

MYSTIC MESSENGER

2016 ANNUAL REPORT



1,200 VOLUNTEERS ENGAGED

67 TONS OF INVASIVE WATER CHESTNUT REMOVED

800 WATER QUALITY SAMPLES COLLECTED & ANALYZED

TOGETHER WE RAISED **\$700,309** TO FURTHER PROTECT THE MIGHTY MYSTIC

Volunteers remove the invasive weed, water chestnut, in Arlington. © Lita Vongsavanh



MYSTIC RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
20 Academy Street, Suite 306
Arlington, MA 02476
(781)-316-3438 | Contact@MysticRiver.org

www.MysticRiver.org
Get social with MyRWA!



"Now is the time to give our entire waterfront back to our community. We all share a vision of a ribbon of new open spaces, marinas, viewing towers, boat launches, fishing piers, boat houses and paths along our waterfront to be enjoyed by residents and visitors alike. Together we will work to ensure that every rule and regulation will be used to provide public access to our waterfront. I commend the Mystic River Watershed Association, the Friends of the Malden River and others who share this vision and work hard everyday to make it happen. Thank you!"

— TOM PHILBIN, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS, CITY OF EVERETT

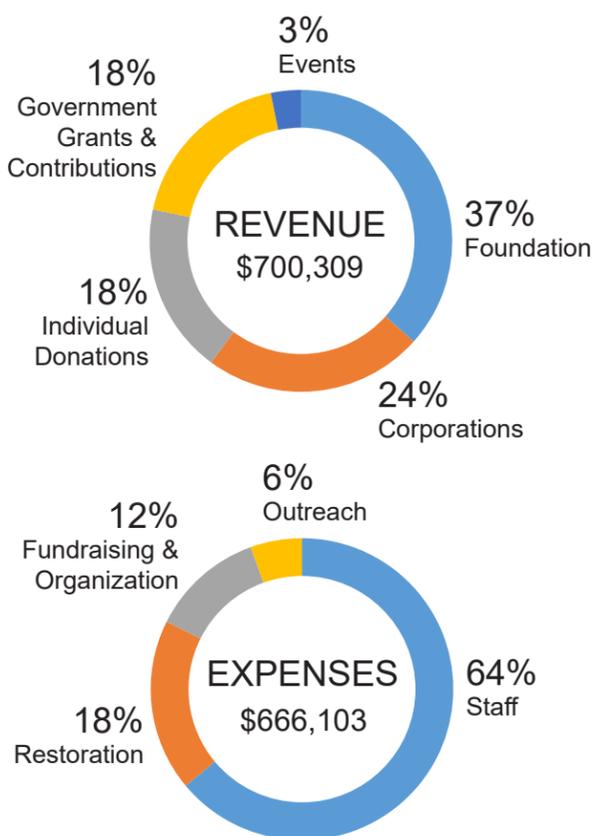


A great blue heron along the Malden River.

THE POWER OF YOU



Volunteers pick up litter at the Earth Day River Cleanup in Medford. © Clara Alexander



The Mystic is my local watershed. My family walks along its shores, swims in its waters and looks forward to seeing the bald eagles that frequent the Mystic Lakes each winter. But this is not the only reason I work every day to protect my watershed. As a scientist, I also know how important the watershed is to the health of all of our communities. And as a local resident, I believe that our communities deserve healthy waters and world-class parks. I know that together we can get there.

The six-member-strong staff which for the first time includes a Greenways Director and a Development Director, worked hard to protect our waters and restore our parks in 2016. And the results are shared in this report. But this is only part of the story. Our partners and supporters are another key component to this success. More than 500 donors fund these programs while 1,200 volunteers come out to clean up our rivers and parks or advocate for improved access. At the same time, state and federal agencies assist our water quality

programs, local businesses and municipalities make on-the-ground improvements, and partner organizations further strengthen our efforts.

I wish that this work could be done with duct-tape and goodwill. But it also requires the financial backing of those same Mystic communities that both impact and benefit from the watershed. Your belief in healthy waters and world-class parks is the power behind the Mystic River Watershed Association. Now more than ever we will continue to fight for environmental protections and improvements. I take comfort in knowing that I can rely upon you in this work.

Thank you and I look forward to a great 2017!

Patrick Herron
Patrick Herron
Executive Director



Water chestnut removal on the Mystic River.

2016 IMPACTS

DATA MAKING A DIFFERENCE

Deployed our robust water-quality monitoring programs to generate data that makes a difference. Specifically, in 2016 our data was:

- utilized by the US Environmental Protection Agency to issue its annual Water Quality Report Card highlighting problem tributaries;
- publicized by The Boston Globe in a series of articles that convinced the Town of Belmont to invest more in clean water;
- referenced by multiple mayors in the watershed to help determine what their communities needed to do to improve water quality; and,
- applied to change management practices that led to reduced bacteria levels at the Blessing of the Bay in Somerville.

Data is the first step to making these water quality improvements—and ours is top notch—thanks to our professional staff, dozens of volunteers, and committed partners such as the US Environmental Protection Agency, Mass. Department of Environmental Protection, Mass. Water Resources Authority and the United States Geological Survey.

REALIZING WORLD-CLASS PARKS ON THE MYSTIC

Secured more than \$500,000 to begin improving our riverfront parks and paths, and to install additional pollution-reducing green

infrastructure. Look for park improvements like newly paved paths and invasive species removal at Medford's Torbert Macdonald Park, the largest riverine park in the Boston area. Further downstream we, along with Chelsea GreenRoots are building a playground and creating improved access to Mill Creek.

PUSHING FOR PROTECTION & ACCESS

Successfully advocated for strong stormwater testing requirements in the new stormwater (MS4) permit and for a public boat launch at the Medford Mews development along the Malden River. Policy committee members and staff monitor permits and policies that could positively or negatively impact our shoreline and water quality. We commented on 13 such projects last year and rallied dozens of supporters to public meetings.

RESTORING HABITAT FOR HERRING

Documented the second largest river herring run in the state bringing much-needed attention to this important anadromous fish. This program, in turn, spurred the building of a second fish ladder in Winchester Center, opening up additional spawning grounds. Volunteers tirelessly documented an estimated 448,060 herring passing through the Mystic Lakes Dam fish ladder. Through a new program coming this spring the migration will even be broadcast to classrooms and private homes through the use of underwater cameras.