



Taunton River Watershed Alliance, Inc.

2008 Annual Report
"Our Wild and Scenic Heritage"

For twenty years, our mission has remained the same: to be the strong, grass roots advocates for the Taunton River Watershed. We advocate for the protection of the watershed and work to restore important ecological features within the watershed. And we never forget our 'fun with a purpose' motto, bringing our members and others out to appreciate the Watershed's unparalleled resources.

TRWA has received a continued commitment of financial support from the Sheehan Family Foundation (SFF), a leading supporter of environmental activism in Southeastern Massachusetts. Having hired our full-time executive director last year, the SFF funding is now being directed toward Clean Water Act enforcement and increasing our membership base.

Our DEP and EPA targeted watershed grant is underway. The Quality Assurance Project Plan (QAPP) is being reviewed for final approval, 45 locations for water quality testing have been selected and new volunteer monitors are being deployed. Public stewardship programs focusing on the Three Mile River and prevention of stormwater pollution are in process. We continue to work with DEP, EPA, the City of Taunton, and Save the Bay to position two fish ladders and to conduct fish counts on the Three Mile River to enhance fish passage.

TRWA's Advocacy Committee increased its capabilities through partnerships at the local and regional level and by obtaining funds for legal support from the Taunton River Stewardship Organization. At a regional level, TRWA has benefited by and developed a strong working relationship with Priscilla Chapman, the full time Taunton River Watershed Advocate from Mass Audubon and funded by the SFF.

We are pleased to announce that TRWA received an EPA 2008 Environmental Merit Award for our commitment to protecting the Mount Hope Bay estuary. For years, our members worked to get the Brayton Point Power Station to comply with the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit. TRWA "...exemplify what can be accomplished by ordinary citizens at a grass root level. The new permit will save billions of fish eggs, larvae, and fish. At the same time it will help restore the estuary..."

We have continued our advocacy efforts on key environmental issues:

- Comments on effects of developments such as Weavers Cove LNG proposals in Mount Hope Bay, Paynes Crossing commercial development in Freetown, the South Coast Rail alternatives, Raynham Woods Commerce Center, and Lake Shore Center in Bridgewater
- Opposition in Federal courts to the City of Brockton's continued interbasin water withdrawals and violations of the Clean Water Act
- Opposition to the proposed location a power plant at the watershed's headwaters in Brockton

- Technical assistance and advocacy support to conservation commissions on local projects
- Participation in the Taunton River Watershed Study, the Upper Taunton Wastewater Study, and working with Riverways Partners on the Mill River project, the South Coast Rail study, and many other critical issues that have arisen.

Critical to this and all of our efforts is community support. Awareness of the threats to the watershed and the ways these threats impact the health and well-being of our surrounding natural communities and ourselves is most important. We speak for those who care about the Taunton River and thus want to broaden our membership base. Last year we had 334 members. Presently, we have 674 members. We are currently preparing to undertake a membership drive as well as a corporate membership campaign.

We are continuing to work and cooperate with the Taunton River Watershed Campaign, an affiliation of ten leading environmental organizations in the watershed. All have agreed that TRWA should take the lead with organizing the annual mini-grants program for community programs and with coordinating the educational programs in the region. This effort is supported through a new multi-year grant from the Jessie B. Cox Charitable Lead Trust. The SFF assists this managerial effort through its funding of TRWA.

We have undertaken a series of educational programs for the public and for municipal officers; all of which have been widely attended. Training sessions for members and the public were conducted on conservation commission operations, vernal pool certification and water quality monitoring. We participated in community events and public outreach programs throughout the cities and towns including the Middleboro Park Commission Canoe Race, the Taunton River Festival, the Taunton River Folk Festival, the Natural Resources Trust Harvest Festival and many others. We held our annual Wild and Scenic Overnight canoe and kayak trip in June and sponsored the Archeology Along the River trip in October. TRWA co-sponsored the Taunton River estuary forum with Green Futures in April.

TRWA Action Focus Teams co-hosted a series of public programs including a Green Fair, designed to help people understand how watersheds work, how actions of individuals can impact the watershed and to provide an opportunity for local businesses to display their earth friendly goods and services.

The agreement for use of the River Center at Boyden Refuge by the TRWA and the City of Taunton's Conservation Commission was renewed. The facilities at the River Center have been transformed into efficient office space and an educational resource center. The transformation into a true River Center is well underway and we continue to work closely with the Friends of Boyden through volunteers and grants to improve both the office building and the grounds of this beautiful wildlife refuge.

The year 2008 has been one of meaningful member support for our expanding efforts to make a difference in the Taunton River Watershed.