The Power of Connection

Interconnectedness is a central tenet of the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) mission, strategic plan, programs, and positive impact in our communities. Our watershed approach to protecting water and land resources is based on the knowledge that activities on the land impact the water, and actions in one area impact conditions downstream. NRWA programs are also interconnected, and all advance our goal to protect water resources. For example, ecological restoration initiatives to improve stream continuity, and climate resilience projects to reduce flooding, both benefit water quality.

The NRWA is uniquely well qualified to protect water quality, advance ecological restoration, and improve climate resilience in our communities. We have been doing this work for 55 years. We have in-depth knowledge of our communities - the water and land resources, the community character, municipal leadership, and colleague organizations who share our goals. As NRWA members and volunteers, you are an integral part of our Association, our work, and our success – **Thank you!**

Strengthening Climate Resilience

The Nashua River watershed is experiencing extreme precipitation and flooding, prolonged periods of higher temperatures and drought, and loss of wildlife habitat and species. The NRWA helps our communities strengthen climate resilience by working with natural systems to mitigate these impacts.

The NRWA is leading the Nashua River Watershed-wide Nature-based Solutions Project funded by a Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Grant awarded to the City of Fitchburg by the MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The project includes five municipalities - Fitchburg, Leominster, Ashburnham, Groton, and Pepperell. The NRWA worked with residents and officials in each community to identify climate impact challenges and develop site-specific Nature-based Solution (NbS) options. NbS use or recreate natural systems to slow and absorb heavy rains to reduce flooding, provide cooler spaces during heat waves, and create habitat for wildlife.

The five communities are representative of our 32 watershed communities, and the lessons learned and tools developed will be used to create an online Nashua River Watershed-wide Nature-based Solutions Plan available to all.

MVP site walk in Leominster
(Photo courtesy of Sherry Anders)

More frequent and intense droughts and hotter summers can be stressful for aquatic species. As water heats, it holds less oxygen, making it hard for fish and other species to breathe. The NRWA Habitat Refuge Program evaluates potential in-stream habitat refugia on coldwater streams, using loggers to track water temperature. Our goal is to protect and restore land adjacent to the coldest of these sites, to keep them shaded and cool for fish and other species.

West Side Trail from Marion Stoddart Conservation Area (Photo courtesy of Sally Reed)

Protecting Rivers and Streams

The NRWA is a tireless protector of water quality, a public value essential to human and ecosystem health. In 2024, the NRWA, with the support of over 60 dedicated community volunteers, completed its 32nd year of our Monthly Water-Monitoring Program. This program provides vital data on the safety of our waters for recreation and the viability of aquatic habitats. Our Swimming Hole Monitoring Program grew tremendously as the NRWA welcomed volunteers for the first time. These dedicated citizen scientists monitored E. coli weekly during the summer at ten sites that are popular for swimming and boating. In partnership with community Boards of Health, the NRWA provided timely warnings about bacterial surges that helped river users avoid exposure to pathogenic bacteria. State environmental agencies use data from both programs to assess the status of watershed-streams under the US Clean Water Act. To view our data, visit Report Cards on the NRWA website.

Preserving Greenways and Forests

Land conservation is one of the most powerful nature-based tools we can leverage to protect water quality and combat the changing climate. Protected land filters stormwater, absorbs floodwater, stores carbon, and absorbs greenhouse gases. Through the Marion Stoddart Greenway Program (MSGP), the Association protects riparian buffers along primary rivers, tributaries, and headwaters. In June 2024, the NRWA celebrated the acquisition of the Phillips Brook Conservation Area, an 80-acre parcel in Westminster, MA with over 1,500 feet of frontage along Phillips Brook. The NRWA was proud to be part of this partnership project with the Town of Westminster, North County Land Trust, Commonwealth of MA, Trout Unlimited, Oxbow Associates, Conservation Works, Nashua Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council, and community volunteers.

Successful land protection is often the culmination of years of foundational work to identify priority parcels, map and document the environmental resource values, meet with landowners, and collaborate with partners. The NRWA created a Greenway Prioritization map to strategically rank unprotected parcels based on overlapping desirable attributes such as adjacency to existing conservation land, rare-species habitat, vernal pools, and proximity to environmental justice communities. Educational materials on land protection and the Greenway Program were developed and shared via information stations installed in Town Halls.

NASHUA RIVERS
WILD & SCENIC
STEWARDSHIP COUNCIL
Nashua • Squannacook • Nissitissit Rivers

Our three National Wild & Scenic Rivers are stewarded by the Nashua, Squannacook, and Nissitissit Rivers Wild & Scenic Stewardship Council (the Council) in partnership and with staff support from the NRWA. This year. the Council received an $8.5 million USDA-Forest Legacy Grant to permanently protect nearly 2,000 acres of priority private working forests in nine communities. This project will help to protect water resources, sustain wildlife habitat, support outdoor recreation, provide ongoing timber products, and strengthen climate resilience. Project partners include the Council, NRWA, land trusts, MA Dept. of Fish & Game, and the MA Dept. of Conservation & Recreation. Additionally, to encourage regional land stewardship, the Council partnered with NRWA to lead three workshops (one for each river) drawing together leaders from federal and state agencies, municipalities, and local environmental partners to identify and prioritize shared land stewardship concerns and opportunities to work collaboratively.

Beaver Brook Pond Tributary (Photo courtesy of Sherry Anders)

Ecological Restoration

The NRWA was founded to restore the Nashua River. Today, the NRWA is advancing restoration projects that improve water quality, and help human and wildlife communities to be healthier and better able to adapt to extreme weather.

We completed a three-year greenway restoration project in which over 7 miles of riparian habitat was restored, and 1515 native seedlings were planted, thanks to support from 450 volunteers and funding from the US Forest Service.

As more intense precipitation events occur, aging infrastructure along our waterways, such as culverts and dams, can impede aquatic connectivity and poses a significant risk to public safety.

In response to the need to address the unsafe and impassable barriers along our rivers and streams, we assisted landowners and municipalities interested in restoration by providing information, community engagement, and help with grant applications. The Association successfully submitted multiple grant proposals to help fund the Whitney Pond Dam removal and Whitman River restoration in Ashburnham, MA. In addition, we provided a series of educational talks on ecological restoration and stream continuity in several communities.

Connecting People with Nature

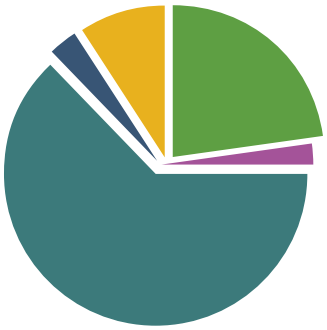
The NRWA understands that it is essential for members of our communities to have opportunities to experience nature, learn about the value of our natural resources and how they can best be protected, and be inspired to be part of these efforts.

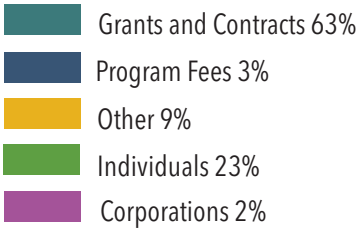
NRWA environmental education programs deliver compelling experiential education programs to accomplish these goals. In 2024, approximately 4,000 people attended one or more NRWA education programs. Our River Classroom® canoe-based program engaged 50 school groups on the Nashua and Squannacook Rivers, encouraging youth and adults to observe river life and make connections to their lives in a very tangible way. Our Scientist-in-Residence programs bring hands-on science to students in 240 K-12 classrooms, introducing watershed topics while supporting state education science standards. NRWA Eco-Adventures for adults and youth provided outdoor experiences with trained naturalists throughout the watershed. Many adult programs involved outdoor exploration and nature identification, while a series of "Wild Inside" programs brought nature indoors to seniors and others with limited ability to participate in outdoor programs.

NRWA Operating Financial Highlights

Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2024 (Accrual Basis) – Unaudited

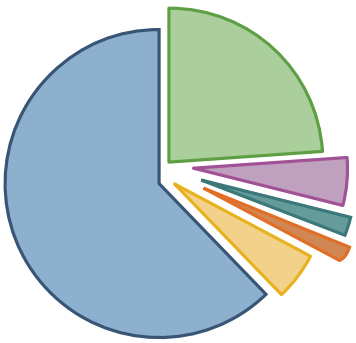
REVENUE

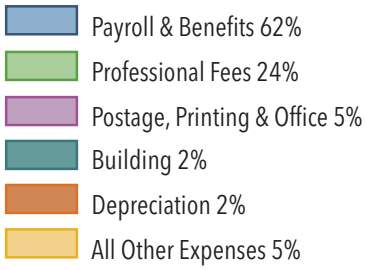




Individuals	$298,018
Corporations	26,970
Grants & Contracts	803,706
Program Fees	37,326
Other	112,103
Total Revenue	$1,278,123

EXPENSES





Payroll & Benefits	$792,774
Professional Fees	301,015
Postage, Printing & Office	59,632
Building	32,283
Depreciation	23,656
Other	59,612
Total Expenses	$1,268,972

For more information about NRWA Staff, Board of Directors, Financials, and Policies, please visit NashuaRiverWatershed.org.

NASHUA RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
592 Main Street, Groton, MA 01450

Non-ProfitOrg.
U.S. Postage
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Fitchburg, MA
Permit No. 35

Visit NRWA's redesigned website to experience the impact of your support in our communities.

New interactive features will be added this year including online paddling maps for beginner and family-friendly paddles.

www.NashuaRiverWatershed.org

Acknowledgments

Individual Contributions

The NRWA is grateful for the generous contributions of the dedicated individuals who are an integral part of the Association as members, donors, volunteers, community partners, advisors, and representatives of business and foundations. Your support is at work in our communities - protecting water and land, connecting people with nature, and improving climate resilience. **Thank you!**

View complete list of business and organization supporters at: www.NashuaRiverWatershed.org.

Business Supporters

(membership, donations, grants, and sponsorships)

Watershed Circle

Bemis Associates, Inc.
Bristol-Myers Squibb Company
Commonwealth Fusion Systems
Devens Enterprise Commission
EPIC Enterprises, Inc.
Groton School
Hollingsworth & Vose Company
Nashoba Air & BoilerWorks
Nypro Foundation

River Club

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Nashoba Paddler, LLC
Rollstone Bank & Trust
Rotary Club of Groton Pepperell

Stream Club

Charles River Insurance Brokerage
Ecological Fibers, Inc.
Ice House Partners, Inc.
Inter-fluve Inc.
The Thirsty Robot

Foundations, Funds, & Contracts

(supporting NRWA activities)

anonymous foundation
Beers For Good Fund of the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
Brian S. McCarthy Memorial Foundation
Bruce J. Anderson Foundation
Burnham Foundation
C. LeRoy Miller Charitable Foundation
City of Fitchburg
Doyle General Endowment Fund of the Community Foundation of North Central Massachusetts
Further Forward Foundation
Greater Lowell Community Foundation
Groton Trust Funds' Lecture Fund
Marion Stoddart Greenway Fund
Massachusetts Cultural Council
Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection
Massachusetts Division of Ecological Restoration
Merrimack Conservation Partnership
The Fieldstone Foundation
The Fleetwing Charitable Foundation Trust
The Progin Foundation
Rotary Club of Nashua West
Sally and Anne Hurley Memorial Fund
US Department of Agriculture – US Forest Service
US Department of the Interior – National Park Service
Vanguard Charitable – The Bemis Outdoor Fund