



**Strategic Plan 2021 — 2026**



## GREAT SWAMP WATERSHED ASSOCIATION STRATEGIC PLAN DRAFT NARRATIVE

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For over 40 years, The Great Swamp Watershed Association has been dedicated to protecting and improving the water of the Passaic River region, from the Great Swamp headwaters to Newark Bay. In anticipation of a vibrant period of growth, the Trustee leadership and staff have come together to draft a 5 year strategic plan. This plan, as detailed below, focuses on the 4 pillars of the mission, addressing the key components of water, education, land, and organizational growth, which support the overall mission of the organization.

GSWA, a Riverkeeper affiliate, aims to broaden its reach and include even more communities in its water quality, education, and messaging endeavors. This plan includes efforts towards that growth, in addition to the framework and necessary steps to foster and support that growth. It is the aim of this plan to further the mission of the organization, while increasing awareness of the fragile resources in the area.

Additionally, an ad-hoc committee has been included to address a potential name change. This committee can take up the many questions that arise when that process is considered, while the regular activity of the organization continues.

The prospect of a capital campaign is also included in this plan, as that will enable many of the goals to be accomplished in the next 3-5 years. Beginning this process with a feasibility study will be a prudent first step in assessing the capacity of both GSWA and the community to embark upon such a campaign.

The mission statement has also been modified, and the vision statement remains the same for now.

**MISSION** The Great Swamp Watershed Association protects and improves the health of the Passaic River through science, education, land preservation and stewardship, and advocacy.

**VISION** We support a “One River, One Community” vision for the many rural, suburban, and urban communities along the Passaic River, for a future in which all of the region’s citizens understand that the health of the watershed is integrally connected to the quality of their daily



lives. We imagine a time in which residents, businesses, and governments along the Passaic work actively and cooperatively to protect and promote clean, safe water, and in turn are rewarded with a bountiful environment that supplies healthy water for drinking and recreation, provides controls for flooding and erosion, supports abundant vegetation and wildlife, and forever inspires with its natural beauty.

## I. **Mission Pillar 1: WATER**

### a. Water Quality Monitoring

Goal: Continue extension downstream of monitoring for 2 more 3-year expansions

Strategy: Begin planning for next expansion in 2023; Research and locate ideal sampling spots

Goal: Finish updating Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) to include recent expansion downstream along the Passaic River

Strategy: Work with Watershed Institute for standardization of data to submit to Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)

### b. Data Assessment and Sharing

Goal: Increase participation by volunteers in validation process

Strategy: Institute a volunteer Data Committee

Goal: Reinstigate the 3-year State of the Streams Report

Goal: Submit water quality data more consistently to DEP

Strategy: Hire Water Quality/Education Associate

### c. Community Building – Working with Municipalities

Goal: Increase our brand as the Passaic Riverkeeper Affiliate

Strategy 1: Institute an annual river clean-up event

Strategy 2: Use our water quality data to drive non-point source pollution reduction in targeted communities

### d. Restoration

Goal: Identify and pursue key restoration projects as opportunities arise and monitor their effectiveness

Strategy: Track water quality at Silver Brook, post hydrological restoration done in fall 2020

### e. Protection

Goal: Pursue protection of stream reaches as opportunities arise

Strategy: Evaluate total maximum daily limit of pollutants



## II. Mission Pillar 2: EDUCATION

- a. Students: Kindergarten to College
  - Goal: Continue to be the Watershed leader for water quality related science based educational programming to each age group in both historic, underserved, and downstream communities, and to serve schools in every community the Passaic River touches.
  - Strategy: expand towns served via targeted partnerships
- b. Leaders and Decision Makers
  - Goal: Continue to be the Watershed leader for water quality related science based educational programming and information sharing
  - Strategy: Continue developing peer to peer sharing of information, including invasive species, deer management, and native habitat restoration
- c. General Public
  - Goal: Continue to be the Watershed leader for water quality related science based educational programming
  - Strategy: Develop and increase programming to target downstream communities and to partner with other organizations
  - Goal: Increase access and connectivity to water
  - Strategy 1: Purchase 6 kayaks and trailer to implement programming and recreation
  - Strategy 2: Development safety and training for best management practices for on the water programming
- d. Green Stormwater Infrastructure
  - Goal: Use our data to encourage green stormwater infrastructure in the most needed communities
  - Strategy 1: Deploy education program around green infrastructure that includes installing rain gardens and other green infrastructure demonstration projects for maximum impact
  - Strategy 2: Develop water quality metrics for baseline determination of water quality or quantity improvements

## III. Mission Pillar 3: LAND

- a. Preservation
  - Goal: Acquire or preserve appropriate open space parcels or conservation easements as appropriate
  - Goal: Increase the public's knowledge of our capacity as a land trust and a repository for potential land to protect



Strategy 1: Renew Land Trust accreditation

Strategy 2: Broadcast and expand knowledge of preservation benefits to homeowners

b. Advocacy

Goal: Pursue key advocacy initiatives as opportunities arise

Strategy: Consider a different staffing structure to deepen policy knowledge and engage in more regional issues

c. Stewardship

Goal: Continue following best management practices for land management

Strategy: Increase funding and/or staff as needed

d. Restoration

Goal: Evaluate new properties for restoration potential

Strategy: Solicit funds/partners/approvals for any viable restoration project

e. Land Use

Goal: Increase use by the public of Conservation Management Area (73 acres)

Strategy 1: Make improvements to and continue maintenance of boardwalk, fencing, bridges, storage spaces

Strategy 2: Install pavilion

Strategy 3: Install electricity

#### IV. Mission Pillar 4: ORGANIZATIONAL GROWTH

a. Building and Land Acquisition to Expand Services

Goal: Secure new property to establish the following:

- property for headquarters
- education center (use to demonstrate green infrastructure and Watershed friendly living)

Strategy 1: Consider permanent displays and activities in new education center to make site a destination

- On-site lab

Strategy 1: Negotiate and finalize acquisition

Strategy 2: Subdivide property with municipality

Strategy 3: Engage architect and engineer in renderings and plans for headquarters, education center and on-site lab

Strategy 4: Pursue LEED standards in restoration/renovation



b. Fundraising

Goal: Achieve success in the following areas:

- Sound Fiscal management  
Strategy 1: Increase endowment through deeper engagement with potential planned giving prospects and other major gift donors  
Strategy 2: Work with Finance Committee to ensure cash flow structure can support growth via capital campaign
- Capital Campaign  
Strategy 1: hire campaign counsel to conduct a feasibility study and campaign readiness assessment; assess and make decisions about campaign, scale according to results of readiness study  
Strategy 2: Act on results and recommendations of the study
- Board involvement  
Strategy 1: Establish “connectivity” goals: 3 per year per Board member  
Strategy 2: Establish coaching opportunities for Board members to increase their confidence in the process of engagement  
Strategy 3: Increase all types of diversity on Board (geographic location, urban/suburban/rural, race, age, gender, occupation)

c. Communications

Goal: Serve as a coalition or hub, working with other, existing organization in areas of expansion

Strategy: Expand outreach to the general public, including diverse communities, young professionals, downstream

Goal: Increase interaction of the public with social media and active use of website

Strategy: Expand media presence by increasing social media presence and print media presence both literally and virtually

- Branding  
Strategy 1: Develop an Ad-Hoc Committee to evaluate name and logo change, especially with an eye to the Passaic River Waterkeeper status  
Strategy 2: Organize community events, such as Run for the River, to further engage and educate the public about GSWA
- Website  
Goal: Improve functionality of website  
Strategy 1: Evaluate how general public uses website  
Strategy 2: Reorganize how users interact with GSWA online



Strategy 3: SEO

d. Staffing

Goal: Maintain quality of existing staff and increase current team

Strategy 1: Increase salaries of existing staff to be more competitive

Strategy 2: : Hire additional Program staff, a volunteer coordinator, and additional IT expertise