

An abstract geometric pattern in the top right corner, consisting of various colored squares and rectangles in shades of blue, green, orange, and grey, arranged in a non-uniform, overlapping manner.

JUSTICE EQUITY DIVERSITY INCLUSION REPORT

2017 - 2023

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USE THIS REPORT TO

EXPLORE...

the ways The Watershed Institute has addressed
JEDI issues in the past five years

LEARN...

how economic and environmental policies lead to
the environmental injustices we see in our
watersheds today

UNDERSTAND...

why staff and board members are committed to
continue learning and becoming better allies



1 INTRODUCTION

Keeping water clean, safe and healthy is the heart of The Watershed Institute's mission. Our scientists, educators, and advocates work to protect and restore our water and natural environment and to combat challenges that include flooding and water pollution.

This report provides an overview of our efforts to advance the goals of JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion)—an emphasis that we embraced in recognition that some communities in our region are particularly vulnerable to environmental threats due to systemic racism. Our staff JEDI Council has helped guide this effort.

Internally focused work has included reviews of our practices and procedures and training for our staff on issues like microaggressions and inherent bias. Externally focused JEDI work has been centered on listening, learning, and building partnerships and programs with residents and community leaders in greater Trenton and other affected communities.

We have joined with our partners to remove trash from waterways and to connect community members with parks and streams in their neighborhoods. We've partnered with educators to provide programming that connects students to the natural world. We've extended special invitations, transportation, and programming to community groups to visit our Watershed Center and Reserve.

Our advocates are working with high school students and community members through programs such as the Mercer County Youth Leadership Academy. Our scientists are teaching students from these communities to collect and analyze data from their local waterways. We are providing training on building and maintaining green infrastructure and educating residents about the future risks of flooding.

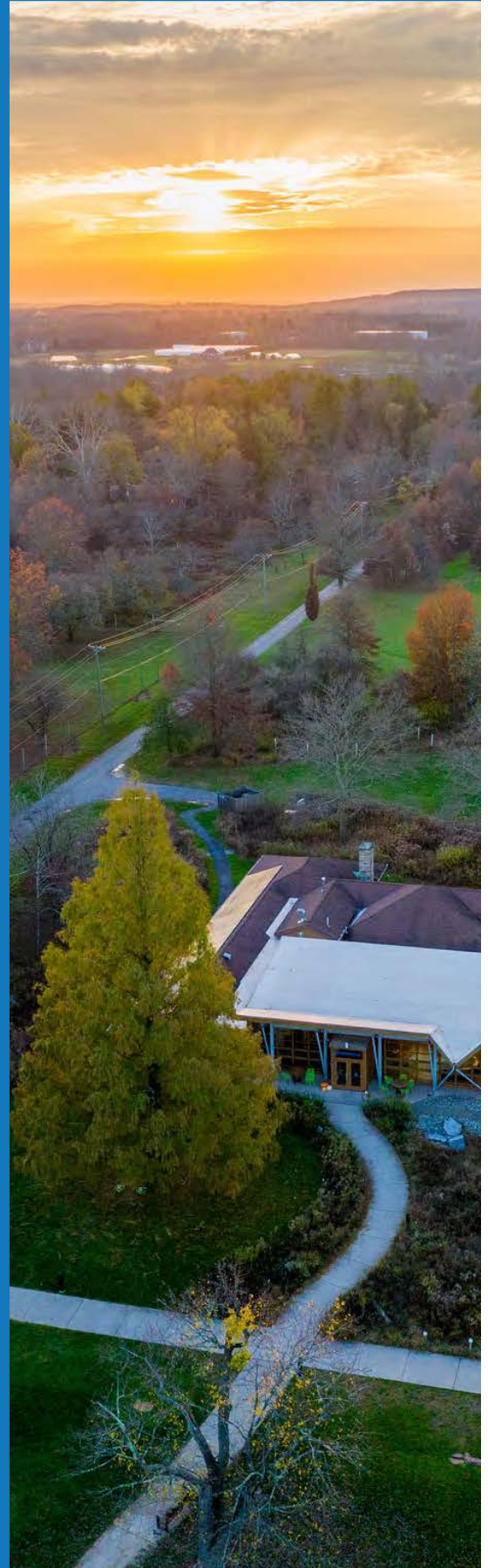
We look forward to continuing this journey, working towards a day when all people enjoy strong and effective protection from environmental and health hazards. We also strive for all people to have equal access to green spaces, and to the decision-making processes for creating healthy environments in which to live, learn, and work. We will work in partnership with other organizations toward this goal.

I hope that this report is a helpful resource for you, and that you will join with us in this important work.

Sincerely,



Jim Waltman
Executive Director



DEFINITIONS

What do Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion mean? Our definitions are always evolving as we learn and gain more experience. For the context of this report, the following represents the shared language Watershed staff agreed on in February 2020.



JUSTICE

Fair treatment and meaningful involvement for all, regardless of who they are or where they come from

EQUITY

Justice without partiality

DIVERSITY

Accepting and respecting differences among each other

INCLUSION

Providing equal opportunity for participation

The JEDI Council promotes Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) within the organization. Our objectives include:

1

Equipping the staff to inclusively serve, represent, and engage diverse communities in protecting water throughout New Jersey.

2

Providing a supportive framework to facilitate positive internal and external interactions for mutual understanding, growth, and collaboration.

3

Increasing diversity and inclusivity within the organization by offering JEDI training and resources to improve awareness, knowledge, communication skills, and organizational practices.

MEET THE JEDI COUNCIL



Sarah Crofts
Development Associate



Sophie Glover
Chief of Operations



Pat Heaney
Assistant Director
of Education



Nicholas Ho
GIS Specialist



Priscilla Oliveira
Outreach & Inclusion Manager



Jim Waltman
Executive Director

BOARD SUPPORT

The Board of Trustees DEIJ Task Force is a group of board members dedicated to increasing diversity, promoting equity, and practicing inclusion on the board. Participating members:

- Ayanna McKay - *Task Force Chair*
- Rob Connor, Ph.D.
- Patricia Shanley, Ph.D.

ORGANIZATIONAL TIMELINE

The JEDI Council first focused on education, training and reflection for staff internally. Since 2021, the JEDI Council's efforts have broadened to support the organization's external work - growing partnerships with other organizations and communities in overburdened areas. The Council continues to address internal issues such as hiring practices, salary equity, and providing resources and staff training.

2017

The Watershed intentionally plans to increase the diversity of groups in its outreach, membership and other efforts.

2018

Geographic focus is expanded to include the Central Delaware Watershed (includes overburdened communities like Trenton). The Lummi Nation and Ramapough Lenape Nation set up a temporary exhibit (the Totem Pole and Rock Altar) at The Watershed Reserve.

2019

Diversity training is held for staff and partners. Our 2030 visioning exercise articulated a goal of expanding programming in Trenton and committed the Watershed to building an organizational culture that values JEDI.

2020

JEDI staff council is created and formally recognized by The Watershed Institute's leadership and staff. Social unrest sparked by victims, including George Floyd, further underscores the need for intentional work. Our values statement is drafted.

2021

Our values statement is approved. The Board's DEI Task Force is formed and meets with the JEDI Council. Departments start concentrated efforts to hire people of color and become more engaged in Black and Latina/o/x communities.

2022

Spanish interpreters are invited to multiple events. Spanish-speaking staff is hired to work more closely with Spanish-speaking communities. Outreach is increased to historically excluded communities to visit the Watershed Center & Reserve. The Watershed's website added a translation feature for the most commonly spoken languages in the state.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We recognize that the land and water now under our care is the traditional and ancestral territory of the Lenni-Lenape.

We pay respect to Lenape peoples, past, present, and future and their continuing presence in the homeland and throughout the Lenape diaspora. We respect their knowledge, culture, traditions and leadership in land and water conservation.

We also acknowledge that historic white supremacy and environmental racism practices have caused disproportionate environmental and climate impacts on people of color and overburdened communities.

The Watershed Institute pledges to work for clean water and a healthy environment, including in communities that have been unjustly affected by systematic racism and environmental pollution.

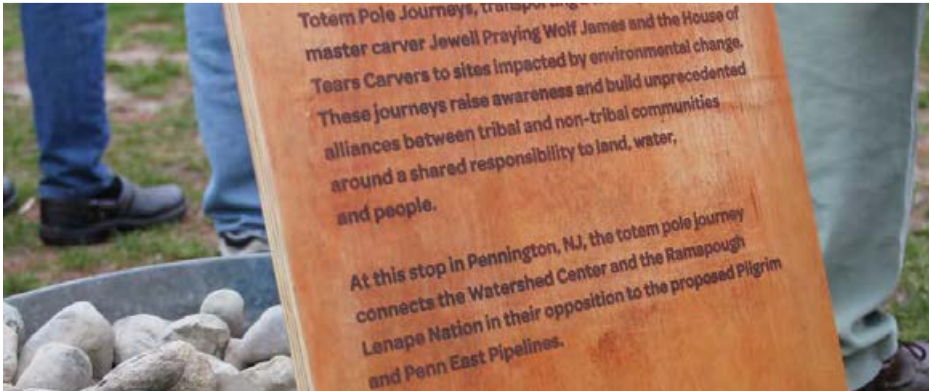


2

A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL INJUSTICES

A

Why History Matters



B

Lenape Native Tribes

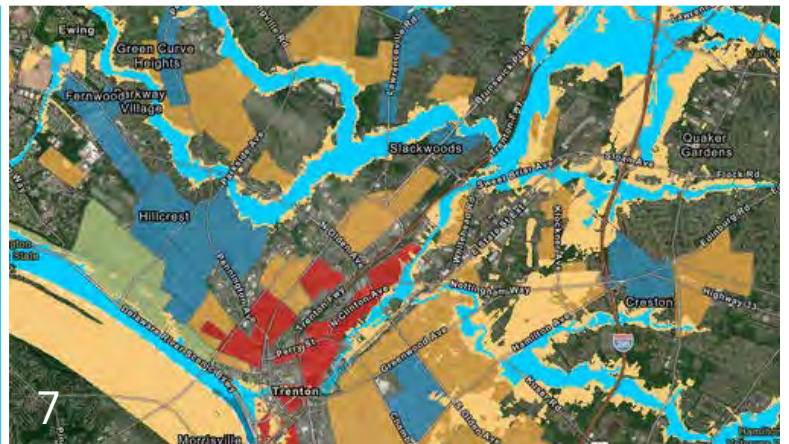


C

Slavery on Our Property

D

Lack of Access to Natural Resources & Redlining



A. Why History Matters



History provides important context for our work. Historic discrimination and racism have caused disproportionate environmental and climate impacts on people of color and overburdened communities. We have pledged to work for clean water and a healthy environment, including in communities that have been unjustly affected by systemic racism and environmental pollution.

We believe environmental justice will be achieved when all people enjoy strong and effective protection from environmental and health hazards. Justice also reflects having equal access to green spaces and the decision-making processes for creating healthy environments in which to live, learn and work.

B. Lenape Native Tribes

During the Late Woodland Period (from approximately 1000 to 1600), the lands that are now New Jersey were the homeland of the Lenape and related tribes. There was a significant Lenape settlement in or near the present Millstone.

The region was crossed by trails including the Assunpink Trail, which came through the Millstone Valley and crossed the Millstone River at Kingston.

European settlement led to conflict, new diseases and loss of the Lenape's ancestral homelands.

In 1758 the first "Indian Reservation" in the United States, Brotherton, was established in New Jersey to contain the remaining Native American families.

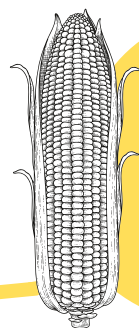
The reservation was closed by 1802. The formal presence of the tribe was removed. Later, in the mid-1800s, the federal Indian Removal Act further displaced and relocated many tribes.

Today, most Lenape live in Oklahoma and there are also communities in Wisconsin and Ontario. However, some individuals remained in New Jersey and their descendants still live in the state.

Three state-recognized tribes continue to live in New Jersey: the Naticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation, Powhatan Renape Nation, and Ramapough Lenape Nation.

Additional Resources

1. Naticoke Lenni-Lenape Tribal Nation: nlttribe.com
2. Millstone Valley National Scenic Byway. "The Lenape.": millstonevalley.org/lenape.html
3. Columbia University School of Nursing. News. "Plants as Medicine: Lenape Healing Traditions Continue Today." (April 2021)
4. Lenape Talking Dictionary: www.talk-lenape.org
5. The Lenape Center: thelenapecenter.com
6. Lenape Nation of PA: www.lenape-nation.org



Xaskwim (corn) was a staple food grown by the Lenni Lenape



C. Slavery on Our Property

European settlement in Hopewell Township began in the late 17th and early 18th centuries. The lands of The Watershed Institute were settled by John Drake in the first half of the 18th century.

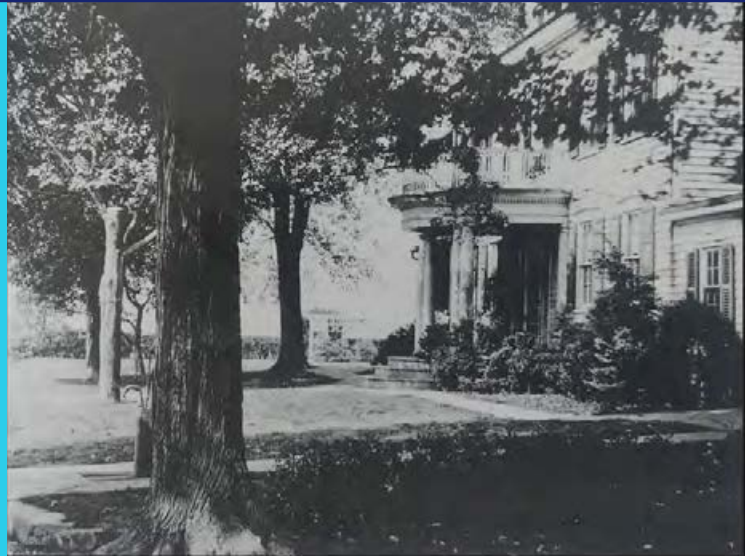
The Drake Farm was owned, occupied and operated by six generations of the Drake family as a successful mixed-use agricultural farm.

Like the majority of 18th century residents of Hopewell Township, John Drake practiced mixed subsistence farming. He cultivated a wide variety of crops and owned horses, cows, sheep, hogs and poultry.

While he farmed the property with the help of family, he also obtained free labor from a black man that he enslaved.

This was fairly common in Hopewell Township during the 18th century, where many farms held one or two enslaved people.

In the coming years, we hope to learn more about the enslaved man who lived on this land.



The Drake farmhouse, 1930s.
Source: Webster 2000

Additional Resources

1. Stoutsburg Sourland African American Museum: ssaamuseum.org
2. Princeton & Slavery Project: slavery.princeton.edu
3. Noelle Lorraine Williams. NJ Historical Commission. "New Jersey, The Last Northern State to End Slavery."
4. Manumissions of Slaves, 1788-1836. NJ Department of State. Record Group: Hunterdon County.
5. National Register of Historic Places (registration). Drake Farmstead.



In 1865, NJ became the last northern state to fully abolish slavery.





. Lack of Access to Natural Resources & Redlining

In the 19th and 20th centuries, central New Jersey experienced rapid development and population growth. The city of Trenton grew as many came to work in mills and factories. In the 1950s, job loss and urban unrest led to a drop in population. Black and Hispanic populations increased.

In the 1950s, urban renewal projects demolished historically black neighborhoods and created John Fitch Way, a highway that cut off the downtown from its Delaware River waterfront.

At the same time, beginning in the 1930s and lasting through the passage of the Fair Housing Act in 1968, red lines were drawn on maps around Black and mixed-race urban communities across the country, designating them as too risky or “hazardous” for mortgages. This process is known as redlining.

Generations of Black people and other residents of cities in New Jersey, including Trenton, were redlined and denied home loans and wealth building opportunities. Simultaneously, redlining created a system for white people to build futures, homes, and wealth in the suburbs outside of the red lines.

Additionally, these redlined areas today have higher levels of hard, non-porous surfaces, which make these areas more vulnerable to flooding and heat.

Additional Resources

1. Trenton Historical Society. "A History of Trenton.": trentonhistory.org
2. The Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia. "Trenton, New Jersey." philadelphiaencyclopedia.org
3. The Story of New Jersey's Civil Boundaries 1606 - 1968. DEP. Old Publications. Bulletin 67.
4. New Jersey Institute for Social Justice. "Erasing New Jersey's Red Lines. Reducing the Racial Wealth Gap Through Homeownership and Investment in Communities of Color."
5. Redlining & Exposure to Urban Heat Islands Dashboard. Created by Science Museum of Virginia and Esri.



In 2020 some neighborhoods in Trenton were up 2.9°C above the city-wide average.

3

CRITICAL STEPS FOR ENGAGING COMMUNITIES



Maple Sugaring event with students from the Robbins School in Trenton (2022)

Through trainings, discussions, and interactions with community members, staff at The Watershed Institute have identified several key steps for intentional programming over the years.

These steps align with our organization's values. The process is dynamic as we learn, experience, and address emerging shortcomings and biases.



Hightstown Environmental Youth Leadership Presentations (2022)



East Trenton Collaborative Visits the Watershed Reserve (2022)



AWE and County Partners at Trenton River Days (2022)



Communities talk about issues at the Assunpink Roundtable (2022)

LISTENING



Youth Environmental Leadership Programs (2021 - 2022)

Listening to the environmental issues that are important to our students is at the heart of our Youth Environmental Leadership Programs. As advocates, we know that a well framed argument from a student is persuasive to elected officials. We taught students in Trenton and Hightstown how local government works and effective advocacy strategies. As a result, students expressed concerns about neighborhood flooding, as well as illegal dumping of trash, much of which ends up in waterways.



Trenton Community Day and Stream Clean Up (2022)

We heard from many residents in Trenton that were bothered by litter and trash in their parks and waterways. In response, The Watershed Institute partnered with community groups including Urban Promise and the East Trenton Collaborative, to organize a stream clean up day. This event was paired with a block party to build community. We've learned from research that providing activities where families can have fun together is an effective way to build connections between people and the environment.

INVITING

East Trenton Collaborative Visit to the Watershed Reserve (2022)

Over the last year, the East Trenton Collaborative has become one of our most valued partners and collaborators. After attending multiple events and visits to East Trenton, our staff was proud to reciprocate the hospitality from ETC by hosting a visit. We strengthened our partnerships by inviting groups to our property and removed obstacles such as admission fees and transportation.



Trenton River Days at South Riverwalk Park (2019 - 2022)

With our partners, we welcomed 600 people to the 4th Annual River Days Celebration in Trenton in 2022. The day included water-based activities including canoeing as well as crafts, food and more. With the help of Spanish-speaking community members, we were able to provide Spanish language interpretations.



Camp & Academy Programs

The Watershed Institute is committed to making our programs accessible to families regardless of their ability to pay.

In the summer of 2022, we provided camperships for 83 different children for a total of 134 sessions. Our Watershed Academy for High School Students provided scholarships for 7 students for a total of 36 week-long sessions.

Free bus service was offered from Trenton and we provided nearly 850 free lunches.



PARTNERING



@ NJ Rise

We saw a large Spanish-speaking population in Hightstown, and reached out to Rise, a community group. Since then, we worked together to develop an Environmental Youth Leadership Program, bringing staff members and those they serve to The Watershed Institute for programs and planned to create a pollinator garden and green infrastructure at the Rise facility in Hightstown. We've recently added our first Spanish-speaking staff member to better serve the Spanish speakers in our area of focus.

@ Urban Promise Trenton

Our relationship with Urban Promise started with Environmental Advocacy programming. Our partnership expanded as scientists at The Watershed Institute worked with students to install stream monitoring equipment. Our educators are working with students to analyze and draw conclusions from the collected data.



Trenton Schools

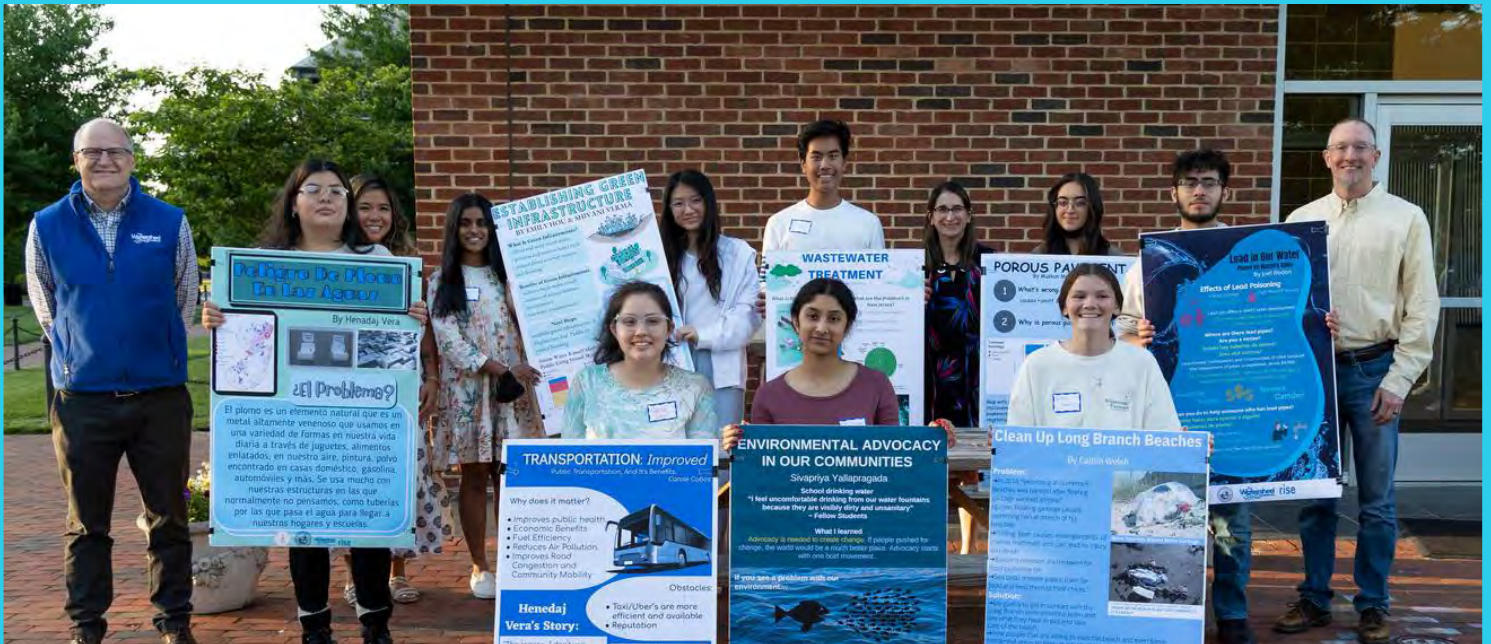
In 2022, Watershed staff spent more than 280 hours delivering programs for more than 1,100 students in Trenton schools that included Robbins Elementary, Grace A. Dunn Middle School, and Trenton Central High School. We also provided programming for nonprofit organizations in Trenton that included the Millhill Child & Family Development Center and Trenton Urban Promise.

CONNECTING

On the path to empowerment

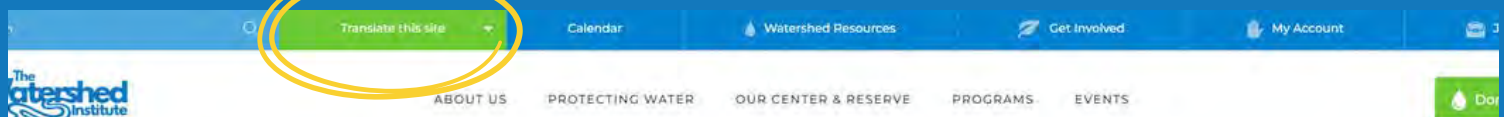
Hightstown Program

Community members need to engage with their local governments when decisions are made about the environment. This can be challenging when there are language barriers and people to people connections are lacking. We are working in Hightstown to build connections between Spanish-speaking residents and the Environmental Commission. In 2021 and 2022, we co-sponsored a booth at the annual NJ Rise Latino Festival and connected students from the community with local environmental leaders as part of an advocacy training.



Communications and members

This past year, we added a feature for our website to be translated into six different languages (Spanish, Mandarin, Portuguese, Hindi, Nepali, and Russian). These languages were chosen because they are spoken by the greatest number of residents of New Jersey. Our goal was to improve engagement and access to information about the Watershed's mission and work in science, policy, education and public outreach.



4 WHAT'S NEXT?



Discussing Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion at all levels

A joint staff and board committee will begin regular meetings about these practices internally and externally. There is buy-in to incorporate justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion at all levels of the organization and the joint committee will help encourage collaboration between staff, board, and leadership to set organizational priorities and meet strategic goals in the next few years. Furthermore, there will be increased efforts to involve external community members and partners in such committee meetings so that we are empowering the communities we serve in our decision-making processes.

Staff positions with clear JEDI focus

We will be incorporating justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion into specific job descriptions and roles to support staff doing this work. The new Urban Education Manager position, as an example, will reinforce the organization's commitment to serve urban communities and schools in an intentional way.

5 HOW CAN YOU HELP?

SHARE...

the word by sharing this document

INVITE...

your friends from diverse communities to join us

DISCUSS...

JEDI issues with your friends and family

SUPPORT...

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color-owned businesses and purchase Fair Trade items in our gift shop

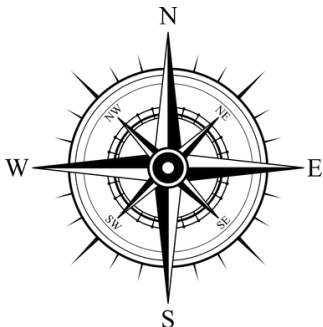
The Watershed Institute's Values Statement

The Watershed Institute holds the values described below in all aspects of what we do at our Watershed Center and Reserve as well as in our work in the surrounding communities in central New Jersey and beyond. We believe that clean water is a fundamental human right. In working to advance this goal, we:

Welcome our visitors, members, volunteers, and staff with enthusiasm, kindness and respect.

Strive to create a place at the Watershed Center and Reserve where everyone, from diverse backgrounds – culture, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, age, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, and physical and mental ability – feels comfortable and safe exploring and enjoying natural spaces.

Pledge to work for clean water and a healthy environment, including in communities that have been unjustly affected by systematic racism and environmental pollution. Environmental justice will be achieved when all people enjoy strong and effective protection from environmental and health hazards, access to green spaces, and equal access to the decision-making processes for creating healthy environments in which to live, learn, and work. We will work in partnership with other organizations toward this goal.



Provide environmental education, with a focus on water, which instills wonder about the natural world and its biodiversity. We hope that by teaching others about the interconnectedness of all living things, we will help participants embrace diversity and biodiversity in their own communities.

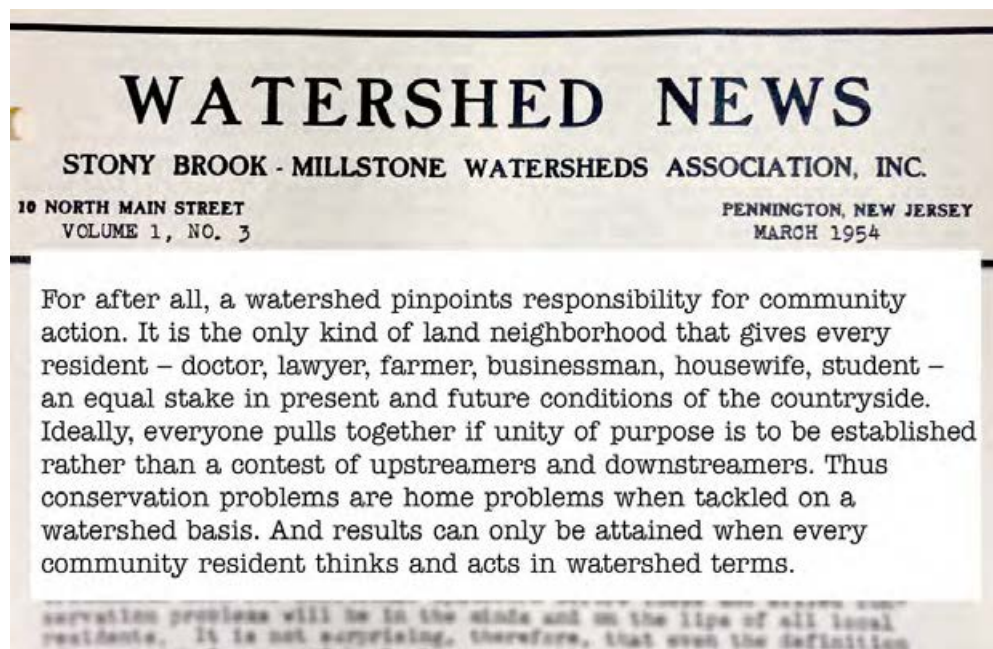
Steward our 950-acre reserve with the goal of preserving the land and water so it continues to provide healthy habitats for many generations to come. It will also provide a natural place of refuge and sanctuary for all visitors. We recognize that the land and water now under our care are the traditional and ancestral territory of the Lenni-Lenape. We pay respect to Lenape people's past, present, and future and their continuing presence in the homeland and throughout the Lenape diaspora.

Involve people from our local communities in important scientific data collection to help us monitor the health of our waterways, watersheds and plant and animal habitats.

Empower people to advocate for clean and healthy water and the conservation of watersheds and nature in the towns and regions where they live.

Listen to our local communities so we can be better partners working towards shared environmental goals. We recognize that too often the voices of low-income people and communities of color are not heard.

Acknowledge that human behaviors are responsible for the recent changes in our planet's climate and loss of biodiversity. We will strive to create authentic partnerships to support communities that are and will become disproportionately more impacted by climate change. We will continue to educate people of all ages about how to protect and preserve the environment and how they can spread truthful information in their communities.



This work is made possible with the support of our partners and donors.

We would like to recognize and thank the East Trenton Collaborative, Millhill Child & Family Development Center, UrbanPromise Trenton, Rise, Mercer County Parks Commission, Trenton Public Schools, Christina Seix Academy, and our many partners and community organizations in Hightstown, Trenton, and the surrounding communities.

We are also grateful to The William Penn Foundation and the Alliance for Watershed Education for providing support for Trenton River Days, the Standards of Excellence program, and the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed's training resources.

We thank the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Bristol Myers Squibb, Educational Testing Service, Kentfields Foundation, The Garden Club of Trenton, and many individual donors for their support of these important programs.



