



# Taunton River Stewardship Council 2023 Annual Report

10/1/2022- 9/30/2023

**The Wild & Scenic Taunton River is a hidden treasure,  
rich in history and environmental resources.**

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## Message from the Council

*This past year resulted in exciting changes as we welcomed several new Council Members and finally found a home to call our own at the Taunton River Watershed Center, located at Sweets Knoll State Park in Dighton. This space, shared with the Taunton River Watershed Alliance, allows for the return of in-person meetings and events.*

*Since 2009, it has been our privilege to promote long-term protection of the Taunton River in southeastern Massachusetts, working closely with the river's outstanding communities and environmental partners. This year our Community Grants program awarded \$100,503 to 11 area projects, while our River Access Committee successfully completed a cartop boat launch site improvement. We look forward to continuing our work in 2024 and supporting new projects which will help to further protect and enhance river resources.*

*-Harry Bailey, Chair & Gloria Bancroft, Coordinator*



Gloria Bancroft





# About the Program

## Wild and Scenic Rivers

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 established a system to identify free-flowing rivers across the United States that possess “outstandingly remarkable values,” and to protect them “for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.” As of 2023, the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System has protected over 13,000 miles of 228 designated rivers in 41 states and Puerto Rico.

## Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers

Partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers are a unique category of designated rivers managed through long-term partnerships between the National Park Service and community, local, regional, and state stakeholders. The Taunton River is a Partnership Wild and Scenic River, with local management guided by the Taunton River Stewardship Council.

### Council Members

Delegates and Alternates (A)

**Berkley:** Joe Callahan

**Bridgewater:** Harry Bailey (Chairperson)

**Dighton:** Bill Frenette

**Fall River:** Open

**Freetown:** Linda Fournier, Rob Kerstiens (A)

**Halifax:** William Hinkley

**Middleboro:** Patricia Cassady

**Raynham:** Open

**Somerset:** Richard Ashcroft, Donna Desrosiers (A)  
(Co-chair/Secretary)

**Taunton:** Richard Shafer

**Executive Office of Energy and Environmental**

**Affairs:** Beth Lambert, Doug Cameron (A)

**Dighton Inter-Tribal Council:** Roger Desrosiers,  
Donna Desrosiers (A)

**National Park Service:** Lauren Bonatakis, Jamie  
Fosburgh

**Save the Bay:** Kate McPherson

**Southeast Regional Planning and Economic  
Development District:** Helen Zincavage, Danica  
Belknap (A)

**Taunton River Watershed Alliance:**

Gloria Bancroft, Bill Napolitano (A)

**Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater:** Kitty  
Doherty

**The Nature Conservancy:** Alison Bowden, Marea  
Gabriel (A)

**Wildlands Trust:** Scott MacFaden

## Taunton River Stewardship Council

The Taunton River Stewardship Council serves as the central coordinating body for implementing the Stewardship Plan, which promotes the long-term protection of the river by

- Bringing together, on a regular basis, various parties responsible for river management, facilitating agreements and coordination among them
- Providing a forum for all river interests to discuss and make recommendations regarding issues of concern
- Establishing priorities, work plans, action plans, and similar strategies to advance implementation of the Stewardship Plan



# Council Feature

## Member Showcase

### Katherine "Kitty" Doherty

For over four decades, Kitty has been at the forefront of local efforts to promote sound environmental stewardship of the Taunton River Watershed. For this reason, we are pleased to showcase Kitty in our first Annual Report. As founding member of the Taunton River Watershed Alliance, the Taunton River Stewardship Council, the Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater, and the Town River Fishery Committee, Kitty has been a catalyst in creating public awareness and coalition building around our important natural resources. Conservation is at the heart of all her work. Whether facilitating legislation for land preservation of the Old State Farm in Bridgewater, or advancing the creation of the Nunckatessett Greenway for a network of land and water trails, her commitment is unwavering. Kitty's dedication and knowledge makes her an outstanding asset to the Taunton River Stewardship Council, currently serving on the River Access Committee.



Kitty and grandson Collin take a break while hiking the Appalachian Trail in Vermont

## River Access Committee

### Committee Chair: Monica Bentley

The River Access and Improvement Committee was created to increase and improve river access along the upper Taunton River and tributaries. The overall goal of the Access Committee is to have a cartop boat launch site approximately every 5 miles, creating ample opportunities for recreational paddlers to launch and rest as they paddle. Approximately 10 sites have been identified for development or improvement. In 2023 the first site, Scadding Street on the Snake River in Taunton, was completed. Two other sites are in progress.

An additional goal is to increase river safety by addressing blowdowns and logjams that may be dangerous and could prevent recreational paddlers from passing through, with the understanding that woody debris is an ecological benefit to the river system. Currently, the Committee is working on improving flow conditions along the Town River between Stanley Iron Works Park and Hayward Street in Bridgewater. Other locations will follow.



# Community Grants Program

The Taunton River Stewardship Council runs a [Community Grants Program](#) with the purpose of supporting local efforts that help to protect and enhance river resources. This year we were pleased to grant \$100,503 to the following 11 projects.

## Herring Run Festival

**Town of Middleborough, Tourism Committee**

Funding to support the Middleborough Tourism Committee's annual Herring Run Festival held at Oliver Mill Park, Middleborough. This event highlights the environment of the Nemasket River, a major tributary of the Taunton River, through educational displays, Native American cultural programs, and local farm foods. In addition, this event aligns with the Taunton River's outstanding resource values, including increasing public awareness of the biological diversity and intact ecology of the river's ecosystem. Funding supported the cost of the required traffic control plan, advertising, and portable restrooms.

Join us for next year's Herring Run Festival on April 13-14, 2024!



Louise Dery-Wells



George Austin

## Sowams Heritage Area Project

**Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc**

Funding for a feasibility study to gain Congressional approval for the designation of Sowams, the homeland of the Pokanoket people, as a National Heritage Area (NHA). The project will include a natural and cultural resources inventory, boundary delineation, mapping, and more, bringing both national and international attention to the Pokanoket homeland and helping to correct and further illuminate the significance of the region's history and wealth of natural resources.

Learn more about this project at [sowams.org](http://sowams.org)

## Picone Farm Preservation Project

**Town of Middleborough**

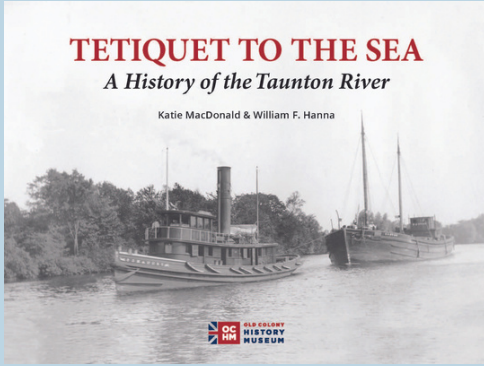
Funding for the environmental site assessment and appraisal related to the Picone Farm Preservation Project on the eastern side of the Nemasket River, a major tributary to the Taunton River. Previous TRSC funding helped the town secure an additional \$6.2M in various grants and appropriations, including \$2.1M in State funding and \$1M in Community Preservation Act funding, for the purchase of Picone Farm, securing over one mile of pristine open space and riverfront access on the Nemasket River.

View the [Picone Farm Preservation Project Video](#) for more info.



Wildlands Trust/EcoPhotography

# Community Grants Program



## Taunton River Book Project: Tetiquet To The Sea Old Colony History Museum

Funding to support the first comprehensive publication to capture both the history and present-day vitality of the river. The rich and diverse history will include stories from Indigenous history through later shipbuilding, fishing and manufacturing activities, as well as environmental advocacy and legislation that led to the Wild & Scenic designation.

Get your copy of *Tetiquet to the Sea* on the [OCHM website!](#)

## Taylor Farm, Fort Hill Conservation Project Town of Middleborough

Funding for the appraisal of Taylor Farm, a 63.6 acre property located at the northwestern corner of Middleborough, where the Taunton River divides Middleborough from Raynham to the west and Bridgewater to the north. This project is an important component of the larger Fort Hill Conservation Project, which aims to protect 280.6 acres with 2.3 miles of frontage along the Taunton River.



Patricia Cassady



## Old State Farm Trail Phase 2 Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater

Funding for Phase 2 of the Old State Farm Trail. These funds, along with funding from Bridgewater's CPA fund and the Sheehan Family Companies, were used to achieve the transfer of a permanent trail easement from the Department of Corrections (DOC) to the town of Bridgewater. This provides a critical first step in the trail creation and helps secure additional funds for engineering and permitting work, setting a solid foundation for moving into trail building (Phase 3).

## Phase VIII Diamondback Terrapin Study Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Funding to support the Phase VIII Diamondback Terrapin Study in the lower Taunton River and tributaries. Funding assists with the cost of a college student technician, who along with a Bristol County Agricultural High School instructor and volunteers, gather invaluable data to determine additional conservation methods to protect this and other species in the future. Listed as a threatened species under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act, the Diamondback Terrapin is the only turtle species in North America which exclusively inhabits estuaries and salt marshes. Once prevalent in Mount Hope Bay, impacts from human development and climate change have contributed to their population decline.

Learn more about this study at on the [TRWA website!](#)



Sally Spooner

# Community Grants Program

## Lower Taunton River Tour Boat

### Spirit of Somerset, Inc

Funding to support scenic and educational boat rides on the Lower Taunton River estuary. Over 1,500 participants enjoyed the river in what has been renamed the Christina Wordell Memorial River Cruise, after one of our late, original TRSC delegates from Somerset, who was dedicated to the preservation of the Taunton River's outstanding resource values.

Visit the [Spirit of Somerset website](#) for further info and photos.



David Berube

## Skim Milk Bridge Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places

### Town of West Bridgewater



Joan Pierce, MA Dept. of Fish and Game

Funding to assist with consulting expenses related to the nomination of Skim Milk Bridge and adjacent structures to the National Register of Historic Places. This site, located at the Town River in West Bridgewater, is possibly the oldest surviving bridge of its kind in the US, constructed circa early 1800's or perhaps earlier. Successful nomination will be an important step in securing funding for its preservation and further study. Among other objectives, this project ties into TRSC's goal of protecting and preserving the cultural and historical assets of the Wild & Scenic River and its tributaries.

## Taunton River Festival

### Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Funding to support the Taunton River Watershed Alliance's annual Taunton River Festival held at Weir Village Riverfront Park, Taunton. This event highlights the important work of non-profit environmental organizations within our watershed, as well as provides recreational information and educational outreach on the effects of pollution on our waterways and the importance of wildlife protection. Funding supported the cost of traffic control and portable restrooms.

Join us for next year's Taunton River Festival on June 9, 2024!



Gloria Bancroft



Byron Holmes

## Park Maintenance

### Friends of Bridge Village Heritage Park

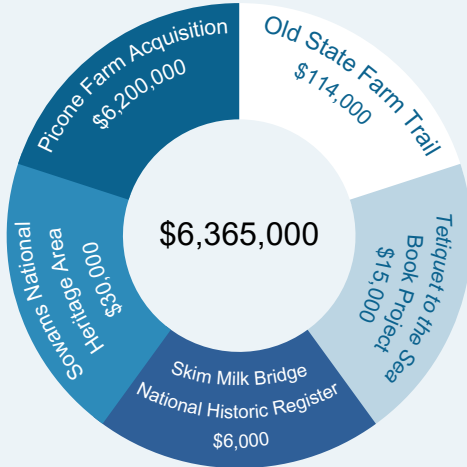
Funding to assist in the use and maintenance of the Bridge Village Heritage Park located on the Taunton River near the Berkley-Dighton Bridge at 70 Elm Street, Berkley. The ½ acre public park offers recreational fishing, picnicking, and boat access for paddlers. Funding provided for portable restrooms and the addition of sustainable clam shells for parking lot access.

For the latest park updates, visit their [Facebook page](#).

# The Year at a Glance

Through our [Community Grants program](#), recipients were successful in leveraging an additional \$6,365,000 in funding for their respective projects, protecting 190 acres of land & contributing over 1,300 volunteer hours.

## Leveraged Funds



## Volunteer Hours



**1371+ volunteer hours**

## News in the Watershed



**Protected: 190 acres and 6000ft of Nemasket River frontage**

### High Street Dam Removal Begins

Bridgewater's High Street Dam, which stood across the Town River for more than 100 years, has been removed. The removal of the 12.5-foot-high, 80-foot-wide hazardous dam opens 10 miles of river to migratory fish. Further upstream, the upcoming replacement of the High Street Bridge will reduce flooding by better accommodating peak river flows and is designed to withstand a 500-year storm and climate change projections through 2070. Learn more [here](#).

### National Park Foundation Grant Awarded

The Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater, in partnership with the Town of Bridgewater, the MA Dept. of Corrections, the Taunton River Stewardship Council, and others, was awarded a National Park Foundation grant of \$50,000 to construct a 1.8-mile, natural surface pedestrian trail along the banks of the Wild and Scenic Taunton River and other land. The trail will provide public access to this portion of the Taunton River and all its benefits; additional public access is envisioned in the near future. For more information, visit the [National Park Foundation website](#).

### Council Openings

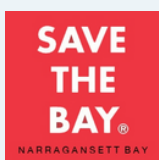
We currently have two Council Member openings in the communities of Fall River and Raynham. We welcome interested parties to contact Gloria Bancroft at [director@savethetaunton.org](mailto:director@savethetaunton.org).

## Thank you to our partners!

Visit their websites by clicking the logos below.

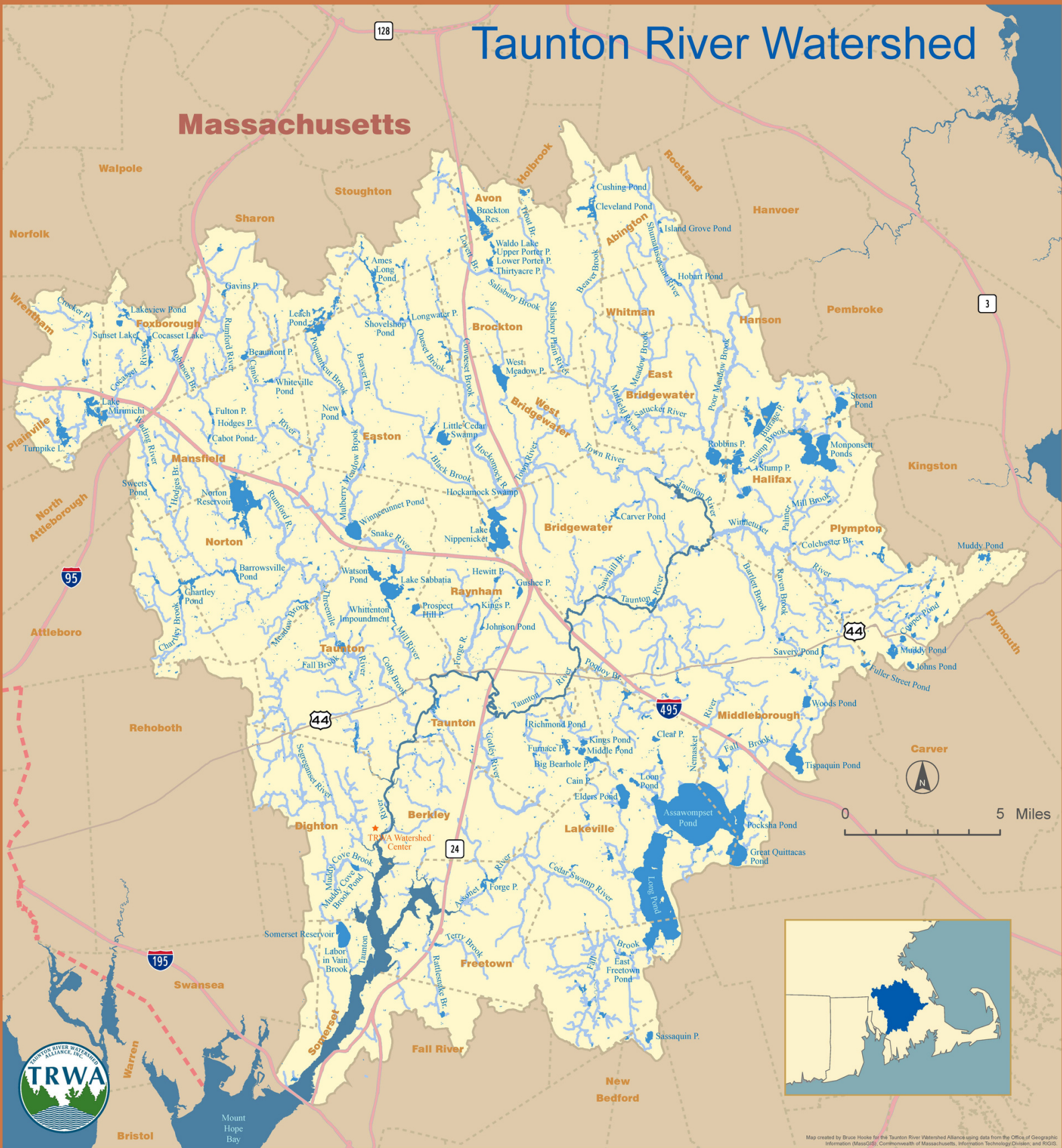


Dighton Inter-Tribal Council



# Taunton River Watershed

## Massachusetts



Map created by Bruce Hooks for the Taunton River Watershed Alliance using data from the Office of Geographic Information (MassGIS), Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Information Technology Division, and RGIS.

Learn more at [tauntonriver.org](http://tauntonriver.org)

Or contact us at:

Taunton River Stewardship Council  
1387 Somerset Ave Dighton, MA 02715  
Mailing Address: PO Box 1116 Taunton, MA 02780  
Telephone: (508) 828-1101  
[director@savethetaunton.org](mailto:director@savethetaunton.org)

