin Nunes
Susan Strauss

Nancy & Michael Shand
Kitt Shaffer
Dabba Stearns
Greg Stone
Amelia Tripp
Iria DeValles-Vieira
Amir Viskin
Faith Wilbur
Corey Windham

Summer Concert 2024

We are grateful to Westport Rivers and the Russell family for their generosity in hosting the event, and to our generous sponsor DSK Architects + Planners. We thank Mid City Steel for their additional support. Our raffle item this year was a cornhole set with a Westport River designed by Kim Botelho our Education Director.



WRWA's Summer Concert at the Westport Rivers Vineyard took place on a lovely July evening, with a cheerful crowd thoroughly enjoying our featured artist, Martin Sexton. This was WRWA's tenth annual summer concert, another success for our organization.



River Day 2024

We featured many of the same popular vendors and exhibitors as in years past, with the exciting addition of showcasing the Eastern Medicine Singers Algonquin Language Culture Keepers. River Day offered fun activities for kids, live music, food & beverages, and a lively community drum circle. Good weather helped motivate hundreds of visitors to come to the Head Landing on June 22.

We give thanks to all our sponsors and volunteers!



Westport River Watershed Alliance



River Day • June 22, 2024

Annual Free Riverfront Festival

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Head of Westport Town Landing

Love Your River

The Eastern Medicine Singers Algonquin Language Culture Keepers
Fun activities for kids • Live Music • Food & Beverages
Exhibitors and Vendors • Community Drum Circle

Sponsors



Jack's Landscapin' • Anchor Animal Hospital
Westport Chiropractic • Distinctive Auto Body

outreach@wrwa.com • 508-636-3016
www.westportwatershed.org



2024 Summer Gala

The 2024 Summer Gala was a resounding success, bringing together nearly 500 guests for an unforgettable evening in support of the Westport River Watershed Alliance. Despite early concerns about the weather, attendees were treated to spectacular views from River Rock Farm. The Gala would not have been possible without our incredible volunteers, whose hard work behind the scenes made the night truly special.

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In memory of Dr. David Wallace
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High School Merit Scholarships

The Westport River Watershed Alliance has provided a Merit Award Scholarship to graduating seniors for the past twenty-five years. This award was made possible by the generosity of the late Margot C. Boote, and by Bill Heath in memory of his parents Ruth and Bill Heath. Margo, Ruth and Bill were all committed to environmental issues and the protection of the natural world. Up until now, one or two recipients were selected each year. This year, WRWA is pleased to announce that for the first time in the program's history, four awardees were selected for their outstanding academic record, commitment to the environment, and leadership roles they demonstrated in their chosen fields of interest. Thanks to an anonymous donation Avery Carvalho, Thomas Bernard, and Matthew Costa from Westport High School and Ben Harrington from Dartmouth High School each received \$1000. To date, WRWA has awarded a total of fifty-one scholarships.



From left to right: Avery Carvalho, Thomas Bernard, Matthew Costa and Ben Harrington

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