



Raritan Headwaters Association 2019 Annual Report











A YEAR IN REVIEW









WOW, WHAT A YEAR IT WAS! Raritan Headwaters celebrated its 60th anniversary in September, with a fabulous party bringing together longtime supporters and energized new members. It was a time for recounting our history and thanking the many amazing individuals—including founders Hermia Lechner and Helen Woodman—who brought us to where we are today.

But it wasn't just a year for looking back - it was also a year of great accomplishment. We held our biggest Stream Cleanup day ever, successfully removed an obsolete dam along the Lamington River, trained new citizen scientists to support our stream monitoring program, advocated on all major environmental legislation in Trenton, planted 3,800 trees, conducted 5,600 well tests for drinking water contaminates, and engaged over 15,000 children in our nature camp and school programs.

Energized by our 2019 successes, we launched into 2020 with renewed energy and robust workplans in place. But it turned out not to be the year anyone expected. No one escaped the effects of COVID-19 and like so many others, our offices closed and most of our education and outreach programs came to a halt.

But our clean water mission stayed the course, and we adapted. Our education staff created a robust learning hub as a resource for the thousands of families stuck at home with no school or extracurricular activities. Our well testing program adapted, with no-contact pickups and drop-offs of water testing kits. Our policy director attended legislative meetings remotely and our science team trained citizen scientists online.

We are fortunate to live in an area so rich in natural beauty and biodiversity. The headwaters region of the Raritan River Basin is home to precious water supplies, diverse wildlife, and residents who value their quality of life in this beautiful part of New Jersey.

But we can't afford to be complacent. The abundance of natural treasures that we all enjoy also makes us more vulnerable to growing environmental threats.

Extreme weather is flushing polluted runoff into our waterways and there are alarming reports of lead in our pipes, toxic algae in our lakes, arsenic in our wells, and plastic in our rivers and oceans. New and emerging contaminants are being identified in drinking water supplies. Our mission to protect our natural resources and the well-being of watershed residents is more vital than ever – made evident by the increase in demand for our services.

With 60 remarkable years of sound conservation work behind us, we move forward in a changing world. Whether we are referring to protecting clean water, addressing climate change, or preserving open spaces – our vision is that "everyone within our reach has access to safe, clean water." We take responsibility for the protection and well-being of those we serve now and future generations. We look forward to working together with each of you to make sure we are contributing to a just and healthy future.

Stew Brunhouse

President, Board of Trustees

Cindy Ehrenclou
Executive Director

We're very pleased that the Department of Environmental Protection used Raritan Headwaters' data in its decision to upgrade stream protections in our watershed."

-Bill Kibler, Policy Director



Photo credit: Nick Romanenk

MORE STREAMS PROTECTED IN THE UPPER RARITAN WATERSHED!

In March 2019, the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) announced plans to designate 749 additional miles of rivers and streams as Category One (C1) waterways.

In addition to using its own data to support upgrading stream designations, the NJDEP used data generated by only one outside source – Raritan Headwaters! Following NJDEP protocols, staff and citizen scientists in our stream monitoring program collected high quality data to support the assessment of surface waters and the overall health of the Raritan River watershed.

Of the 749 miles of streams proposed for upgrading due to their exceptional ecological value and/or fishery resources, over 200 are in the upper Raritan River watershed

This includes stretches of the South Branch, North Branch, Lamington/Black River, Neshanic River, Pleasant Run and McVickers Brook.

It was quite an endorsement of our Water Quality program and the work of our watershed scientists under the leadership of Dr. Kristi MacDonald. Kudos to Bill Kibler for representing Raritan Headwaters in NJDEP stakeholder meetings to move the process along and advocate for our waterways. This is another example of how RHA's science informs decision-making.



This improves habitat for migratory fish and imperiled mussels, while potentially reducing the risk of flooding to nearby residents."

—Eric Schrading, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

ECOLOGICAL HEALTH FOR THE LAMINGTON RIVER

The waters of the Lamington River flow freely through Somerset County, thanks to Raritan Headwaters' successful removal of a derelict grist mill dam in October 2019.

The project improves habitat for fish and other aquatic creatures.

Dr. Kristi MacDonald, RHA's science director is very pleased with how it turned out. Now that the river has been moved back to its original channel we are going to see the ecological health of the river greatly improved.

The old Burnt Mills dam held sediment, creating unhealthy conditions for most aquatic wildlife. In addition, the shallow pooled water behind the dam heated up in summer, depleting oxygen levels. Most aquatic life needs cool, clear, oxygen-rich water.

Removing the old concrete dam allows free passage of migrating fish. The project also added riffles and pools to the river to improve fish habitat.

The dam removal was done in partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

As part of the dam removal, the river was realigned to its historical configuration to reduce erosion and flooding in the Milnor Road-Cowperthwaite Road neighborhood - including an 11-acre nature preserve owned by Raritan Headwaters.

The project will continue in 2020 with the restoration of the floodplain and the planting of willow trees along the riverbank.





EDUCATING COMMUNITY LEADERS

Our Watershed Tools for Local Leaders workshops are designed to give local governments the requisite knowledge and tools they need to better protect our drinking water sources. We understand that the most impactful change happens at the local level.

Empowering officials in the 38 municipalities within the upper Raritan River watershed with knowledge to make the best possible decisions and forming partnerships to implement plans for environmental protection are the goals of the series. Through brief seminars and workshops, RHA provides practical guidance on scientific principles, useful tools, government regulations and funding sources for a variety of needed watershed protection initiatives. Workshops are presented by Raritan Headwaters scientists and policy experts, as well as visitors from regulatory agencies, universities, and other non-profit organizations. In addition, participants and presenters learn from one another's experiences and find ways to partner on projects to protect and restore water resources.

Since 2017, these popular workshops have addressed such topics as well water testing and treatment, stormwater pollution and harmful algal blooms, creating

climate resilient communities, stream buffer restoration, restoring balance to our public forests, and assessing impervious coverage.



PEOPLE POWER: 1,700 VOLUNTEERS REMOVE 18 TONS OF TRASH

What can a motivated, energetic group of Raritan Headwaters volunteers accomplish in just three hours? A lot!



At 9 a.m. on April 13, 2019, more than 1,700 volunteers of all ages fanned out across the upper Raritan River watershed in Hunterdon, Somerset and Morris counties. By noon, they had removed 18 tons of trash, litter and recyclables from almost 80 miles of river, stream and lakefront.

The day's haul included 9,133 plastic bottles, 3,039 plastic bags and 53 car and truck tires. Unusual items included a kitchen sink, a mannequin, a massage table, several televisions, a child's riding Jeep, bicycles, a rusted meat grinder, a PlayStation console and a couch.

It was our best year yet, and we have our fantastic volunteers to thank.

From Cub Scouts to local businesses, everyone put tremendous energy and enthusiasm into the cleanup. We are so proud of what they accomplished. In one morning, we logged over 5,000 volunteer hours!

The 29th annual cleanup improved water quality downstream, all the way to where the Raritan River flows into the Atlantic Ocean. By collecting plastic bottles, bags, straws and other objects during the Stream Cleanup, we're preventing them from becoming pollution.

Cleaning up streams helps prevent plastics from breaking down into microplastics, an emerging threat to both wildlife and human health.

In a pilot study released in early 2019, RHA found plastic fragments the size of poppy seeds or smaller in samples taken at 10 sites along the South Branch. A large percentage of these microplastics originated as larger plastic items such as bags, bottles, wrappers and other single-use plastics.

The Raritan River is a source of drinking water for millions of New Jersey homes and businesses, so every piece of trash removed helps keep water supplies healthy and prevents debris from eventually entering the ocean, threatening wildlife.





THE GO FUND: GET OUTSIDE & EXPLORE!

In 1967, fourteen-year-old Cindy Doggett (Ehrenclou), won an essay contest on "The Effects of a North Jersey Jetport" sponsored by the Upper Raritan Watershed Association.

Hanging in her office at Fairview Farm, is the certificate signed by URWA's James Casey, President, and Richard Goodenough, Executive Director, recognizing her "demonstrated concern for the future environment of this region". Perhaps Cindy's 25-year career at Raritan Headwaters Association was meant to be, a destiny of sorts.

Experiencing and connecting with nature is a path to the care and stewardship of our precious natural resources. Cindy believes this to her core and has led the organization to develop nature education for all ages – Nature Day Camp, school field trips, and family programs. Cindy always says: "If I can get them to Fairview Farm, they will get it!"

In 2019, Cindy celebrated her 25th year with Raritan Headwaters! To honor her legacy, our trustees launched the Get Outside Fund, or GO Fund for short. The campaign raised over \$35,000 to provide outdoor experiences to those who don't have meaningful opportunities to connect with nature.

Beyond building a foundation for responsible environmental stewardship, RHA believes that outdoor time in nature is important for mental and physical health.

Being out in nature helps form a sense of belonging to the world and offers a wealth of sights, sounds, smells, and colors. It piques a sense of curiosity, exploration and interest in all that nature has to offer. It reconnects each person to their surroundings, raises awareness about the importance of nurturing their environment and ultimately prompts one to be the protector of that environment.

With the help of the GO Fund, children from New Jersey's urban communities will also be able to enjoy visits to Fairview Farm and enjoy nature in our beautiful outdoor classroom.

Many thanks to the RHA's trustees for establishing the GO Fund and a special thanks to all the friends and supporters for helping Raritan Headwaters and Cindy extend the organization's mission beyond the watershed!



CITIZEN SCIENTISTS AND INTERNS

Volunteer citizen scientists and interns help out with RHA's stream monitoring program in 2019.



Volunteer Naturalist, Alan Rennie, above right, walks and inventories birds sighted at Fairview Farm



CELEBRATING 60 YEARS!



















250 Raritan Headwaters members and friends gathered at the Fairview Farm Wildlife Preserve on a beautiful September night to celebrate 60 years of protecting clean water in local rivers, streams, and homes. Guests enjoyed live music, delicious food, and live and silent auctions. The event also included a special toast to Executive Director Cindy Ehrenclou for her 25 years with the organization.

Some of our nearest and dearest friends shared their time and artistic talents with Raritan Headwaters to create a festive and fun evening. Our deep thanks and appreciation to Wende Dasteel, Julie Goetz, Gretchen Jaeckle, Edward Jaeckle, and Catherine and Paul Norbury for adding magic to our memorable evening.





RIDING AND BIKING FOR THE RIVER: TWO-WHEELS

Raritan Headwaters was on a roll in 2019, with two fun "events on wheels" raising funds to support our clean water mission!

In June RHA held our 16th annual "Ride for the River," a 70-mile motor-cycle run along our watershed's scenic backroads through Hunterdon, Somerset, and Morris counties.

Started by avid motorcycle owners, devoted environmentalists, and dear RHA friends, John Belle and Amy Greene, "Ride for the River" has raised over \$160,000 in support of our mission and work. Sadly, John left us in April after a year-long battle with cancer. John will be sorely missed by all who knew and loved him. RHA will continue to honor his legacy through future "Ride for the River" events.



John Belle





John Belle and Amy Greene

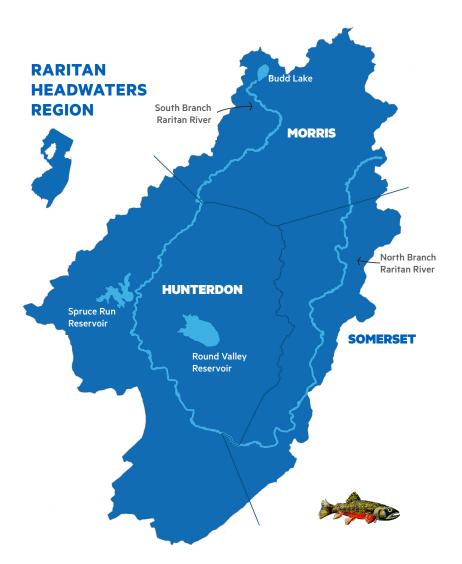


Dallas Hetherington



John Parker and John Lee

"Garden State Fondo", founded in 2011 by the late Morristown native Marty Epstein, is an annual cycling event that raises funds for local nonprofit organizations. Starting in Morristown, the different routes take riders through our beautiful watershed region. This personal riding challenge welcomes over 2,500 cyclists each year and in 2019 Raritan Headwaters was chosen as one of the beneficiaries!



WHAT'S IN YOUR WATER? Raritan Headwaters Find out through our Community Well Testing Program!



RHA's Community Well Test event

RHA'S COMMUNITY WELL TESTING PROGRAM

Working with our dedicated municipal partners, we are able to positively influence public health in our watershed communities.

The RHA well testing program served over 1,550 households in 2019. Residents throughout the watershed and beyond, across 43 municipalities and 5 counties, utilized our convenient and affordable testing program to ensure that their drinking water is safe to consume. Tests were conducted for contaminants including coliform bacteria, nitrates, arsenic, lead, radon, uranium, and volatile organic compounds.

In addition to RHA's spring and fall Community Well Testing events, residents can test their water at their convenience anytime during the year through our individual well testing program. RHA's website includes online Toolkits which provide a wealth of information on a variety of contaminants to help residents decide what to test for.



Participate in a Community Well Testing event in your town.



Pick up a testing kit at a Raritan Headwaters office.



On public Water? Test for lead and copper.

GET THE LEAD OUT CAMPAIGN LAUNCHED

In 2019, Raritan Headwaters launched a "Get the Lead Out" campaign to encourage local residents—especially those with older homes either with a private well or connected to public drinking water systems—to get their tap water tested for lead.





550 taps were tested in 2019

Lead in drinking water can come from your pipes, plumbing fixtures and solder. Raritan Headwaters has offered lead testing for years, but in light of the recent news about lead contamination in Newark's drinking water, we want people to know that they can easily and affordably get their water tested. If lead is found, it is easy to treat.

Lead in drinking water is colorless, odorless and tasteless. Lead contamination endangers the health of anyone who drinks it and is especially detrimental to brain development in young children. The only way to know if you're being exposed to lead in your drinking water is to test it. Raritan Headwaters contracts with a certified lab to provide lead tests at a discounted price. If lead is found in drinking water, homeowners have several options, including installing an under-the-sink water filter, a faucet-mounted filter, a system that reduces water acidity, or using a drinking water pitcher with a filter.

Raritan Headwaters is a member of the state's Lead in Drinking Water Task Force, which presented a report with recommendations for reducing the danger of lead contamination throughout New Jersey.



RHA BY THE NUMBERS



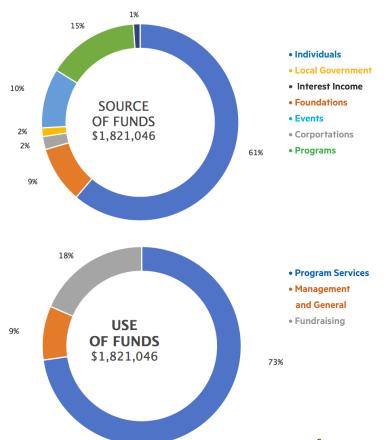
Raritan Headwaters collects metrics all year round so we can track our impact on the health of our watershed and the communities we serve."

-Blake Putnam, Director of Development

RARITAN HEADWATERS ASSOCIATION

YEAR ENDED SEPTEMBER 30, 2019

	ACTUAL
INCOME	
Individuals	\$1,115,054
Foundations	\$169,729
Corporations	\$38,938
Local Government Support	\$25,706
Events	\$177,987
Programs	\$273,508
Interest Income	\$20,124
TOTAL INCOME	\$1,821,046
EXPENSES	
Program Services	\$1,324,471
Management and General	\$159,978
Fundraising	\$336,597
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$1,821,046





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Remembering Candy Ashmun



Candace McKee Ashmun 1924-2020

New Jersey lost one of its staunchest environmental advocates, and Raritan Headwaters lost a beloved trustee and friend when Candace McKee Ashmun passed away on May 23, 2020 at the age of 96.

Candy was a force of nature— one of the most intelligent and accomplished women ever known, and also one of the kindest and most nurturing.

New Jersey and the upper

Raritan River watershed are better places for having Candy as their defender for over 60 years.

RHA's archives are full of Candy's contributions as a water quality researcher and trustee. She was a catalyst for using scientific data to win environmental battles, for making the connection between land use and water quality, and for taking a regional approach to watershed protection. She participated in our early battles and helped create our association's and the state's first Natural Resource Inventory.

Thank you, Candy.

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TAKE A HIKE AND CHARGE YOUR CAR!



Thanks to a generous donor and a grant from the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP), electric car owners are in luck!! Raritan Headwaters now has a dual-port electric vehicle charging station at its Fairview Farm headquarters, meaning electric car owners can now take a hike and enjoy nature while charging up.

Raritan Headwaters Association



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In Memoriam 2019

We lost three past trustees and longtime friends Ann West, Robert Graff and Kay Serebrakian. Their legacies will live on in our work to protect the watershed.

GET YOUR FEET WET

The COVID-19 outbreak derailed plans for a full schedule of RHA "Get Your Feet Wet" outdoor experiences—river paddles, hikes, family events and educational workshops.

But you can still stay connected with Raritan Headwaters!

- Come to Fairview Farm and enjoy a hike on our trails, a stroll through our Bird and Butterfly Garden, or catch-and-release fishing in our pond.
- Learn remotely! Visit our website at www.raritanheadwaters.org/2020/05/22/river-friendly-webinarrecordings/ to view recorded webinars on organic lawn care, invasive species, protecting your groundwater and more!
- Engage your kids in nature! Check out our online Resource Hub at www.raritanheadwaters.org/education/learningresources/ for dozens of ideas for projects, crafts, backyard explorations and learning opportunities.













Raritan Headwaters Association

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raritanheadwaters.org 908.234.1852



RHA's mission is to protect water in our rivers, our streams, and our homes. Our vision is that everyone within our reach has access to safe, clean water that is swimmable, fishable, and above all, drinkable.

Front Cover Photo: Dallas Hetherington