

# Norwalk River Watershed Association Strategic Plan



## Board of Directors

Louise Washer  
**President**

David Havens  
**Vice President**

Donna Merrill  
**Treasurer**

Sarah Breznen  
**Secretary**

Betsy Barosky

Ryan Bossis

Elizabeth Craig

Richard Dineen

Luis Estrella

Lauren Matison

Laurie Mirra

Jes Parker

Kristin Quell-Garguilo

Kitsey Snow

Cathy Smith

Jayme Soyak  
**Conservation  
Coordinator**

## Vision

A healthy, clean river and corridors of connected wildlife that support the needs of the watershed communities in balance with the needs of fish and wildlife.

## Mission

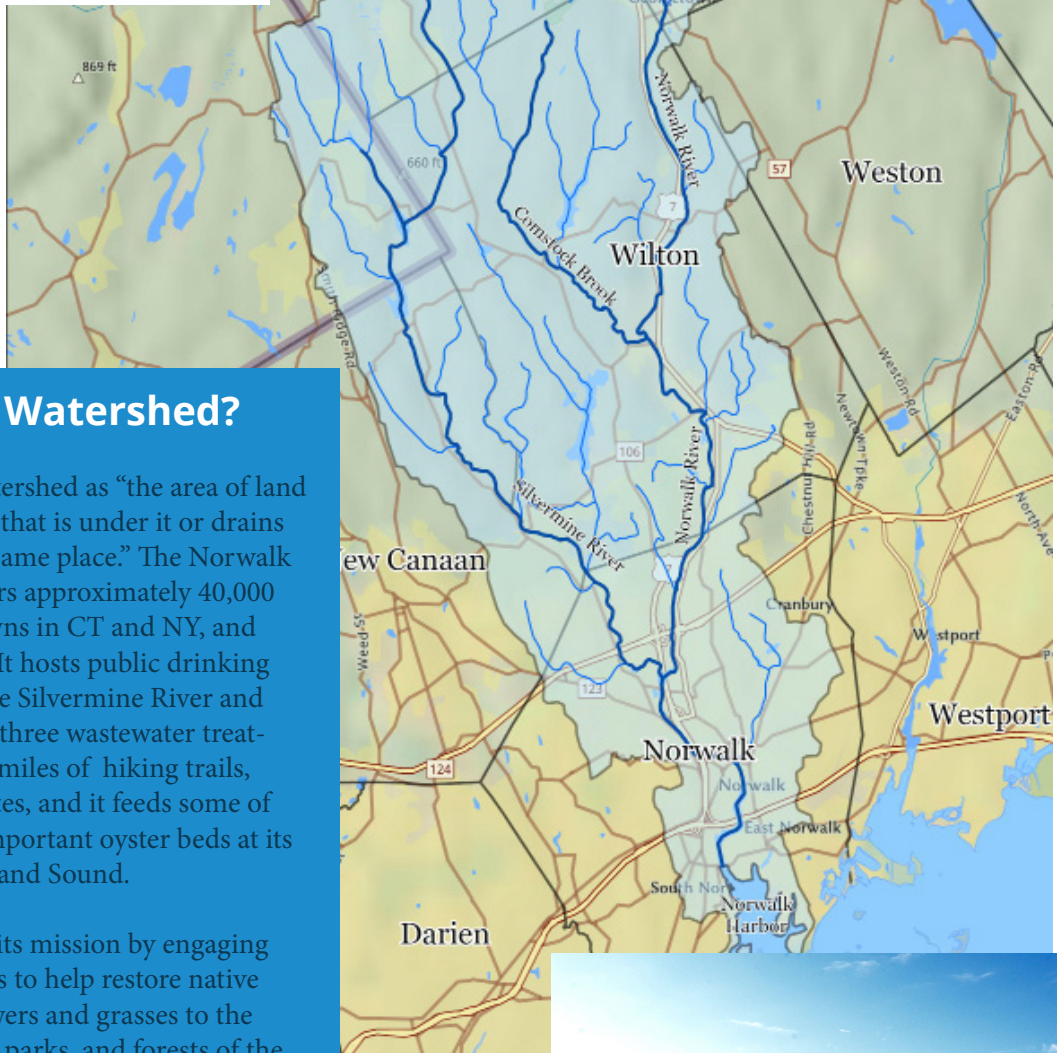
To protect and restore water quality and fish and wildlife habitats in the Norwalk River Watershed.



# Protecting the Watershed through Education and Action!



Turtles in the Great Swamp, the headwaters of the Norwalk River, located in Ridgefield.



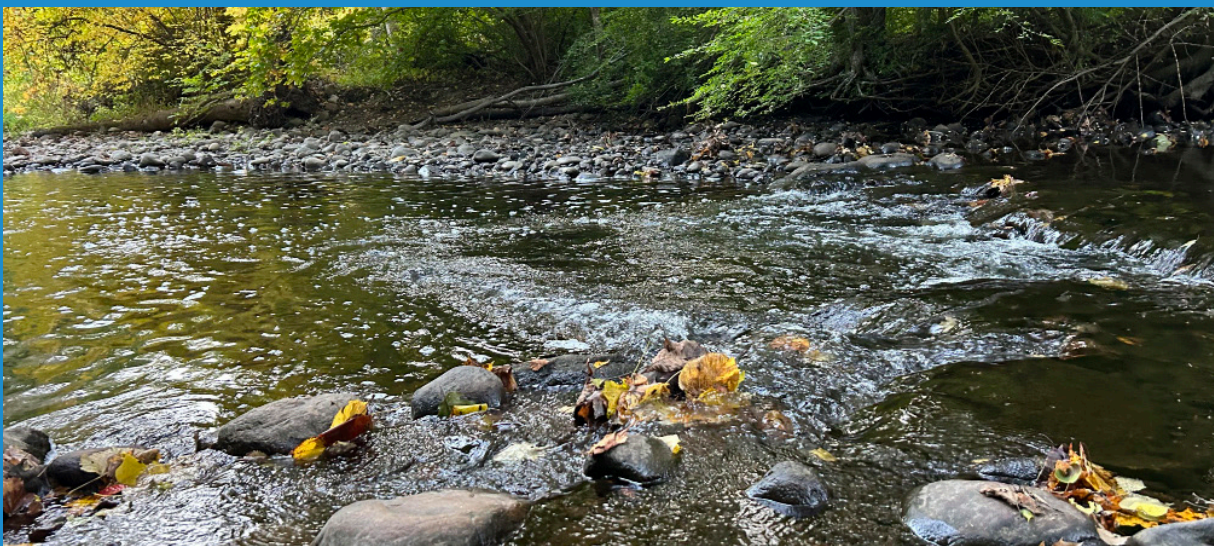
## What is a Watershed?

The EPA defines a watershed as “the area of land where all of the water that is under it or drains off of it goes into the same place.” The Norwalk River Watershed covers approximately 40,000 acres, spans seven towns in CT and NY, and is over 20 miles long. It hosts public drinking water reservoirs on the Silvermine River and Comstock Brook and three wastewater treatment plants. It offers miles of hiking trails, recreational fishing sites, and it feeds some of Connecticut’s most important oyster beds at its mouth in the Long Island Sound.

NRWA accomplishes its mission by engaging community volunteers to help restore native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses to the riverbanks, meadows, parks, and forests of the watershed; working to expand community access to the river, the surrounding open space, and its trails; supporting research and legislative policy that protects biodiversity, clean air, and water; and promoting education, cooperation, and action on the part of the stakeholders in the seven watershed towns in CT (Ridgefield, Redding, Wilton, New Canaan, Weston, and Norwalk) and NY (Lewisboro).



Norwalk Harbor from Oyster Shell Park where the Norwalk River flows into the Long Island Sound.



## GOAL 1

# Water Quality Restoration

Assure that water quality consistently meets state standards, allowing the EPA to remove the Norwalk River from its list of impaired waterways

### ***Strategies***

Reduce the stormwater pollutants entering the river by working with communities to

- reduce impervious land coverage to less than 12%
- plant and protect vegetated buffer zones along rivers, streams, and wetlands that slow and absorb polluted stormwater runoff, protect against erosion, and keep the river cool
- reduce lawn size and adopt organic lawn-care practices—avoiding pesticides and chemical fertilizers, keeping leaves on-site and out of waterways
- improve septic maintenance including encouraging regular inspections and pump-outs
- use best practices for winter de-icing

Monitor water quality to help understand which pollutants need to be targeted in which areas; compile and make public data on water quality testing.





## GOAL 2

# Habitat Restoration

Restore and protect wildlife habitat with a focus on connectivity

### ***Strategies***

- Remove invasive plant species and plant native trees, shrubs, wildflowers and grasses on public land.
- Encourage watershed residents to remove invasive plant species, add native plants, and avoid pesticides in their yards.
- Advocate for streamflow protections that allow for uninterrupted flow in all streams and rivers of the watershed—no more dry streams.



## GOAL 3

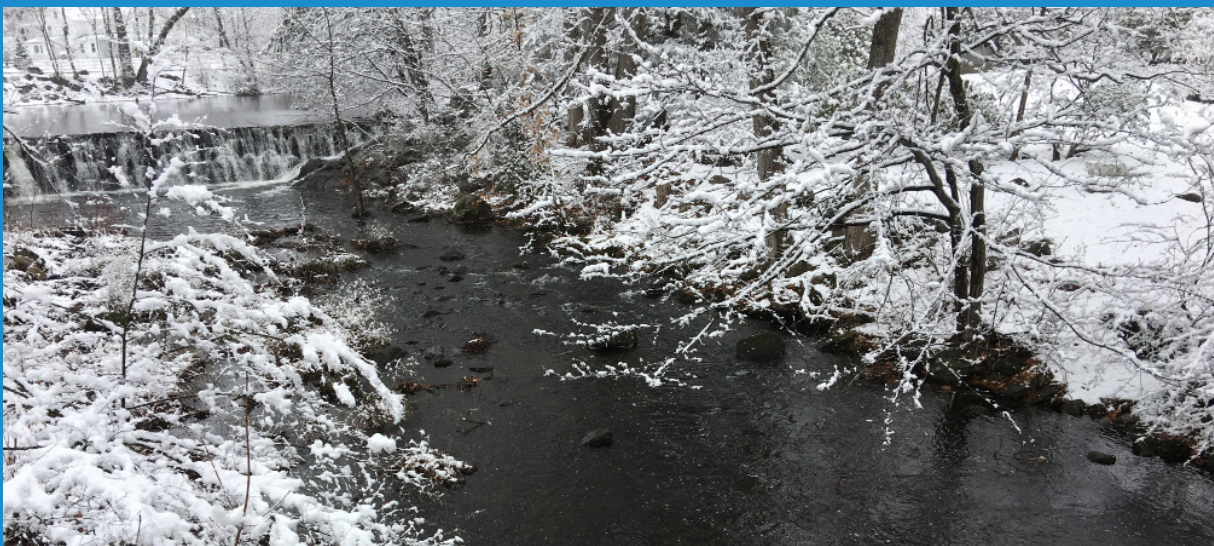
# Outreach and Education

Engage and educate the public and municipal leaders about how they can help protect and improve water quality and wildlife habitat

### ***Strategies***

- Create and share high quality educational resources to engage watershed communities on issues such as septic maintenance, water conservation, reducing single-use plastic, reducing lawn size, transitioning to organic lawncare, planting native plants, removing invasive plants, leaving the leaves.
- Partner with schools, student groups, scouts, corporate groups, garden clubs, land trusts, and local volunteers for invasive removal, planting, and river cleanup events.
- Lead nature walks and host library talks.





## GOAL 4

# Water Policy Advocacy

Advocate for policy and action that protects adequate flow in the river and its tributaries, restores and protects groundwater levels, and guides land management practices that protect water and wildlife habitat

### ***Strategies***

- Encourage water conservation.
- Advocate for local, state, and federal environmental policies that protect water and wildlife habitat.
- Protect against flow and thermal impairment through the continued support of the removal of dams along the river.
- Advocate for protecting riverbanks, headwaters, wetlands, and aquifer recharge areas from development.





Water quality testing



Planting Trees in a South Norwalk Park



Leading a vernal pool nature walk



Advocating for the plastic bag ban