

Taunton River Stewardship Council

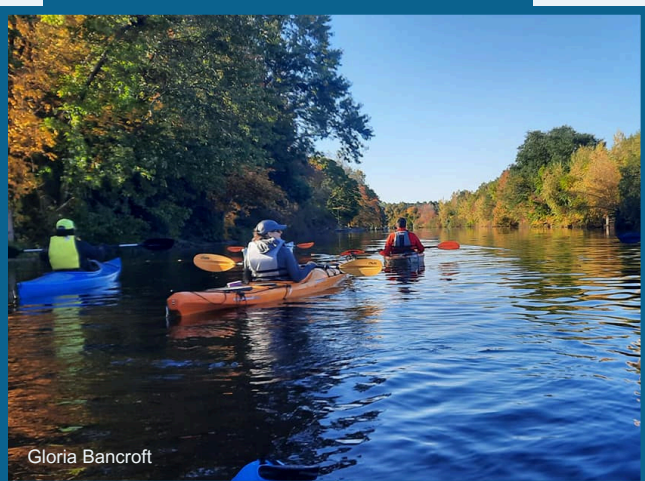
2024 Annual Report

10/1/2023- 9/30/2024

The Taunton Wild & Scenic River provides outstanding wildlife habitat, scenic beauty & recreational opportunities.

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Gloria Bancroft

Message from the Council

2024 was indeed an exciting year with several new happenings. Through the work of our River Access Committee, the new River Stewardship Grants Program was created. Up to \$10,000 per year is now available to cities and towns seeking to address river access challenges, caused by fallen woody debris. Be on the lookout for improved access in the Satucket River from our 1st grant recipient, the Town of East Bridgewater.

We hosted our 1st legislative visit at the Great River Preserve in Bridgewater, to spread awareness of the Taunton Wild & Scenic River's importance and need for continued protection. Our Community Grants program awarded over \$50,000 to 10 area projects to further protect and enhance river resources.

As we navigate the effects of 2025's federal funding concerns, we remain committed to working with our watershed partners and communities in the protection of the Taunton Wild & Scenic River.

-Harry Bailey, Chair & Gloria Bancroft, Coordinator





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 2024, 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

Halifax: William Hinkley

Middleboro: Patricia Cassady

Raynham: Jim Rothwell

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

Taunton: Richard Shafer

Executive Office of Energy and Environmental

Affairs: Beth Lambert, William Hinkley (A)

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

National Park Service: Lauren Bonatakis

Save the Bay: Kate McPherson, Josh Hall (A)

**Southeast Regional Planning and Economic
Development District:** Danica Belknap,
Sara Singh (A)

Taunton River Watershed Alliance:

Gloria Bancroft, Bill Napolitano (A)

Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater: Kitty
Doherty

The Nature Conservancy: Marea Gabriel, Alison
Bowden, (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



Kevin Carr

Council Feature

Member Showcase

Patricia (Tricia) Cassady

As the Town of Middleboro's Conservation Agent and serving as the Town's delegate to our Council for over a decade, Tricia has successfully brought forth a number of important projects. Her efforts focused on the preservation of natural, cultural and heritage landscapes and assets, not only vital to her town, the river and its tributaries, but to the state, region and nation, including indigenous peoples. For this reason, we are pleased to showcase Tricia in our 2024 Annual Report. In addition her day job, Tricia has given countless hours to furthering environmental education and biodiversity conservation through her affiliation with the Network of Conservation Educators and Practitioners (NCEP). As a talented artist, she has used her own Art & Nature Studio, and her affiliation with the Guild of Natural Science Illustrators, to help people experience nature and learn how to promote the stewardship of our natural resources. Her passion and dedication makes her an outstanding asset to the Taunton River Stewardship Council, currently serving on the River Access Committee.



Tricia at Mass Audubon Moose Hill, Sharon MA

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.

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.



Upper Taunton River in Bridgewater, Monica Bentley

To assist in reaching our goals, the new River Stewardship Grants Program was created in 2024. Funds up to \$10,000/year are available to cities and towns to address river blockages. Our first award, \$4,500 to the Town of East Bridgewater, will be used to improve access on the Satucket River in 2025.

Community Grants Program

The Taunton River Stewardship Council offers a Community Grants Program to support local efforts which protect and enhance river resources. Awards of up to \$25,000 per year are available to watershed cities and towns. For program details visit tauntonriver.org. This year we were pleased to grant \$50,555 to the following projects:

Hathaway Park Kayak/Canoe Storage Rack

Town of Freetown

Funding was provided to purchase kayak/canoe storage racks at Hathaway Park in Assonet, along the Assonet River to allow residents to store their kayaks and canoes for the season. From the put-in at Hathaway Park, paddlers can explore from Assonet to other areas, such as Dighton Rock State Park. Paddling on the Assonet River is a relaxing way to discover the unique character of Freetown and natural resources of the Taunton River Watershed.



Town of Freetown



Town of Easton

Invasive Species Evaluation, Four Ponds

Town of Easton

Funding for the evaluation of aquatic invasive species at four ponds managed by the Easton Conservation Commission: New Pond (16.4 acres), Old Pond (5 acres), Ames Long Pond (16.4 acres) and Langwater Pond (14.8 acres). Each pond has aquatic invasive plants exacerbating eutrophication. The Town's planned restoration project will identify the invasive species, the extent of infestation, and options for effective management. Results will improve water quality, restore recreational activities, and preserve wildlife habitat.

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, while increasing public awareness of the biological diversity and intact ecology of the river's ecosystem.



Gloria Bancroft

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 1/2 acre park offers recreational fishing, picnicking, and excellent access to the river for paddlers. Funding provided for portable restrooms and landscaping services.



Gloria Bancroft



Gloria Bancroft

Taunton River Festival

Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Funding to support the Taunton River Watershed Alliance's annual Taunton River Festival held at the Weir Village Riverfront Park in Taunton. This event celebrates the Taunton Wild & Scenic River by highlighting the important work of our watershed's non-profit environmental organizations. Educational outreach on the effects of pollution, current wildlife conservation efforts, land preservation, and local recreational opportunities, such as hiking trails and river access sites, are shared. Funding supported the cost of traffic control and shuttle services.

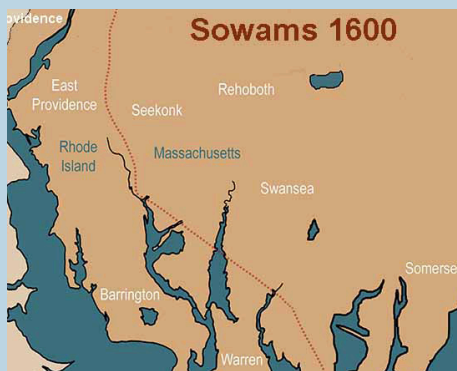
Slade's Ferry Scenic Waterfront Park & Overlook

Town of Somerset

Funding to create a visual design concept to further the Scenic Waterfront Park and Overlook plans in Somerset's Slade's Ferry Crossing District. Once a thriving commercial area, the District has deteriorated over time. However with the anticipated demolition of the Brightman Street Bridge, there is potential for a new recreational fishing pier and scenic waterfront park. Funding will assist in the development of these plans.



Paul Cogley



David Weed

Sowams Area Heritage Project

Sowams Heritage Area Project, Inc

Previous funding was awarded 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. Additional funding in 2024 supports GIS mapping of the region and professional website design to include interactive access to maps of the region.

Community Grants Program

Oxbow Preserve Expansion

Wildlands Trust

Funding to support the appraisal cost for the Oxbow Preserve Expansion Project in Raynham. The Oxbow Preserve purchased in 2008 contains extensive frontage along the Taunton River with no public river access. This adjacent 77 acre acquisition would significantly expand the Preserve and provide access with a terrestrial trail system, trailhead parking area, and kayak/canoe launch. This project would increase recreational amenities and address the short supply of quality river access sites in Raynham.



Scott MacFaden



Sally Spooner

Phase IX Diamondback Terrapin Study

Taunton River Watershed Alliance

Funding to support the technician of the Phase IX Northern Diamondback Terrapin Study in the lower Taunton River and its tributaries. Data is gathered to determine conservation methods to protect this and other species in the future, including effects of climate change. Terrapins are a threatened species under the MA Endangered Species Act, and the only turtle species in North America to exclusively inhabit estuaries and salt marshes. This study is done in collaboration with MassWildlife and Bristol County Agricultural High School.

Tispaquin Pond Invasive Species Survey

Town of Middleboro

The 195 acre Tispaquin Pond is the largest natural water body in the Town of Middleboro known for its recreational uses and wildlife oasis. However, the unmanaged invasive plants are dominating nearly 70% of the littoral zone causing long-term degradation of the pond's condition. Funding was awarded for the consulting cost to study the aquatic vegetation and provide recommendations for responsible removal.

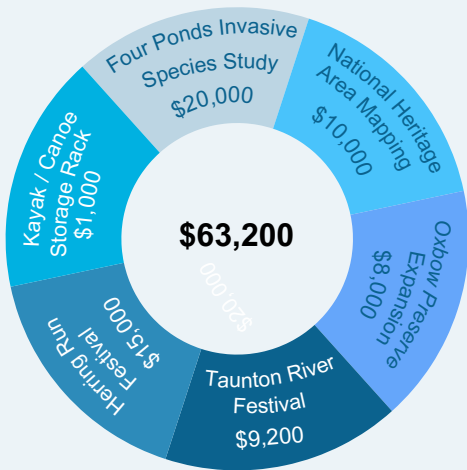


Town of Middleboro





The Year at a Glance

Through our Community Grants program, recipients were successful in leveraging an additional \$63,200 in funding for their respective projects. Recipients and Council members contributed over 1,490 volunteer hours.

Leveraged Funds



Volunteer Hours

- 604 Diamondback Terrapin Study 
- 500+ River Access Team 
- 284 Taunton River Festival 
- 102 Bridge Heritage Park 

1490+ volunteer hours

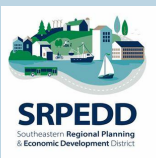
Protected: 18 Northern Diamondback Terrapin nests with 155 hatchlings 

News in the Watershed

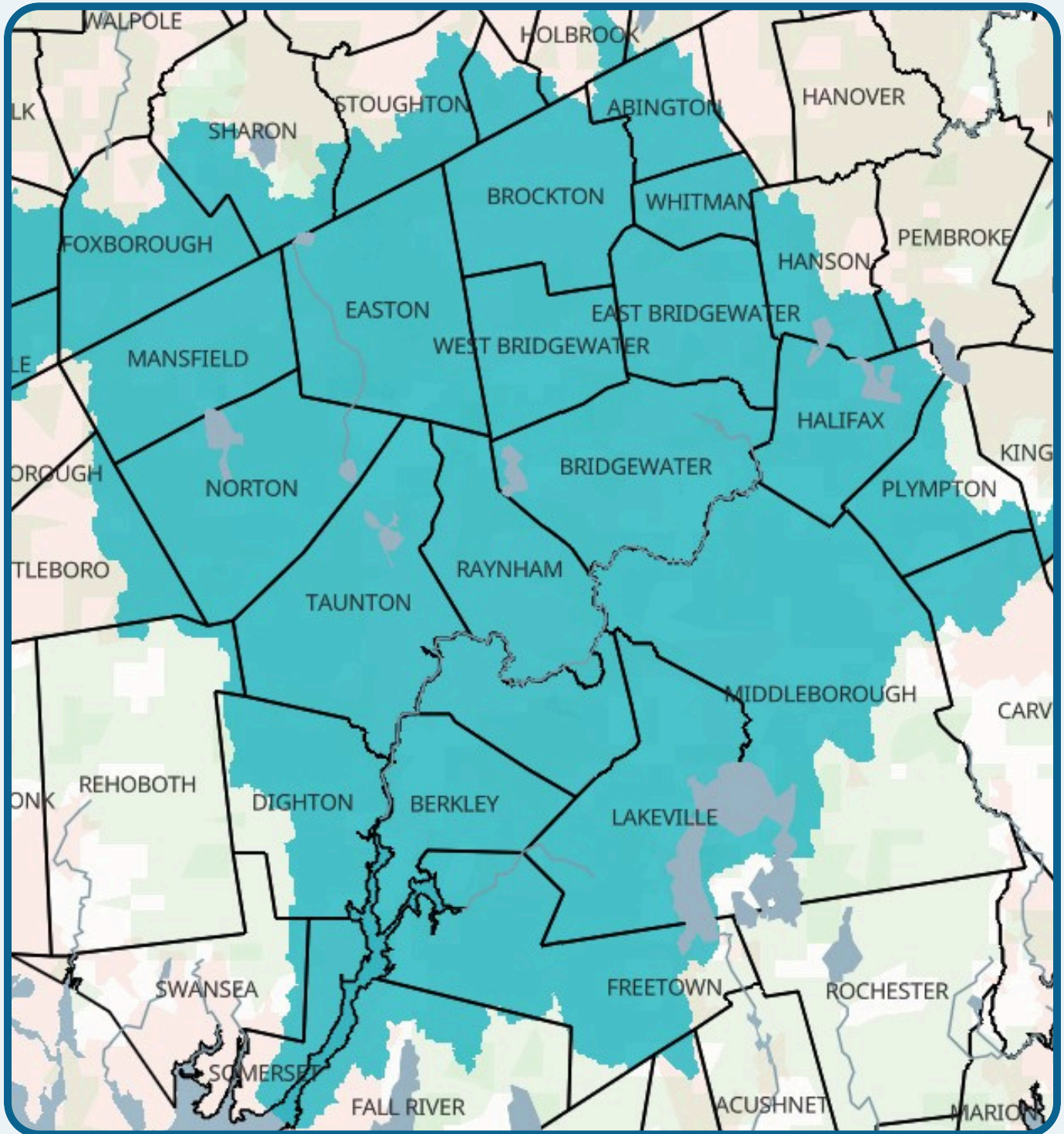
National Park Foundation Grant Awarded

Wildlands Trust, Inc. was awarded a National Park Foundation grant of \$15,000 for the Striar Snake River Trail Development and River Access Improvement. The 84-acre Striar Snake River Preserve is located in Taunton. The property lies within the Hockomock Swamp ACEC, has a half mile of frontage on the Snake River, feeds directly into Lake Sabbatia, and is a tributary of the Taunton River. Currently, the only public access to this property is the unendorsed use of the frontage on Field St. for launching paddle craft. This award will enable building a trailhead parking area, improving the existing boat launch site for non-motorized boats, and constructing an accessible path, observation platform overlooking the river, and riverwalk trail.

Thank you to our partners!



Taunton River Watershed



Learn more at tauntonriver.org

Or contact us at:

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