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November 28, 2023

**Your support has helped the NRWA become one of CT's environmental leaders.
Your continued support will help us prepare a new generation to pass the torch to!**

Dear Fellow Watershed Protector,

On October 3rd I was truly honored to receive the 2023 Environmental Leader Award from the Connecticut League of Conservation Voters. The accolades, though, belong to all of you. It's your support and the work of NRWA's dedicated and tireless volunteers that are having an impact both in the watershed and across the state!

So before 2023 comes to an end, I want to take this opportunity to make sure you know what your dollars, volunteer efforts, and advocacy have helped us accomplish this year.

- This spring we led the charge against installing an artificial turf field at Allen's Meadow in Wilton and we won that battle! We are also fighting three new fields in Norwalk. To understand the significance of this issue for our watershed, make sure to listen to the scientists we invited to speak to our community during our March webinar – available at norwalkriver.org.



- In Ridgefield, we launched a major stormwater mitigation project through a grant funded by the Town of Ridgefield. The objective is to install a large raingarden to help mitigate the impact of polluted stormwater runoff coming from the Ridgefield Playhouse parking lot. That area drains into the Great Swamp,

the source of the Norwalk River, where water quality routinely fails to meet state standards for supporting aquatic life and recreational use.

Continues...



- Along the Norwalk River Valley Trail we worked at the Sharp Hill Road trailhead in Wilton, and at three sites in Norwalk to remove invasives and plant more native trees, shrubs, and wildflowers. This work is part of an ongoing partnership with the NRVT.

- We were there to witness the Dana Dam at Merwin Meadows in Wilton come down after years of working with Trout Unlimited (TU), Save the Sound, the Town of Wilton, and others to make this happen. This is a massive win for the river and all the wildlife and people that live within and around it. We also worked alongside TU and Pollinator Pathway volunteers to restore

streamside habitat after a dam removal on a private property along Comstock Brook, a Norwalk River tributary (photo above left). As TU's Gerald Berrafati says, "Momentum is really growing behind dam removals in the Norwalk River Watershed – it's awesome!"

- We made more progress on the meadow restoration at McKeon Farm in Ridgefield, a project we work on in partnership with the Ridgefield Conservation Commission. We began to see the fruits of our labors with native plants and their pollinators on full display this summer, as you can see in the picture to the right. This project encompasses a three-year scientific study of insect populations to determine how much difference the restored habitat is making.



- NRWA volunteer teams, including the famous Weed Warriors, pressed on with more invasive plant removal and native ecosystem restoration at Oyster Shell and Woodward Avenue Parks in Norwalk.
- We partnered with the Maritime Aquarium and the City of Norwalk on a federal grant which is funding initial plans for a restored "living shoreline" at Veteran's Park in Norwalk.

Continues...

- We continue to work on restoring the vitally important tree canopy in South Norwalk along with homeowners, the Norwalk Tree Alliance, the City of Norwalk, and other partners.



Overall, this year we have planted nearly 150 native trees and shrubs and over 2,000 native plants and grasses, worked on clearing 10 acres of invasives plants, and cleaned up 750 pounds of trash along the river. And we're particularly thrilled to report that over 1,050 people have participated in NRWA events so far this year!

Among the dedicated volunteers who are achieving these incredible results are students from schools and organizations throughout the Watershed. These young conservationists are tomorrow's environmental leaders, and I think you'll agree it's crucial to capture their attention and gain their commitment now.

To ensure that happens we are focusing on an expanding range of student projects. For example, the NRWA as part of the Norwalk Pollinator Pathway worked together to help Cranbury Elementary School in Norwalk develop a curriculum that involves collecting seeds of native plants, propagating, and growing them. The students then plant these seedlings at our restoration site at Oyster Shell Park. In Ridgefield, we are sponsoring a new Green Team at Barlow Mountain School. High school interns from Stepping Stones Museum and the Maritime Aquarium in Norwalk and from across Fairfield County as part of the Builders Beyond Borders program are doing community service with us. This is just to name a few of the projects we're developing to help train young environmentalists.

But we need your help to continue to expand these efforts in 2024. If you are able, please make a year-end gift today [HERE](#).

All of us on the NRWA Board wish you and your family a happy and healthy holiday season and a bright 2024. We are so very grateful for your past and future support!

Sincerely,



Louise Washer
President – on behalf of the NRWA Board

Volunteers Hard at Work at Oyster Shell Park in Norwalk



Fall 2019: Cutting invasive phragmites and Japanese knotweed.



2019-2022: Laying tarps to smother the invasive plants' root systems without using herbicides.



2019-2023: 'Weed Warrior' volunteer group maintaining the tarps.



Summer 2023: Removing the first section of tarps and planting native grasses to support birds and pollinators!

Membership Form



Becoming a member helps NRWA continue to protect local water quality, hiking trails, and wildlife habitats.

Riparian Society

Steward	\$1000+
Protector	\$500 – \$999
Patron	\$100 – \$499

Membership

Supporter	\$50 – \$99
Friend	\$30 – \$49
Other	\$ _____

My company has a matching gift program
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Donate Online at NorwalkRiver.org

Or mail your tax-deductible Annual Membership gift of \$ _____ to
NRWA, Inc. PO Box 7114, Wilton, CT 06897. Please make check payable to NRWA, Inc.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

I would like to receive updates and events info. My email is: _____