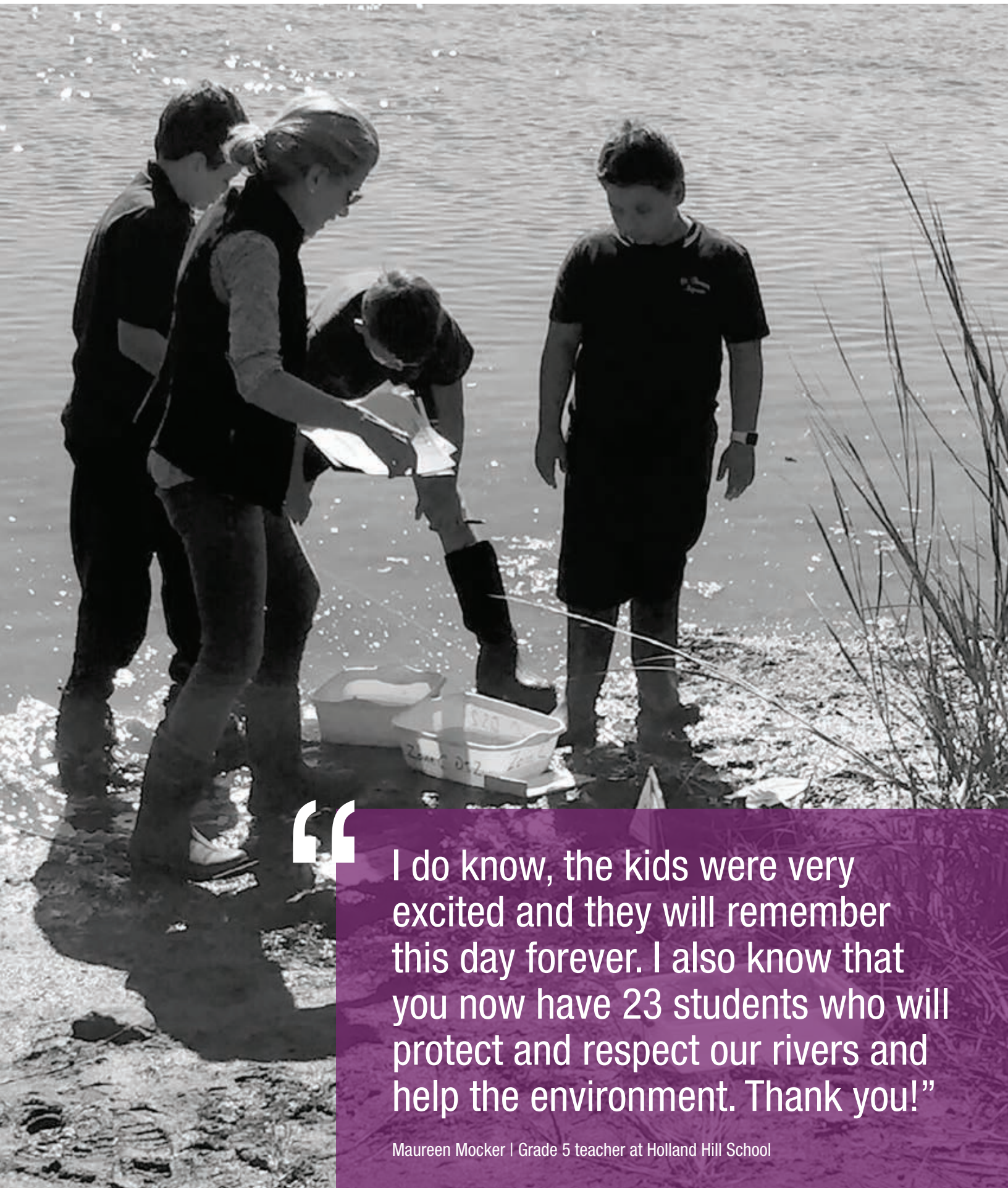


2018 ANNUAL REPORT

mrwc-fairfield.org





“

I do know, the kids were very excited and they will remember this day forever. I also know that you now have 23 students who will protect and respect our rivers and help the environment. Thank you!”

Maureen Mocker | Grade 5 teacher at Holland Hill School



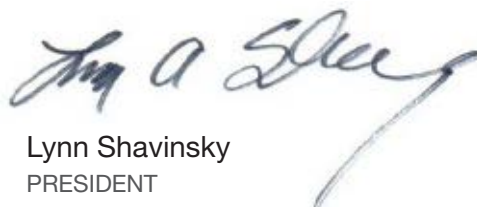
PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This year has been a year of adaptations. As we teach in grade 3 of the River-Lab Program, organisms adapt to maximize their success within their habitats. Our organization is no different. In 2018, Mill River Wetland Committee faced a number of changes and has begun to adapt in order to continue being the best local resource for environmental education.

The greatest change we face is the implementation of the Next Generation Science Standards within the science curriculum. While student led discovery and relevant scientific practice has been a cornerstone of the River-Lab Program, there are adjustments in alignment of the content areas in each grade level. Our Curriculum Committee, River-Lab Directors and Board have all been involved in restructuring our program. Last Spring, we implemented a new pilot program for grade 5 using our key concepts to better align with the new curriculum. In addition, the Estuary program did not run during the year to allow for better curriculum relevance with students who are in grade 7 this year.

Another exciting change that MRWC was involved with relates to our local community of Fairfield. Fairfield is taking a leadership role in the state with our town's new Sustainability Plan. MRWC is committed to being a community leader in environmental education to support the town's direction. This past year, we reached out to other like minded organizations and will continue to partner with others to further sustainability initiatives.

MRWC has always been an organization committed to educating our community about environmental issues, engaging them to make active choices to support sustainability and to advocate for the health of our watershed and greater environment. In the past year, we have found that we stand solidly behind that mission as we incorporate new and exciting methods of implementation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lynn Shavinsky". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the last letter.

Lynn Shavinsky
PRESIDENT

HIGHLIGHTS

While 2018 was full of exciting developments, we are especially proud of the recognition MRWC received for our part of Fairfield's application to the Sustainable CT initiative. One of just 5 communities awarded Silver Certification, the highest possible designation, Fairfield earned the most points of any community for sustainability actions across 9 broad categories. We worked with the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force to demonstrate how our programs provide "Watershed Education" under the "Well-Stewarded Land and Natural Resources" category. Our River-Lab Program was specifically highlighted by the Sustainable CT Review Committee for the breadth and scope of our public education outreach efforts. The accolades for the River-Lab Program reinforced the important role of early environmental education in a long term sustainability solution.

BUILDING ON THE MOMENTUM OF 2017, MRWC CONTINUED TO INCREASE OUR COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT OUTSIDE THE RIVER-LAB PROGRAM. WE FORGED NEW PARTNERSHIPS WITH:

- Wild Birds Unlimited on Black Rock Turnpike. Together, we ran a scavenger hunt for young students to learn about birds that spend winter in Connecticut and the challenges they face.
- Dr. Jennifer Mattei from the Biology Department at Sacred Heart University. At our Annual Meeting, she spoke about the significant progress made against coastal erosion with the artificial reefs installed at Stratford Point. In addition, we organized a group of volunteers to support her Earth Day initiative to plant estuary grasses to further combat erosion.
- Other CT environmental groups on projects large and small. The biggest joint project was an effort to spread the word about the Public Land Conveyance Protections included on the November 2018 ballot (Question 2). Almost 85% of voters approved the amendment to the CT Constitution requiring a public hearing before public lands can be sold, swapped, or given away by special acts in the General Assembly. A victory for all!

WE ALSO WE CONTINUED SUCCESSFUL TRADITIONS, INCLUDING:

- Two trivia night fundraisers
- Beautification at Rockland Pocket Park with Sleepy Hollow Landscaping
- Annual clean-up at Perry's Mill Pond Open Space
- Family Water Hike celebrating National Trails Day



IMAGES FROM TOP: Wild Birds Unlimited, Dr. Jennifer Mattei, Coastal cleanup

KUDOS

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

The following individuals were honored for their service to the River-Lab Program at our Annual Picnic at the Mill, home of Jocelyn T. (Joy) Shaw. We sincerely appreciate their commitment and dedication to environmental science and the community.

Kingfisher Badge

Guided at least 1 study-trip per grade level and at least 10 study-trips total

Tracey O'Neill
Carrie Rullo
Kelly Sullivan

5 Year Award

Guided at least 5 years and received Kingfisher Badge

Alison Genovese
Nikki Vinoski

10 Year Award

Guided at least 10 years and received Kingfisher Badge

Sara Jannott
David McKinnis
Kathryn O'Mahony

MRWC Scholarship for Sustainability

Each year, MRWC recognizes a senior from Fairfield Ludlowe and Warde high schools for their study of and commitment to science and the environment. For generations, MRWC's River-Lab Program volunteers have provided Fairfield students with unique opportunities to explore environmental science in a local watershed. These experiences have made enough impact on some that they have become authors, environmental lawyers, environmental videographers and science teachers. We hope this scholarship encourages additional students to become leaders in environmental stewardship. This year, only one scholarship was awarded, as the second recipient had a change in circumstance.

Fairfield Ludlowe High School Recipient

Jingyi (Susan) Dai has a passion for Biology. While at Ludlowe, she served as the Vice President of the Science National Honor Society and was a member of several other honor societies. Dai was a flutist with the Concert Band and Wind Ensemble and very involved with the Greater Bridgeport Youth Orchestra. She currently attends Wellesley College, where she plans to study and conduct research in Biology.



IMAGES FROM LEFT: Gifts presented at the Annual Picnic, Joy Shaw at the Annual Picnic



VOLUNTEERS OF THE YEAR

SARA JANNOTT AND NICOLE NUTTALL

We are grateful to both these ladies for the dedication of their time and many talents to our beloved River-Lab Program. Their most significant joint accomplishment is the complete redesign of our trip and guide scheduling process after the implementation of our new website. These ladies worked countless hours to find, test, and implement an online solution that was familiar, user-friendly, and low cost! This volunteer coordination platform has been fully implemented and receives rave reviews from guides.

SARA JANNOTT

- Sara has been a dedicated MRWC volunteer, serving as guide, school captain and model leader since 2008. However, her involvement with River-Lab dates back to her participation in study-trips as a child growing up in Fairfield.
- Sara practically bubbles with enthusiasm for all things River-Lab, especially grade 5. She has been in charge of this grade since 2015, and is our most experienced Lab Leader for the in-classroom microscopic study and identification of plankton.
- Her enthusiasm is contagious, making Sara a wonderful ambassador for the Program. She truly inspires the students to protect our watersheds, and with them, the plankton responsible for almost half the carbon monoxide to oxygen conversion on earth.

NICOLE NUTTALL

- Nicole has been involved within all areas of the program, starting as a guide in 2011 and taking on leadership roles at each grade level.
- Nicole has led River-Lab Estuary (formerly River-Lab grade 6) since 2015, introducing several improvements, including a successful petition to Fairfield Public School (FPS) Administrators to add 10 minutes to the study-trip.
- She oversaw the program through more than a year of transition, keeping all stakeholders updated, and ensuring River-Lab was addressed in the new middle school science curriculum.
- Nicole has generously shared her photographic and graphic design talents with MRWC. Her keen eye has yielded many improvements to study trip materials, MRWC social media, and the website.



“

This [watershed education] effort is incredibly impressive, both in terms of the collaboration between the town, the nonprofit MRWC, and the other groups (PTAs, etc.) and in terms of the breadth and scope of the citizen monitoring effort and the accompanying public education.”

Sustainable CT Review Committee in September 2018

Photo by Tara Benyei

RIVER-LAB PROGRAM

SCHOOLS (Gr. 3-5)



11 ELEMENTARY (PUBLIC), 2 PRIVATE

STUDENTS (Gr. 3-5)



2,336

GUIDES (Gr. 3-5)



437

2018 HIGHLIGHTS

- The Board of Education for Fairfield Public Schools (FPS) officially approved a new science curriculum which continues to drive changes to the River-Lab Program.
- Dedicated curriculum committee volunteers developed and piloted a new study-trip for 5th grade. The pilot study-trips represent a fundamental shift to student-driven observations and question formation. This shift challenges students, teachers and parents (our guides) to hone their observation skills while resisting the tendency to make assumptions and give information, even unconsciously!
- Four schools (Assumption, McKinley, Riverfield, and St. Thomas) piloted the new study-trip. These pilot trips were led by our curriculum committee volunteers. The regular 5th grade study-trips ran concurrently for all 9 remaining elementary schools.
- The Estuary study-trip, the final unit in our River-Lab Program, did not run in 2018 due to the FPS' new science curriculum shift (river basin systems are now taught in 7th grade). Therefore, those students will visit the estuary in Spring 2019, ensuring all students have the opportunity to observe the river basin system's link to the Long Island Sound.
- The parochial school 6th grade curriculum continues to study the estuary in grade 6. Those students visited the estuary in the fall of 2017.
- The grade level mismatch between FPS and the parochial schools precipitated the name change to the River-Lab Estuary study-trip, focusing on the program content rather than grade level.
- Study-trips for grades 3 and 4 ran in the Fall according to plan. We anticipate changes to the study-trips in 2019 as a result of continued grade level shifts in the science curriculum concepts within FPS.

CURRICULUM NEWS

Curriculum development continues to be a priority as we adjust the River-Lab Program to align with the grade level expectations of the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and the updated science curriculum adopted by Fairfield Public Schools (FPS). The Curriculum Committee piloted a new grade 5 study trip which focuses on how organisms of the floodplain interact with one another, transfer energy, and influence the ecosystem. In the NGSS, students are encouraged to observe closely, gather data, and develop their own questions about these patterns of interactions. The pilot was a huge success and will run again this spring.

In July, members of the Curriculum Committee collaborated with FPS teachers and administrators to outline the ways in which River-Lab study trips support the newly adopted science curriculum in the remaining elementary grades. As a result of that work, Curriculum Committee members will spend 2019 creating NGSS-aligned field experiences for grade 4 that highlight the effects of weathering and erosion. In addition, the team will develop new guide training that prepares guides for the significant shift to the NGSS focus on student observations, data gathering and question formation.

The River-Lab Estuary program, formerly taught in grade 6, will be presented in grade 7 where it aligns with the content in the “Ecosystems” unit. On the study trip, students observe and record conditions, perform field tests of water quality, and assess the biodiversity of the estuary. Data gathered in the field is collected and analyzed in order to find patterns and prompt scientific inquiries about the health of the estuary and the entire river basin system.

Although the grade specific content and pedagogical practices are changing, Fairfield educators remain committed to using our local river basin to engage students in science learning. River-Lab remains a valued resource to educate Fairfield’s next generation of environmentally aware citizens.



One touch of nature makes the whole world kin.”

William Shakespeare

LUMINARY



Mary Hogue, member of the all-volunteer MRWC Board, was awarded the Fairfielder of the Year Award for her outstanding volunteer contributions to Fairfield in 2018. The award is presented annually to a model citizen, nominated by fellow residents and town employees, for the dedication of personal time, energy and service to initiatives that improve life in Fairfield. Mary’s deep knowledge and expertise on energy efficiency, sustainability and the environment benefits the Town and its residents and has also made Fairfield a model for other communities. We congratulate Mary on this well-deserved recognition. We are grateful for her dedicated efforts on behalf of MRWC and Fairfield as a whole.

HERE ARE A FEW EXCERPTS FROM THOSE WHO NOMINATED HER:

“Mary is a tireless volunteer who has dedicated countless hours to the Earth Day Committee, the Fairfield Forestry Committee and the Sustainable Fairfield Task Force. She is a key link and supporter of all the groups that contribute to a better environment and quality of life in Town... I can’t think of anyone more deserving of the Fairfielder of the Year Award.”

- Alyssa Israel | Past Chair of the Fairfield Bicycle & Pedestrian Plan Advisory Committee

“It is my opinion that Ms. Hogue stands out among all the citizen volunteers with whom I’ve worked, anywhere... Her tireless efforts in 2018 to advance Town sustainability, resilience, and equity goals are well known to everyone who participated in these initiatives...”

- Geoffrey Steadman | Consultant to Fairfield Forestry Commission and Fairfield Harbor Management Commission

FIRST SELECTMAN MIKE TETREAU SAID THE FOLLOWING:

“Mary is extremely dedicated to the well-being and progress of our town, particularly in the areas of clean energy, forestry, sustainability and environmental protection. She has effectively integrated these important issues throughout our community—all while doing this as a devoted volunteer simply wanting to make a positive and meaningful difference.”

COMMUNITY



A SAMPLING
OF THE MANY
ACTIVITIES MRWC
ORGANIZED OR
PARTICIPATED IN
DURING 2018.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Perry's Mill Pond clean up, community presentation of grade 4 model, Sustainable CT award ceremony, Rockland Park, outdoor classroom created by Eagle Scout Mitchell Ransden, Wild Birds Unlimited, Clam Clinic, conifer revetment with Trout Unlimited Nutmeg Chapter

VOLUNTEER GUIDES

Erica Acheychek	Heather Cameron	Andrea Flynn	Tricia Kane	Lynsey McCloskey
Callie Acker	Jessica Campbell	Daniel Forgie	Juli Karacsonyi	Eileen McCormack
Jenny Acquaviva	Mike Carafotes	Karen Fox	Ann Katis	Gerry McCormack
Sarah Adhya	Kristin Carbone	Kristin Frame	Jean Kaul	Cathleen
Halla Akach	Jennifer Carozza	Gail Francolini	Jennifer Keating	McCormick
Amity Almond	Matt Carty	Vivian Freitas	Andrea Kelly	Hilary McCusker
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Photo by Tara Benyei

“

The Mill River floodplain is the Eden of Fairfield. It's woven path through town connects the elderly with the past, the established with it's roots and teaches our children how they and their actions are connected with all that is around them.”

Steve Baker, Mill River Wetland Committee Board Member



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\$1000+

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Lynn Shavinsky
Jocelyn T. Shaw
Town of Fairfield

Heartfelt thanks to all who made donations in 2018.
Every contribution supports our work to help educate
our community to be stewards of the Earth.

Photo by Tara Benyei

MATCHING GIFT COMPANIES

Fidelity Charitable
The GE Foundation
The Health-e Giving Fund
Pitney Bowes Foundation

GIFTS IN HONOR OF

*Vincent Carissimi, Sr. and
his two older sons who
each served several years
(1969-1977) in the Mill
River Ranger Program*
Jocelyn T. Shaw

*Alison Genovese
on Her Birthday*
Sharyn Katz, Samantha
& Hunter

*Nicole Nuttall
on Her Birthday*
Steven Baker
Mickey Brooks
Sherrie Cannitello-Fahey

Sally Connolly
Alison Genovese
Mary Hogue &
Guy Gleysteen
Sara Jannott
Amy Jennings

Reini & Michael Knorr
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GIFTS IN MEMORY OF

Vincent Carissimi
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Richard Foltz
The Helitzer Family
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Wild Birds Unlimited



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Samantha Anderson

GUIDE AND CLASSROOM TRAINERS

Samantha Anderson

Steve Baker

Carol Barrios

Sara Jannott

Juli Karacsonyi

Reini Knorr

David McKinnis

Sarah Neafsey

Nicole Nuttall

Kate O'Mahony

Christina Rescsanski

Lynn Shavinsky

Subha Sunder

Nikki Vinoski




Photo by Tara Benyei

“

In every walk with nature one receives far more than he seeks.”

John Muir

2018 FINANCIAL REPORT

Mill River Wetland Committee, Inc
January 1, 2018 - December 31, 2018



* These restricted investments are funds from HUD for the dam restoration.

† Amounts have been corrected in connection with annual reconciliation of account holdings.

INCOME	12/31/2018	12/31/2017†
Donations		
General/Memorial	15,248.10	12,105.00
Annual appeal	2,040.00	4,415.00
Company Match	1,362.50	250.00
PTA donations	6,000.00	8,000.00
Subtotal Donations	24,650.60	24,770.00
River-Lab Program Income		
Study Trips	12,615.00	9,500.00
Reimburse Classroom Materials	0.00	0.00
Subtotal River-Lab Program	12,615.00	9,500.00
Fundraising Income		
Fairfield County Giving Day	1,685.00	2,200.00
Trivia Night	2,447.01	1,180.00
Earth Day	0.00	0.00
Giving Tuesday	995.00	2,745.00
Amazon Smile	95.29	94.23
Merchandise/Other	1,403.51	731.50
50th Anniversary Event	0.00	9,277.00
Subtotal Fundraising	6,625.81	16,227.73
Grants	2,400.00	886.00
Dividend/Interest Income	2,014.11	1,405.26
Total Income	48,305.52	52,788.99
EXPENSES		
MRWC Expenses		
Insurance	13,144.20	10,621.00
Copying	532.76	314.02
Office Storage	2,974.50	2,884.00
Office/Business Expenses	3,189.93	4,161.60
Annual Report Preparation	500.00	500.00
Scholarship Fund	500.00	500.00
Subtotal MRWC Expenses	20,841.39	18,980.62
River-Lab Program Expenses		
Guide & Teacher Materials	5.08	94.97
Study Trip Expenses	5,220.42	4,588.41
Subtotal River-Lab Program	5,225.50	4,683.38
Payroll Expenses		
Staff Payroll	20,475.01	21,700.00
Employment Taxes	678.70	1,945.14
Payroll Service Fee	964.54	2,202.17
Subtotal Payroll	22,118.25	25,847.31
Fundraising Expenses		
	120.11	3,160.76
Total Expenses	48,305.25	52,672.07
Net Cash Flow	0.27	116.92†
INVESTMENTS		
Vanguard Inter-Term Treasury Funds	39,852.86	39,457.18
Vanguard Inter-Term Treasury Funds*	26,783.18	26,517.28
Vanguard Short-Term Treasury Funds*	23,006.46	22,699.38
Total Investments	89,642.50	88,673.84





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