



Great Swamp Watershed Association

P.O. Box 300 • New Vernon, NJ 07976

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Meeting of the Board of Trustees

December 11, 2025, 8:30 am

ZOOM

Agenda

- Approval of Board Minutes of August 22, 2025 and October 31, 2025 Meetings
- President's Report
- Executive Director's Report
- Finance Report:
 - Review YTD results
 - Review and Approve Annual Audit
 - Approve 2025 990
 - Switch investments to Fidelity
 - November Financial Statements
- Election of Officers
- Other Business
 - Set 2026 Board Meeting Dates
- Executive Session
- Next Meeting: Friday, February 20, 2026 at Kemmerer Library?
- Adjourn

Protecting our waters and our land for more than 30 years

Great Swamp Watershed Association
Investment & Endowment Policy

Investment & Endowment Policy – Modified 5/19/2023 Board Approved, (previously Modified/Board Approved 11/22/19; 03/16/17; 3/31/16 04/17/15)

Purpose: To ensure the organization has responsible and prudent investment and management of its financial assets and how those assets may be used to have a secure and lasting source of dedicated funds to support the goals of the organization.

Restrictions:

The Investment & Endowment Fund is predominantly a board designated fund. Any funds that have been solicited specifically for Endowment are restricted and tracked in the Donor Database and separately maintained in a spreadsheet by the Finance Director. The permanently restricted funds will be noted each year in the annual report. For Fiscal Year 2022, the amount was \$68,050.

The organization maintains an Operational Investment Account that is for operational purposes and is not restricted. These funds may be used by operations as needed for up to 15% or \$50,000 in any one year. A financial need beyond \$50,000 requires board approval.

Board Designated Allowable Uses of Investment & Endowment Funds:

4% of the total funds each year may be transferred and used for the operation of the organization. The intention of this transfer is to draw from the Investment & Endowment annually an amount that is less than the average amount earned each year. This amount may be modified with a 2/3 vote of the entire Board of Trustees.

The date the draw will be calculated on is June 30 and will be based on a previous 12-month average balance. The Finance Committee will determine when to actually take the 4% draw after reviewing the current financial picture of the organization. The Finance Committee will recommend any adjustments to how the funds should be taken to ensure the funds remain in line with the approved allocation mix.

Should the organization need to borrow funds from the Investment & Endowment Funds for an operational deficit, those funds may be borrowed from the Investment Fund. The Budget Deficit Policy procedures would remain in effect until such time as the funds are paid back. A loan for the operation of the organization would require a 2/3 vote of the entire Board of Trustees and may not exceed 10% of the total value of the board designated funds.

In addition, the Board of Trustees may from time to time be required to legally defend and protect the conservation easements and land owned in fee. The Board may elect to restrict the funds necessary for the protection of the conservation of those assets from the Investment fund. The board may use no more than 25% of the total Investment & Endowment Fund, that is board designated for the legal protection and stewardship of such assets. The expenditure of these funds requires board approval. See also *Policy for Funding Stewardship*.

The Board restricts the following funds for the Conservation Easement Stewardship and Defense Fund for easements held by GSWA as of 4/1/2023:

\$50,000 Legal Defense of three easements
\$10,500 for stewardship of three easements (\$3,500 each)
\$ 3,000 for legal defense of six fee land parcels
\$83,500 Total

Great Swamp Watershed Association
Investment & Endowment Policy

Dissolution of the Organization:

In such event, the board restrictions on the defense of Easements owned and the Stewardship of parcels held in fee simple shall be distributed entirely to or among one or more non-profit organizations devoted primarily to the protection of the environment as defined in the Certificate of Incorporation. The organization may impose additional conditions or restrictions on the transfer as the Board of Trustees deem appropriate to better assure the property and easements will be monitored and enforced as per the terms of the conservation easement and intent of GSWA. Where possible, Stewardship funds will be distributed with those parcels.

Investment and Management of Financial Assets:

A. Asset Allocation

All asset allocation decisions will be reviewed by the Finance Committee at least annually and presented to the Board of Trustees at least annually. Asset allocation will generally consist of a mix of stocks, bonds, and money market investments. Once the total asset allocation has been approved it will remain in effect unless or until there is a new recommendation by the Finance Committee. Asset investment in Stock Funds (Index or managed) should remain on average within a range of 50-70% of total endowment assets. All changes must then be approved by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Trustees.

B. Asset Manager Selection:

- The fund performance must have competitive market results for 3- and 5-year performance.
- Sustainable Investing will be considered over other funds provided the returns are comparable.
- The funds have low management fees and transparency.
- The funds have no or low transaction costs.
- SIPC coverage must be at or in excess of our balance.
- At periodic intervals no shorter than 3 years the asset manager relationship will be reviewed by the finance committee.

• C. Sustainable Investment

- - GSWA defines sustainable investment as the integration of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) considerations in the investment process.
- - GSWA will actively consider sustainable investments that are aligned with its Mission and otherwise conform to the Investment and Endowment Policy.

D. Opening an account / Managing the account

The initial set up will be handled by the Treasurer and the Finance Director. This will include opening accounts and transferring funds.

Dual signatures of the Treasurer and Finance Director are required on asset transfers out of the account and withdrawals, excluding the 4% draw transactions.

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E. Responsibilities of the Finance Director

- The Finance Director shall keep all the necessary accounting records.
- Endowment Funds will be deposited as received unless amounts received are small (under \$1,000). If small amounts are received, they will be accumulated and deposited once a month at the beginning of the month. Donations under \$1,000 will not be considered Endowment Funds, instead, they will be included in the Board Designated Investment Fund.
- Four percent of total assets may be distributed to the Association once a year. Any withdrawal in excess of 4% requires board approval other than as previously noted on the Operational Reserve.

F. Responsibilities of the Treasurer and the Finance Committee

- The Funds' performance will be monitored by the Finance Committee.
- The Finance Committee will approve any changes within the asset allocation between asset classes within the overall portfolio allocation.
- The finance committee is responsible for reviewing the asset allocation of the Operational Investment Account, the Investment Account and the Endowment Funds.
- A quarterly presentation will be made to the Board on the value of the fund and report annually on the performance of the fund.
- The Finance Committee and Board should focus on three and five-year returns.

Re- Approved and Adopted by the Board of Trustees on the 19th day of May 2023; previously approved 11/22/2019 3/16/17; 3/31/16.



**Great Swamp Watershed Association
Financial Statements - November 2025 Notes**

General Notes

- * **Draft - Not all accounts reconciled and audited**
- * **Some entries booked only at Year End**

P&L - Notes

- * **Operating Revenue is around \$111k under budget**
(Climate Grant \$60k, not yet billed - Internal Investment Transfer (\$23k under)

Will investigate Foundations & Major Donors and timing
(December donations \$50k in first 10 days, including some foundations)
- * **Operating Expenses are less than budget (\$12k, some timing and some savings)**
- * **Other Revenues and Expenses are \$147k over budget**
Investment Gains, Div and Interest Income Remain strong
- * **Total P&L of \$132k surplus, \$69k after adjusting for endowment drawdown**

Balance Sheet - Notes

- * **Cash balance is healthy at \$451k, \$43k below year end**
- * **Investments grew by \$96k through Nov (after 64k drawdown)**
- * **Preliminary Net Income (Net Assets) grew by \$69K, ending Net Assets 3,521,423**

The GSWA team will be preparing a deep dive and full year updated forecast in January after 6 months are completed



**Great Swamp Watershed Ass
Actual v. Budget & Prior Year
Nov. 30, 2025 - Summary (Dr:**

	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Prior</u>	<u>Curr Yr</u>
<u>Balance Sheet</u>	<u>9/30/25</u>	<u>6/30/25</u>	<u>Impact</u>
Cash	451,523	494,985	
Investments	2,576,197	2,480,516	
Fixed assets	481,479	481,479	
Other Assets	267,911	265,106	
Total Assets	3,777,110	3,722,087	
Liabilities	255,687	269,204	
Net Assets	3,521,423	3,452,883	68,540



Great Swamp Watershed Association
Actual v. Budget & Prior Year
Draft - Nov 30, 2025 - Fiscal 2026

November 2025 YTD						
	Actual	Budget	Prior	Var Better (Worse) than Budget	% B (W) Budget	
Revenue						
3210 Deferred Income from Prior Year	0	0	21,334	-	NA	Not applicable this year
4000 Annual Event	173,222	143,806	148,372	29,416	20%	see net below
4100 Individual - Membership	19,404	26,744	26,729	(7,340)	-27%	
4180 Individual Major Donors	39,660	59,240	59,240	(19,580)	-33%	
4190 Individual Trustee Giving	21,572	12,500	4,540	9,072	73%	
4200 Corporate	35,755	67,500	72,500	(31,745)	-47%	Need to review timing
4330 CorporateStewardship Restricted	6,800	9,000	9,010	(2,200)	-24%	
4400 Foundation Support	74,000	90,000	132,600	(16,000)	-18%	Need to review timing
4600 Music Fest Event	1,500	0	636	1,500	NA	
4700 Programs - Education & Outreach	7,790	200	2,770	7,590	3795%	
4800 Native Plant Program	0	0	100	-	NA	
4900 Government Grants	1,650	60,000	32,906	(58,350)	-97%	Climate change, not yet billed
7111 4% Fund Transfer Draw	63,500	86,527	77,284	(23,027)	-27%	Acctg formula change
Total Revenue	444,853	555,617	588,021	-110,764	-20%	
Gross Profit	444,853	555,617	588,021	-110,764	-20%	
Expenditures						
5000 Administrative Payroll Total	344,590	349,410	335,492	4,820	1%	
5100 Development Expense	1,817	1,700	1,075	(117)	-7%	
5200 Education and Outreach	6,757	6,400	7,547	(357)	-6%	Budget timing
5290 Native Plant Prog Expenses	0	0	0	-	NA	
5300 Membership	7,003	9,863	9,613	2,861	29%	Prev Newsletter
5400 Stewardship	16,947	9,585	24,638	(7,362)	-77%	Timing of workdays
5500 Water Quality	3,761	19,250	9,657	15,489	80%	Budget timing
5700 Grant Specific Expense	756	0	0	(756)	NA	
5800 Advocay	36	2,083	0	2,047	98%	
6100 Administrative Expense	45,858	60,708	43,585	14,850	24%	
6150 Depreciation Expense	0	0	0	-	NA	
6240 Miscellaneous	78	0	0	(78)	NA	
6400 Annual Event Expenses	44,422	28,550	28,748	(15,872)	-56%	see net below
6490 Music Fest	12	0	0	(12)	NA	
6500 Mailing	4,346	875	1,588	(3,471)	-397%	
Total Expenditures	476,347	488,425	461,942	12,042	2%	
Net Operating Revenue	-31,494	67,192	126,079	-98,686	-147%	



Great Swamp Watershed Association
Actual v. Budget & Prior Year
Draft - Nov 30, 2025 - Fiscal 2026

November 2025 YTD					
	Actual	Budget	Prior	Var Better (Worse) than Budget	% B (W) Budget
Other Revenue					
7000 Unrealized Gain On Sec	135,156	-	153,550	135,156	NA
7001 Gain/Loss On Securities	-	-	-	-	NA
7010 Interest Income	4,584	1,250	4,176	3,334	267%
7011 Dividends Received	24,025	15,000	22,385	9,025	60%
Capital Campaign Revenue	-	-	30,000	-	NA
Total Other Revenue	163,765	16,250	210,110	147,515	908%
Other Expenditures					
5803 Community Action Exp Save Noe; Passaic Greenway; etc			5,000	-	
8020 Strategic Plan / Capital Camp Consult	230	-	4,082	(230)	
Total Other Expenditures	230	-	9,082	(230)	
Net Other Revenue	163,535	16,250	201,028	147,285	906%
Net Revenue	132,041	83,442	327,107	48,599	58%

Gala Fiscal 2026	Actual	Budget	Prior
Revenune	173,222	143,806	148,372
Expense	44,422	28,550	28,748
Net	128,800	115,256	119,624

Grant Recap December 2025					
Corporate Restricted		BUDGET	ACTUAL	VARIANCE	NOTES
	PSEG	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	\$2,000.00	Environmental Education.Received in August.
	BMS	\$ -	\$ 15,000.00	\$15,000.00	Environmental Education.Notified of award in October
	Sanofi	\$ -	\$ 3,600.00	\$3,600.00	Corporate Stewardship Workdays, received in October
Corporate Unrestricted					
	Columbia Bank	2,500.00	\$2,500.00	\$0.00	General Operating Support. Received in July
	Target	\$ -	\$2,755.47	\$2,755.47	General Operating Support. Received in August through Simple Generosity
	Bells' Brewery	\$ -	\$3,500.00	\$3,500.00	CMA Stewardship, Received in October
	Athletic Brewerr - Two for the Trails		\$5,800.00	\$5,800.00	CMA Stewardship, notified in November *NEW*
Foundation Restricted					
	New Jersey League of Conservation Voters	\$ -	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 3,000.00	*Provide social media and op-ed about water and land topics. Received in October *NEW*
	Glasser Foundation	\$ -	\$ 7,500.00	\$ 7,500.00	Environmental Education, received in November
	Hyde and Watson Foundation		\$ 12,000.00	\$ 12,000.00	Office supplies, applied in June,pending
Foundation Support Unrestricted					
	Mazer	\$ 8,000.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	General Operating Support.Received in July
	Impact100 Garden State	\$ -	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	General Operating Support. Received in July,merit award for being finalists for the Impact100 Garden State
	John Ben Snow Memorial Trust	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ -	General Operating Support, Received in August
	Edith Hahn Wildlife and Animal Preservation	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00	\$ -	General Operating Support, Received in August
	Gibson Fund	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ (5,000.00)	General Operating Support, Received in October
	Fatzler Foundation	\$ 5,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	\$ -	General Operating Support, Received in November
	Mimi Washington Starrett	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 15,000.00	\$ 5,000.00	GOS, applied in June, notified in November
SUBTOTAL FOUNDATIONS/CORPORATIONS YTD		\$ 75,500.00	\$ 141,655.47	\$66,155.47	
Government Grants					
	Wolrkforce Development Board of Northwest NJ		\$1,650.00	\$1,650.00	Reimbursement from Workforce Development for Alex Sloane master's course
Applied/Pending				\$ Request	
	Lillian Schenck Foundation			\$5,000	Environmental Education, applied in July, pending
	Green Mountain Energy Sun Club			\$ 84,598.00	Loantaka Brook Restoration and Protection Plan, applied in July, pending
	Meerwarth Foundation			\$ 15,000.00	Environmental Education, applied in September, pending
	First Energy			\$ 7,500.00	Environmental Education, applied in September, pending
	Stackhouse Foundation			\$ 15,000.00	GOS, applied in September, pending
	Cestone Foundation			\$ 25,000.00	GOS, applied in October, pending
	Tyler Foundation			\$ 25,000.00	GOS, applied in September, pending
	Renewable Natural Resources Foundation			\$ 50,000.00	Loantaka Brook Restoration and Protection Plan, applied in September, pending
	BAE Systems			\$ 7,500.00	Environmental Education, applied in November, pending
	TOTAL			\$ 313,403.47	

Board Report December 2025
Lynne Applebaum, Director of Institutional Relations
Grant Updates

FY 25-26 is off to a good start, but we have a ways to go. We are working hard to retain partners and maintain important organizational relationships, while cultivating new potential funders.

Here are some development updates:

- We applied to Green Mountain Energy Sun Club 2025 Sustainability Grant for the Loantaka Brook Restoration and Protection Plan. We are waiting to hear from them. We are also looking into applying to Woodard and Curran and the NY/NJ Harbor Estuary Program for this project.
- We have sent out a strategic partnership framework for a select group of funders, in response to feedback that I have received from some of our corporate partners. The advantage to the funders is a clear annual picture of sponsorship opportunities we offer, which help with budget planning, as well as events and workshops that we can work on together. The message has been that they want to be active participants with us and not just be thought of as a “bank.” We are waiting to hear back from this group, who are in the throes of planning their FY 26 budgets.
- I am attending the NJ Non-Profit Conference in Somerset on December 3rd and look forward to networking and learning from fellow nonprofit leaders.
- We are now listed as Environmental Partners on the 1% For the Planet platform. 1% for the Planet is a global network that certifies and connects businesses committed to donating 1% of annual sales to vetted environmental nonprofits like GSWA.
- Wade and I have been communicating about how to ensure a smooth transition once he is retired at the end of December.
- Board and Advisory Council have embarked upon another Thank-A-Thon to let our donors know how much we appreciate their support.
- I am an active member of the Morris County Chamber of Commerce non-profit advisory board. I continue to attend regular meetings and work with the group to determine upcoming roundtable discussions and participate in the roundtables on a regular basis.
- I regularly attend MCCC’s Business Connections once a month. It’s a valuable way to network with local individuals and businesses.
- I continue to submit numerous grant applications and work on developing new connections all the time. As always, your help is greatly appreciated in this area.
- As always, I ask for your support in setting up meetings with potential funders. There is nothing like a targeted introduction coming from you.

Wade's Development Board Report
12.3.2025

Thank-a-thon Meeting on 10.30.2025 with Val, Nancy and Lynne to establish the criteria for board and Advisory Council members who are asked to call and thank donors for their support in 2025 – (not a solicitation)

Lunch at The Morristown Club with Bill, David Naidu and Joe Basralian (prospective new board member) 10.31.2025

Meeting with Lynne to brainstorm content for Year-end Appeal Letter 11.3.2025

Viewed Free Will Webinar on year-end fundraising 11.4.2025

Attended a meeting of the New Jersey Highlands Clean Water Legacy Project – Mission: to identify the greatest challenges to the water resources in the New Jersey Highland region and provide a roadmap to collectively address these challenges through communication, fundraising, advocacy, and action now and for future generations. “Don’t take your water for granted.” 11.5.2025

Viewed a New Jersey Environmental Fundraisers presentation re. transforming e-mail strategies to boost donor giving 11.10.2025

Free Will Webinar: Activating your Donor Advised Fund Donor Base 11.11.2025

Attended Staff Meeting with Bill
11.12.2025

Introduced Bill to Conor Evans of Community Builders. Member of the Morris County Chamber of Commerce who would like to bid on the Ferber Property renovation 11.13.2025

Participated in the Thrive Morris volunteer effort loading boxes of food at the Interfaith Food Pantry 11.14.2025

Lunch at The Morristown Club with donor & Breakfast Briefing presenter Dr. Jim Muchmore 11.19.2025

Worked registration for Alex Sloane’s Breakfast Briefing on *Freshwater Mussels* 11.20.2025

Development Meeting with Lynne and Bill – draft letter for major donors regarding my retirement and send to Bill and Lynne for editing 11.20.2025

Attended the Morris County Chamber's **Business Connections** networking event
11.21.2025

Ongoing: major donor gift acknowledgement phone calls & letters

Operations Board Report – Val Thorpe

December 2025

Green Carpet Gala & Silent Auction – October 23, 2025



This year's Gala was packed with environmental enthusiasts who came out to support GSWA and celebrate **Julia Somers**, NJ Highlands Coalition (NJHC) Executive Director. Julia was a highly involved throughout the planning our largest annual fundraiser which included promoting ticket sales, encouraging “roast” video submissions*, and helping assemble Gala invitations for mailing.

Adding a unique level of entertainment to the evening was our fantastic host, comedian and actor **Chris Gethard**. The introduction was initiated by our Director of Finance, Eric Fenchel. After outlining his proposed role, I was grateful that Chris graciously agreed to donate his time to support our mission. His comedic talent was highlight of the night, elevating the overall experience for everyone.

Nearly half the guests participated in the **Vegan Challenge** where GSWA received \$100 for every vegan meal ordered that night. This fundraiser-within-a-fundraiser amassed an additional **\$14,500** for the Gala! We are truly grateful to Marilyn and Michael Dee for organizing and contributing to this impactful challenge (which they pioneered in 2019). By securing additional challenge underwriters, they increased their initial pledge per vegan meal ordered from \$75 to \$100!

Another evening highlight was the video **roast of Julia Somers*** featuring heartfelt and humorous contributions from her friends, colleagues, politicians, and more. I worked closely with Julia, her team, and the GSWA staff to identify and encourage video contributions. Elliott Ruga of the NJHC kindly and expertly edited the clips together into a wonderful and touching tribute to Julia.

GSWA again offered free Gala tickets to the public subsidized by underwriters. I promoted this ticket give-away via social media, a press release, and eNews. Perspective attendees vied for these tickets by expressing their motivation for attending the event. Over the years, this process has yielded new members, several thousands of dollars in silent auction purchases, and even a board member.

Gala Financials

In planning the FY25-26 budget, it was decided to keep Gala budget numbers close to FY24-25. However, this year's Gala turned out to be a very different event than last year's. The pendulum swung hard in both directions on various line items which in the end mostly balanced out the budget leading us to exceed our budget by \$2,773.

- **Gross Revenue:** \$177,509 (~7% over budget)
- **Overall Net:** \$136,829 (2% over budget)

Impactful Financial Details

- **Ticket Sales** were 60% higher than anticipated with nearly 300 attendees. This was our highest turnout since pre-Covid. We attribute this to a combination of a highly respected local honoree, a known comedian serving as host, and the increased promotion.
- **Donations:**
 - The vegan challenge brought in \$14,500 – this was not factored into the initial budget
 - Additional donations came in 100% over budget
- **Underwriting**
 - Attained 62% of goal
 - Lynne Applebaum and Wade Kirby worked tirelessly to secure underwriters. Despite their efforts, underwriter support was lower than anticipated.
- **Auction** (silent and live combined) we achieved 85% of budget
- **Call for Cash** was nearly 70% over budget
- **Outside A/V Company** – the structure of the event deemed we hire an outside company to manage the A/V. This expense was not in the budget.

Planning and Execution

Organizing the Gala became my added responsibility when our long-time office manager retired in 2020. Last year, I transitioned the silent auction portion to the capable hands of our current Office Manager and Event Coordinator, Izzy Filippini.

This year I enthusiastically coached Izzy to take ownership of the Gala's execution moving forward. Izzy's exceptional vision shone through. She was responsible for this year's theme and the creativity behind it, identified several streamlining opportunities, and took ownership of many additional deliverables—all while remaining calm and focused. Also, in true nonprofit-employee fashion, she successfully enlisted her family to volunteer their time in preparation for the event. Oh, our poor families.

The Gala is a big undertaking, and it takes many hands to make it a successful and enjoyable event for all. Izzy and I want to acknowledge the following people for their extra efforts in making this event such a big success:

- Lydia Chambers and Carolyn Dempsey for their engagement and creative and critical thinking as Gala Planning Committee members.
- David Naidu for encouraging Board and Advisory Council participation and being a role model throughout the planning and execution of the event.
- Marilyn and Michael Dee for their work on the Vegan Challenge, their generous donations to the silent auction, for purchasing tables, and for their overall enthusiasm.
- Sue Kessel/Chatham Print & Design for her thoughtful input and for producing professional printed pieces for the event.
- The involvement of our Board dedicated members.
- Chris Gethard for donating his time and talent to entertain the attendees and for his solid efforts in selling the live auction and call for cash.
- Our co-workers, who always pull together like a well-oiled machine in the days leading up to and during this big event.

*We believe this year's Gala achieved a level of success that goes beyond fundraising success. It was a unique experience focused on **building goodwill and bringing our environmental community together**. It was great to see so many people connecting, smiling, and celebrating our great cause together.*

Appeals

The **Year-End Appeal** was mailed mid-November and kicked off in early-November with a #GivingTuesday digital campaign. This year's theme, "I love here," was based on a note I received from a young scavenger hunter back in April. Lynne and Wade drafted the original letter based on this theme and with input from Nancy Rago, we crafted the final version. For the **#GivingTuesday** campaign I crafted and emailed three different weekly versions. Nancy piggy-backed the effort via social media posts. **Year-End Appeal** donations are beginning to come in. I will follow up the mailed letter with an eBlast in late-December. Stay tuned for the results!

The **Chair Appeal** in June was a huge success, exceeding its goal by 147%. We received 22 gifts from 21 donors, including one from a local resident who was new to our organization.

GSWA in the News

I compose press releases which are published in some or all the following local news media outlets including New Jersey Hills Media (14 local newspapers), The Daily Record, InsiderNJ.com, The Patch, TapInto, and more. Be on the lookout for GSWA press releases which can be found at GreatSwamp.org/publications:

- 9/5/25 [GSWA to Honor Julia Somers at Gala](#)
- 9/11/25 [Chris Gethard to Entertain at Great Swamp Gala](#)
- 10/3/25 [Great Swamp Offering Free Tickets to Gala](#)

GSWA eNewsletters and eBlasts

In October and November, I sent 17 eNewsletters (include newsy articles and event promo) and eBlasts (shorter, mainly to promote events or share a news article). Depending on the content, I send to 5000-8500 unique email addresses in our database. The average 55% open rate. Industry average open rate for nonprofits and education is 25-46%

GSWA Print Newsletter "Across the Watershed"

August through September, I worked with the GSWA staff who submitted articles and photos for our Fall/Winter edition. We were thrilled to obtain an article from guest authors, Odera Umeh and Dr. Duke Ophori, Department of Earth and Environmental Studies, Montclair State University. We first met Mr. Umeh when he volunteered to help with our cleanup on *City of Water Day* downstream on the Passaic River in July. After editing and confirming edits with each staffer, I collaborated with Sue Kessel of Chatham Print & Design on layout and design. The newsletter was mailed to 1,800 GSWA members and is also used as promotional material for new members and at outreach events.

"A Twilight Affair" Fundraiser at the Dawson Home

Ryan and Melinda Dawson generously opened their home (beautifully renovated barn) to host a GSWA fundraiser event, "A Twilight Affair" on September 17, 2025. Select friends and colleagues of the

Dawsons and GSWA attended this fabulous event which included nearly 60 residents, business associates, and local politicians. The Dawson's generously funded the entire event which generated a total of \$7,000 in donations to GSWA. Thanks you Melinda and Ryan!

HR Committee

The HR Committee (Kristina McRae, Ian MacCallum, Val Thorpe, Bill Kibler) met in early December. We reviewed Kristina's updates to the GSWA Employee Handbook and discussed additional updates. Once finalized, we will send the revised copy to the GSWA staff with an additional signature page added. We also discussed revised staff job descriptions based on Bill's one-on-one discussions. Staff will be asked to review and sign off on these revisions.

Based on the timing of Bill's tenure, this past June, it was decided that fiscal year-end appraisals will begin in 2026. Therefore, staff will receive a year-end "review" in January 2026. I have crafted a template which Bill, Val, Hazel, and Sandra will utilize for these reviews. Formal appraisals and performance-based compensation discussions will begin after June 30, 2026.

Great Swamp Partners*

Based on the popularity of our 2025 scavenger hunt, the Partners determined we will offer this again in April 18-19, 2026. This is a Great Swamp watershed-wide event which guides participants through all of the Partners' beautiful open spaces while engaging them in all-things nature. FYI, I will continue in my role as co-facilitator of this partnership in 2026.

*The Great Swamp Partners consists of representatives from the following organizations: GSWA, The Raptor Trust, Morris County Park Commission OEC, Friends of the Great Swamp, GS National Wildlife Refuge, Somerset County Park Commission EEC, and Morristown National Historical Park.

CAM Team Update

Our Communications, Admin, Membership (CAM) team, consisting of Val, Nancy Rago, and Izzy Filippini, met to update our department's 'strategic plan' and 2026 timeline of deliverables. We made great progress and will meet again to finalize before the end of 2025.

New Office Copier

I took on the unenviable task of obtaining a new office copier. It has been an arduous task with many fits and starts. We opted to rent a refurbished machine which brought with it many issues, however, we now believe we are back on course. Collective fingers crossed...

Board Report: Membership Overview

From Nancy Rago, Membership and Social Media Manager | December 3, 2025

Q2 FY26

R E C A P

Since my last update in late October, most of my time has been split between wrapping up post-Gala work and getting membership efforts moving again.

- **Gala Thank You Letters: Done:** I'm happy to report that the gala support acknowledgement letters are in the mail! With help from two amazing volunteers, Val Thorpe, and the rest of our staff — especially Bill Kibler, who added personal notes to many of our top supporters' letters — we sent out more than 525 thank-you letters to over 365 donors, including the Board and Advisory Council members who participated.
- **FY 26 YTD Donor Snapshot:**
 - *Renewal Mailings* – 40 renewals letters for FY26 Q1 R2, 196 renewals letters for FY26 Q2 R1, 632 letters to lapsed FY24 donors across all four quarters.
 - *General Members* – 226 active donors, 80 New who gifts were through eight different programs or events. I've identified 702 lapsed (3-year) donors and will reach out to them by mail and email.
 - *Sustaining Members* – 16 active Sustaining Members, including one new. Six 3-year lapsed Sustaining Members will receive targeted email outreach.
 - *Matching Gift Donors* – 17 active Matching Gift participants, with 6 new this year. I've flagged 15 lapsed Matching Gift donors for email follow-up.

2025 Thank-a-Thon Update

A big thank you to the 18 board and advisory members who jumped in to help with this year's Thank-a-Thon! Lynne has already sent out your donor lists, and the calling window runs from December 2 through December 15. She also shared a Google Doc so you can easily track who you've reached and how you contacted them.

This year's contact list includes first-time donors who gave \$125 or more, along with our Gala attendees, sponsors, and donors — a total of about 275 supporters. Your calls help keep both our newest donors and our Gala community connected to GSWA, and we really appreciate you taking the time to make those touchpoints personal.

Thanks again for helping us close the year with gratitude and strong relationships!





Overview

We are closing out the year very industriously, as indeed we have been for the whole of 2025! There is no longer a down time period for our programming staff- field season programs give way to in-school programs, our public programs take place year-round, Climate Change workshops compete on weekends with public programming and when fall lengthens, we are busily planning the huge and ever-expanding Plant for Pollinators program for the spring along with our next season of public programming. While being continually busy can make it hard to fit everything in, especially admin(!) in this time of reflection and Thanksgiving, we are grateful to be able to have such an impact on so many students of all ages in the new and existing learning opportunities that we create and undertake each year. We will have final numbers for the year for our various segments of programming at the annual meeting. November saw us work with and present to new and old community groups including Morristown Home Gardeners, Chatman Community, Paterson PS5, PS25, PS12 and STEAM school. We were happy to receive support from the Thomas Glasser foundation that will allow us to pay per diem educators for the 2026 season to take some of the strain from our existing staff.

Climate Change Learning Collaborative Grant

At our quarterly Department of Education CCLC meeting, the official news of year 3 funding was shared. We are excited for the continuation of this important Climate education work, and our northern regional hub of Ramapo and partners is leading the way with the number of teachers reached this year. Since June this year, 772

public school teachers have taken part in workshops offered at our, and the other 3 partner organizations for place-based climate education. More than 183 of that total were hosted at GSWA. We are still hearing the fine tuning of next year's grant requirements, but it looks as if we will be able to request a similar funding level and focus our work on teacher education as well as student field education. The culminating event for our



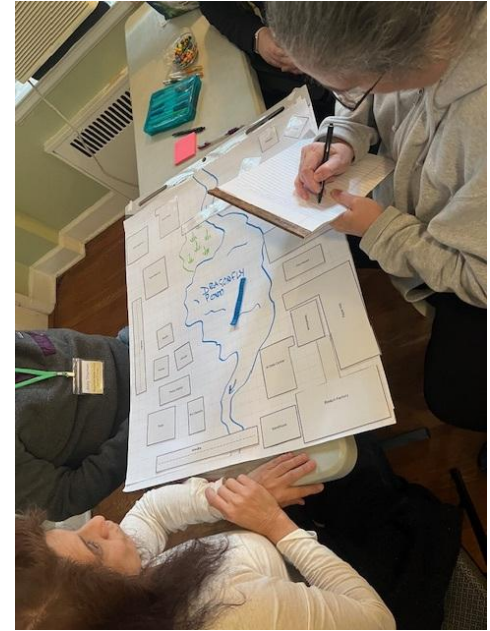
region will take place March 16th, at Ramapo, and more than 395 students have already registered to attend. The Dept of Education has surveyed the attendees in the first year of the grant. 94% of respondents stated they are more comfortable teaching Climate change post workshop. Throughout the state, 2,400 participants attended over 160 professional development events, and again GSWA was a large part of that- hosting 17 events in our first year.

We are working with PS5 in Paterson, who was a grant recipient this year for the CC Learning School grant. We helped their spearheading teacher Ms Furnam plan an assembly style Climate Science education event, offering age relevant climate focused education experiments and activities. We will be going with their 5th grade into their classrooms and playgrounds and helping with advice and technical expertise on the green infrastructure project the students will be involved in creating. Students from the 5th grade have already visited the CMA

for a field trip and by years' end we will know these students well!

We held two sellout teacher workshops in November, one focused on how ecological field science can help students understand how Climate Change is already impacting their communities and can help inform resilience projects. All of our teacher workshops focus in on how climate change is impacting Passaic River region communities, tying in GSWA's mission, and looking at climate change through the lens of GSWA's own water quality, quantity and biodiversity related protection mission. Teacher used data sets GSWA, NJ state climatologists, or the participants themselves collected learning how flooding caused by our communities' increasingly impervious surfaces, and precipitation caused by increasingly energetic storms- impact environment and human communities, and what solutions focused thinking can

implement to mitigate these issues.



K-12 Education

We finished our field season of programming in early November, and are now booking and planning our in school water quality programming. We will be in Paterson PS25, preparing students with 4 in class and playground in August after almost 5 years of work. The original 5th graders we were to work with are now high schoolers- Urban work can often be slow, and you have to take the long view to partnering with schools for projects, but we are excited to finally plan with the kids to have a climate and flood mitigation project in their own school. As part of our climate work we are creating flood models to use in classroom teaching, and are putting the finishing touches to two more lightweight models. The latest shows the approximate path of the Passaic around Paterson, and is incredibly helpful for use in hands on activities to help students learn about WHY their communities flood.

We will have our final 2025 numbers ready for the annual board meeting.



Plant for Pollinators Program

We spent time recently future planning for next years 2026 Plant for Pollinators program. We combed through the plants we have offered in the last five years of the Pollinator Plants program to ensure we pick the best plant list for this years sale based on analytics. We created a master list of all plants sold over the years so we could look at how many times it was sold, and how rapidly the species typically sold out... (especially last year where we had more units of many species and still had plants sell out in the first couple of hours.) We have sold 84 different species over 5 years, no small feat! We want to continue to offer new, interesting, and pollinator powerhouse species for the growing purchasers- 630 in 2025. We know from our feedback survey post sale that the bulk units offered for the first time this year were a big hit. We increased both the number of units, and species offered in bulk. These orders are a little easier to process, and valuable for larger scale groundcover plantings as people transform their gardens. We will look to slightly increase the total number of plants sold this year, but by only a small percentge, since processing the sale takes so many volunteers.

We expanded the non-flowering section: ferns, sedges, and grasses- mindful we want to expand people's mindset on pollinator attracting plants. We are adding some new species for our expert purchasers and keep the great performing plants beginners will love. We are happy with the service and pricing of our nursery partner, so plan to use them again for the bulk of the order. We read our post sale survey responses and tried to include some of these requested plant in our planning for 2026. Last year we had 37 individual species... we are up a couple in our hopeful selection to 41. We are also looking to increase the number of units of those fast sellout plants if possible. We propose 5 kits this year: **Rain Garden/wet Sun, Hell strip, Sunny Meadow ,Dry Shade, Damp Shade** . We will choose speakers for our popular webinar series and the additriional pieces we include in the online sale.

Public Programming

We finished up our popular paddling season with two chillingly cold paddles on Veterans day. Despite it being the coldest day of the year, we had a happy group of attendess at the two paddles, and were rewarded with 3 bald eagles flying over our yeads, beaver, great blue herons and kingfishers. Although the water was cold, and the air temperature colder, the wildlife didn't seem to mond. One participant came straight from the paddle to the office to join as a member. These programs are one of the best ways to engage public with who we are and what we do. You can talk easily about protecting water quality when you are in a boat just a

couple inches from the water you study, test and work to protect.

Alex presented a breakfast briefing on the importance of mussels to the river system, we have three native conifer wreath making classes this week and a couple of hike and that will complete our 2025 programming.



Programs and Professional Development at Great Swamp Watershed Association



Student Experiential Learning Opportunities

We bring GSWA's focus on water quality and ecological conservation to your 5-12th grade students.



Field Trips GSWA staff will lead students through a day in the life of a field scientist, assessing environmental health and resilience through water quality monitoring and ecological assessments. Students participate in hands-on water quality science and undertake ecological thinking as they walk our restored floodplain forest exploring microhabitats and assessing ecological values of preserved lands. Students will engage meaningfully in how environmental health and climate change impacts human communities in the Passaic watershed.

In-Class Learning GSWA staff will come to your classroom to explore issues surrounding water quality and quantity, the real New Jersey water cycle, and how water moves through natural and human built ecosystems. Student will undertake guided activities and interactive lessons to explore local

water quality and environmental issues. Our science staff will tailor information to be locally relevant, place-based and relatable to your students. We can teach up to 5 classes on your scheduled day.

In-School Teacher Professional Development Workshops will take place at your site and can include all educators and facility staff at your site or specific grade levels and subjects from your district. Participants will experience place-based, locally relevant, hands-on experiential activities. GSWA staff will provide high quality, current and vetted science-based resources applicable across all subject areas. GSWA will demonstrate lessons and interactive models and will leave teachers with all the resources they need to turnkey these resources



Next Steps: Interested schools should contact GSWA to book based on availability and capacity. **If you have any questions or would like to schedule a program or trip, please contact: Hazele@greatswamp.org or Asloane@greatswamp.org**

Stewardship Board Report

By Ginger Van Ryzin

Ice is beginning to cover the Conservation Management Area, signaling winter is just around the corner! The change of season also means that hunting season is here, and so our trails are officially closed until noon on weekdays for the safety of our visitors. Our hunting program is essential to keep the deer populations in check at the CMA, preventing overgrazing of our native plants and habitat degradation.



Pre-Thanksgiving Volunteer Day at the CMA



Sandra with volunteers installing a coir log to protect the bank of the Silver Brook

Since October, we have had over 75 folks come to volunteer at the CMA, planted 800 native plants, removed 250 square feet of invasive species, and restored 20 feet of the Silver Brook riverbank. Pingry Middle School was our first group to come, and with their help we mulched and reformed the back of the green trail totaling over 500 feet. Our second corporate workday with Sanofi was a success, and despite the chilly temperatures we had a great turnout. Our corporate folks got a taste of stream bank restoration and regrading as well as how cold it can be in a stream when in waders in early November!

The fall stewardship season wrapped up with our annual Pre-Thanksgiving Community Volunteer Day, where we were able to finish up the last of the projects, including placing hardware cloth on the slippery boardwalks to make the trails safer for winter hikers.

Our major project this fall was replacing the orange trail bog boardwalk with new plank boardwalk, and thanks to all our volunteers we are almost finished. This part of the orange trail is heavily trafficked, because many of our educational field trips use this trail. All in all, we have replaced nearly 300 feet of bog boards with wider plank boardwalk.

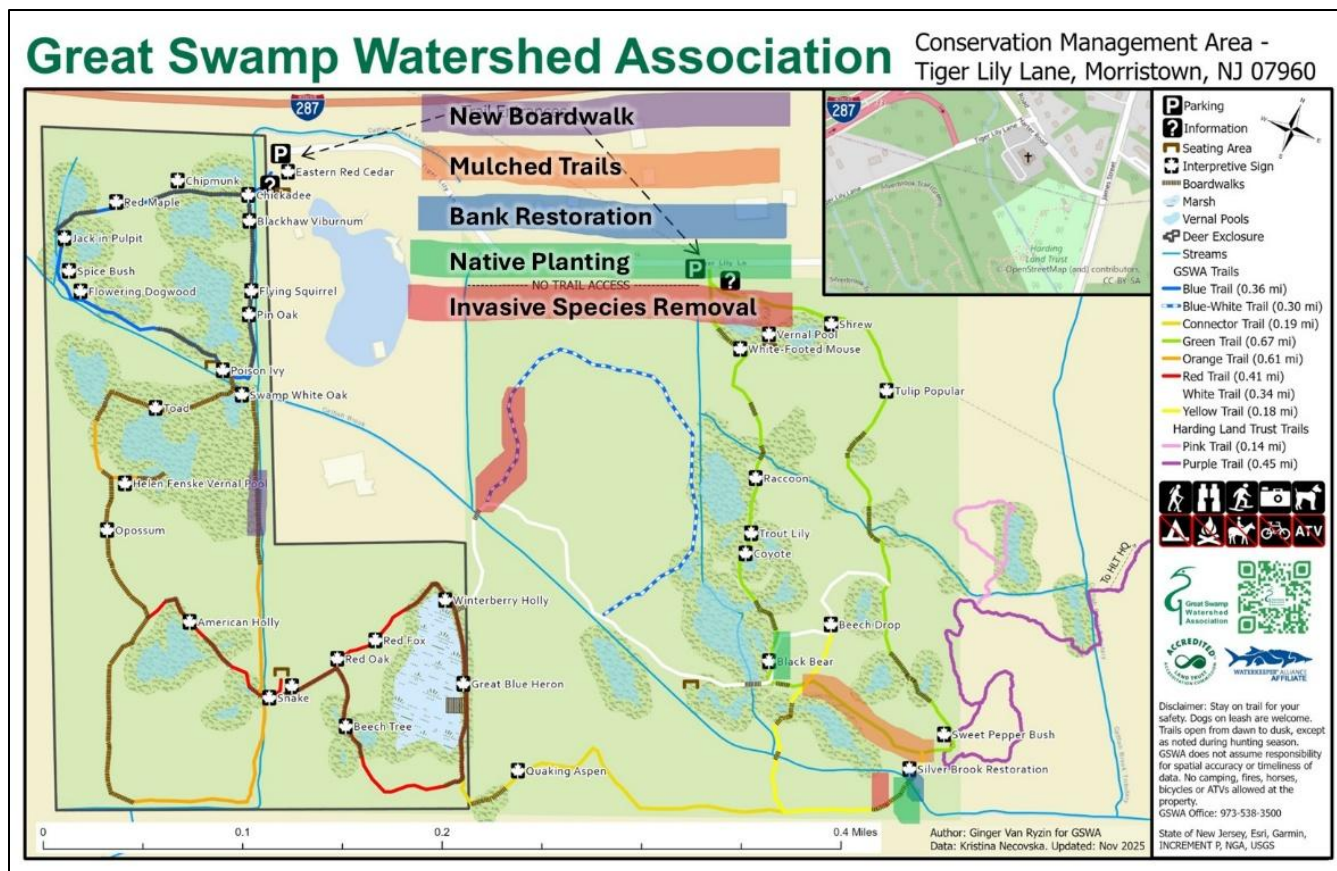
Lastly, the end of fall also means the time for easement monitoring. Per our land trust accreditation, we monitor our conservation easements yearly at the end of November or early



Frosty raccoon footprints on the Green Trail boardwalk

December. This helps us ensure that the conservation easements are properly maintained and have good relationships with the landowners. We monitor our three conservation easements, located in Chatham Twp, Basking Ridge and Madison, in addition to our fee properties Hoag and Kent in Chatham off of Long Hill Lane. If you have any questions about our conservation easements, reach out to Ginger at gvanryzin@greatswamp.org.

November CMA Project Map:



GSWA Water Quality Programs

Board Meeting Report

December 2025

Water Quality Monitoring

Chemistry –

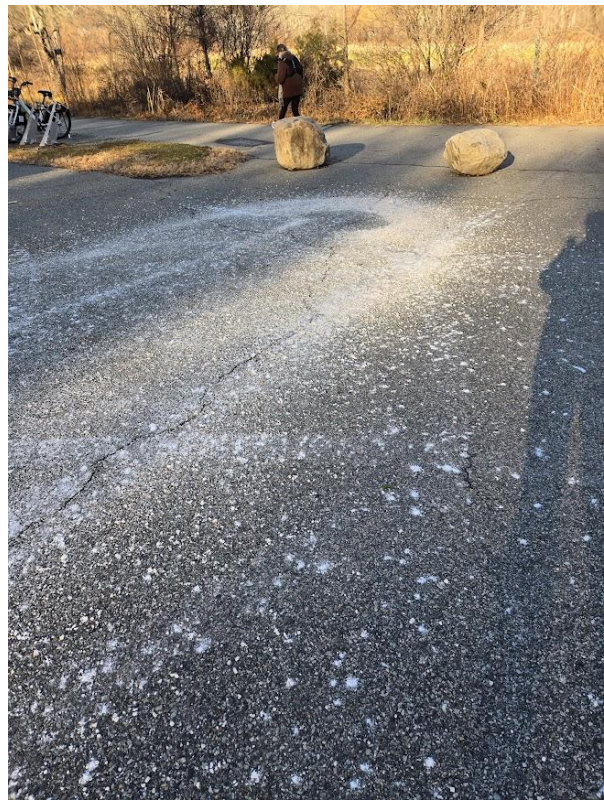
2025 –

We have completed our final round of chemistry sampling for 2025. This was done the first week in December, slightly later than the normal which is usually the last week in November. This was due to weather in the third week in November and then the holiday being so late. Due to lab constraints we were unable to sample Thanksgiving week.

Sampling this week saw some worryingly high numbers for Total dissolved solids(TDS) and specific conductivity – both parameters that show salt levels in the water. In particular levels at Loantaka Brook below Kitchell Pond and Great Brook below Footes Pond were significantly high. Loantaka Brook had TDS over 1000mg/l and Great Brook was even higher at over 1500mg/l. For reference the state standard is 500mg/l or lower. While the numbers are concerning the cause is obvious, best management practices are not being used by municipalities when it comes to salting roads and parking lots. The picture below is the parking lot at Kitchell Pond showing an excessive amount of salt which will run directly into the pond and thus Loantaka Brook with the next rain or snowmelt.

Looking ahead to 2026, we will begin our final expansion into data collection along the Passaic River. Utilizing the attached PDF map, created by Ginger VanRYzin our GIS specialist, I have identified four sampling locations. These sites represent, as close as we are able, the downstream reach of each of the HUC14 watersheds in this region of the river. In order from upstream to downstream –

GSWA PRD14 – Boat Launch at Riverside County Park, Lyndhurst, NJ. This site will allow us to assess the impacts of the confluence of the Third River with the Passaic.



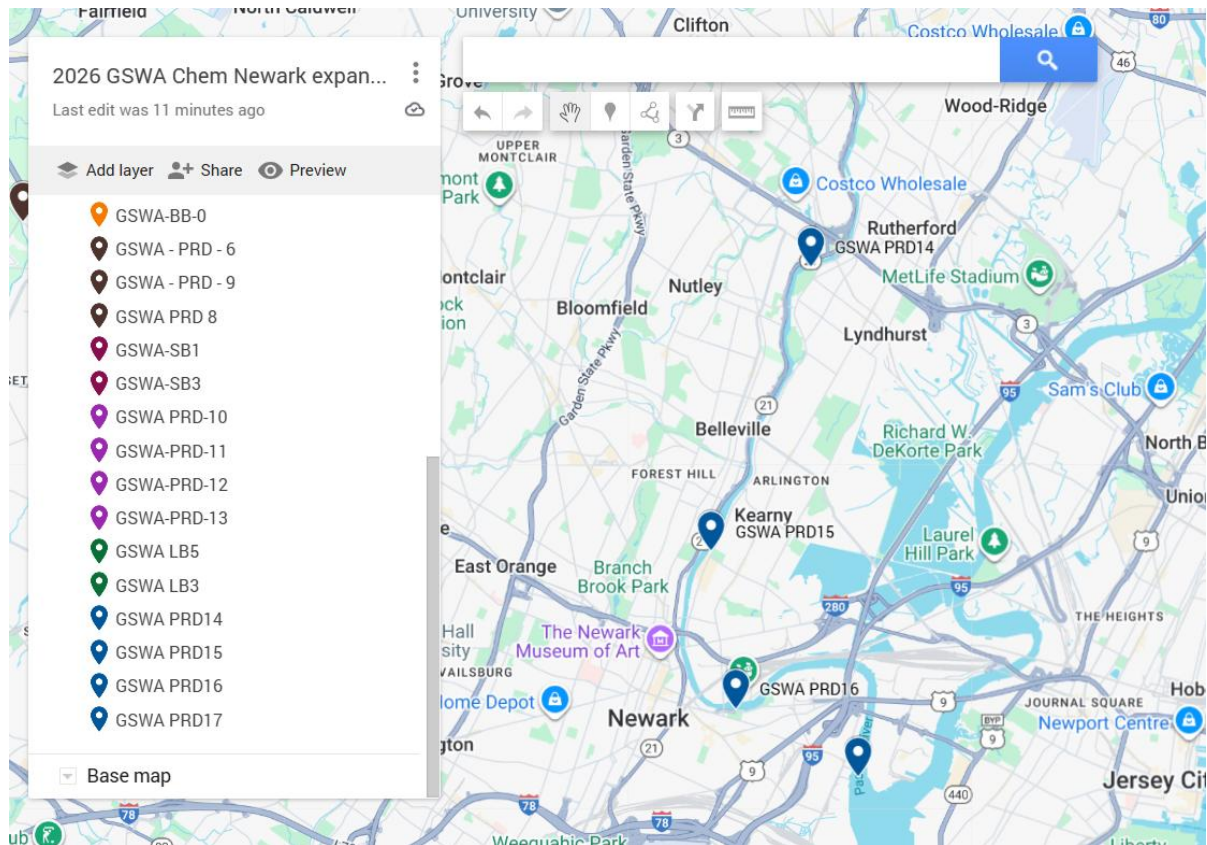
GSWA PRD15 – Kearny Archery Park and boat Launch, Kearny, NJ. This site will capture the impacts of the Second River confluence.

GSWA PRD16 – Passaic River Park, Iron Bound, Newark, NJ. This site will help us to look at the impacts of the industry along this area of the river and the increased impervious cover from the surrounding areas.

GSWA PRD17 – Passaic River at Newark Bay. This will be the farthest downstream site we sample. ***I am happy to announce that we have teamed up with Hackensack Riverkeeper to collect samples at this site. They will be able to bring us out for three of the sampling dates each year.***

I am still gathering data on the surrounding region that will help us to better interpret the data that we will be collecting in our final expansion. Land use characteristics, impervious cover, and types of industry, will all help to round out the water quality data that we collect. This region is part of the Diamond Alkali Superfund site which stretches along the lower 17 miles of the river from Dundee Dam (our current furthest downstream location) to Newark Bay. While we will not be sampling for the toxins that are present in the sediment in this region we will be exploring the data collected by the EPA, NJDEP and other interested parties, to help us better understand the current conditions. We also hope that our water quality data, collected at this time, prior to the start of the superfund restoration, will serve as a baseline moving forward, as the cleanup of the river proceeds.

See below for the locations of the sampling sites, as see attached PDF for the map of the NJDEP HUC 14 delineations.



Visual Assessments –

Fall visual assessments are almost complete. Many of our volunteers have, including new teams who joined after our last training, have completed and submitted their assessments. Fall sampling runs through the end of November. If you are interested in learning more or volunteering please reach out – sandral@greatswamp.org

Macroinvertebrate sampling –

Our macroinvertebrate samples have been delivered to Normandeau for sorting and identification. We look forward to receiving our results early in the new year.

GSWA staff and volunteers were able to complete our macroinvertebrate surveys in a timely fashion for the first time in three years. The weather cooperated and, with the help of six different volunteers and interns, we collected samples from 16 sites throughout the Passaic River region. For the first time we were able to complete sampling at some of our downstream locations including Little Falls and Dundee Dam. (see pictures below) The samples are set to be delivered to Normandeau Associates later this month for identification and enumeration.



Figure 1- Old Carpet Factory at Little Falls sampling site



Figure 2- Large Crayfish collected while sampling at Little Falls site

Education –

Our education continue to keep us busy. We are currently finishing up our last few weeks of outdoor education.

Loantaka Brook Restoration Project –

We are still actively pursuing funding opportunities to complete this project. Updates will be forthcoming as we hear of new grants and funding sources.

History - Loantaka is our most impaired stream within the Great Swamp Sub-watershed. This stretch of the stream has elevated levels of bacteria during the summer months, it is impacted by road salt, runoff and effluent discharges, and doesn't have a good diversity of habitat for macroinvertebrates. The picture to the left is where Loantaka Brook headwaters start, coming out of a culvert under Parsons Village in Morristown.

Since my last board report I have met with many of the community members as well as the Morris Township EC and Morris County Parks employees. We have done a number of walk-throughs of the area along Loantaka Brook which we would like to target for restoration. One of these included being accompanied by Steve Souza formerly of Princeton Hydro and Roy Messaros from Rutgers University Environmental Engineering. These two gentleman brought some needed insight into what restoration efforts would be possible and the most successful at addressing the issues facing the stream.

While examining the headwaters region of Loantaka Brook we also reviewed the restoration that GSWA helped to conduct Seaton Hackney Stables. The restoration area adjacent to the stream was in relatively good shape with the native trees which had been planted all doing well and with minimal deer browse, the understory is once again dominated by invasive plants. However, of greatest concern was the fact that we observed dumping of horse manure from the Seaton Hackney paddocks on the stream side of

the fencing. These piles of fresh and older manure being placed within the restoration area and along the stream side of the fencing allow stormwater to carry the nutrients and bacterial contamination more directly into Loantaka Brook. Both the stables and Morris County Parks were notified of the violation and we will follow up in the coming weeks to ensure that this is dealt with.

Dr. Messaros is now pulling together a bid to present to GSWA on the cost of writing a formal restoration plan. This plan would include all recommendations and discrete projects that will be weighted in terms of efficacy. In this way our GSWA grant team can begin to look at sources for funding the different projects. This is the next step in the process of seeing the project come to life and restoring the water quality to the Loantaka Brook headwaters.

We have hired a new staff member to fill the position, Alexandra (Alex) Melligon. Alex comes to us with a solid water quality background including data collection and management. She also has teaching experience in an informal setting. We look forward to welcoming Alex to GSWA in mid-June.