

The Watershed Institute

2023 – 2028 Strategic Plan
Executive Summary



About this Plan



In 2023, The Watershed Institute's Board and Staff conducted an intensive process to create a new five-year Strategic Plan. The last such plan was adopted in 2017 and much has changed internally and externally since then.

Our Guiding Principles for this process were to:

- 💧 Engage our board, staff, community partners, and supporters in the plan development process.
- 💧 Address key strategic questions facing the organization.
- 💧 Create an actionable plan aligned with our mission, with metrics against which to measure our progress.

The Strategic Planning Team:

- 💧 **Co-Chairs:** Trustees Shefali Shah & Peter Tovar
- 💧 **Team Members:** Board Chair Barbie Cole, Trustee Enrique Curchitser, ED Jim Waltman & COO Sophie Glovier

The plan incorporates input from more than 300 board and staff members, community partners and supporters of the organization.

Our Mission

Keeping water clean, safe and healthy is the heart of the Watershed's mission.

We work to protect and restore our water and natural environment in central New Jersey through conservation, advocacy, science and education.



Planning Context

Climate change is the foremost threat to healthy watersheds and clean water.

Altered rainfall patterns exacerbated by additional land development, have contributed to devastating flooding and water pollution that threaten New Jersey's residents and communities.

Current generations are thought to spend significantly less time outside than their predecessors. **Exposure to nature is known to provide physical and mental health benefits** and to inspire **greater concern for and action on behalf of the environment.**

As The Watershed Institute celebrates our 75th Anniversary, we are uniquely positioned to address these challenges.



Our 5 Year Plan

- 💧 **Affirms** our role as a **center for learning and leadership on watershed health and water resources protection**. We develop and disseminate solutions to advance **watershed restoration, regional collaboration, and resilience to the impacts of climate change**.
- 💧 **Renews** our commitment to **connecting people of all ages to the natural world, the joy of nature** and opportunities to **join with us** to work towards **healthy watersheds for all** that provide us with **clean, safe and healthy water**.
- 💧 **Commits us to work with our partners towards environmental justice**, ensuring that all community members enjoy **strong and effective environmental protections, access to green spaces** that offer health benefits and build climate resiliency, and **equal access to the decision-making processes** for creating healthy environments in which to live, learn and work.
- 💧 Maintains our intensive focus within the **Stony Brook-Millstone and Central Delaware River Watersheds**, while **strengthening our work to improve statewide policy and practices**.

2023 – 2028 Strategic Plan:



1

The Watershed Institute will be **New Jersey's center for learning and leadership** on watershed health, water resources protection, and community resiliency in the face of climate change and biodiversity loss. By integrating the practices of land and forest conservation, environmental advocacy, watershed science, and education in the pursuit of our mission, we design practical solutions to real-world problems.

2

Our Watershed Center and Reserve will be exemplars of **environmental stewardship**, teaching platforms that advance our mission and goals and connect people to the **joy of nature**, and an **educational model of a carbon negative campus**.

3

Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion will be embedded in all areas of our operations and programming because everyone deserves to experience and enjoy nature and all voices are needed in the mission to restore and protect our natural environment.

2023 – 2028 Strategic Plan:

4

Our **organizational structure and culture will be institute caliber** and provide the platform for board and staff to be effective and efficient in their work.

5

We will **evolve and strengthen our brand to communicate that we are an institute making a demonstrable impact** on water, watersheds, and resiliency to climate change.

6

We will ensure that The Watershed Institute has the financial resources, personnel, technology and facilities necessary to achieve its vision.



Advocacy

We are a **statewide leader** on issues relating to **watershed health** and **building climate resiliency to flooding and water quality issues**.

- 💧 **Our intensive work** at the local and regional level informs the development of **statewide policy solutions** to the climate-related challenges of flooding and water quality.
- 💧 Our expertise with state water law, regulations and policies makes us an **effective and appreciated advocate for strong municipal ordinances, planning and policies**.
- 💧 We provide advocacy training in Hightstown, Manville and the greater Trenton areas to **support community members** in advocating for **environmental justice**.



Science & Stewardship

We are a **leading source of data, information and best practices** for regional watershed restoration and management techniques for stormwater management, watershed health, biodiversity, and climate resiliency.

- 💧 **Watershed restoration strategies** are tested in our communities and on our reserve by our own scientists and research partners and inform the development of regional watershed plans.
- 💧 We **build on the strong foundation of our statewide programs** such as **NJ Watershed Watch Network** and the **River-Friendly program** by improving awareness of, access to and engagement with these initiatives.
- 💧 We **share our StreamWatch data** in ways that make it easy to access, understand and interpret.
- 💧 We **prioritize work in environmentally overburdened communities**, ensuring we are responsive to residents' needs and intentional about engaging them in our work.





Education

We are a **statewide leader in teaching people** of all ages about **watershed health, threats to clean water** and the **water-related impacts of climate change**.

- 💧 We **develop, pilot, evaluate and disseminate innovative educational curriculum for students of all ages** and effective strategies for teaching about water, forests, watersheds and climate change that build knowledge, change attitudes and result in action.
- 💧 We **connect people to the "joy of nature"** through public programming for people of all ages on our reserve.
- 💧 We are a **physical presence in Trenton** through partnerships and offer educational programming to this community where they are. We will **build a pipeline of people from the community** to teach the community.



Conservation

Our Watershed Center and reserve will be:

- Exemplars of **environmental stewardship**.
- Teaching platforms** that advance our mission and goals.
- A place of wonder that **connects people** to the joy of **nature**.
- An **educational model** of a **carbon negative campus**.
- Welcoming to all**.



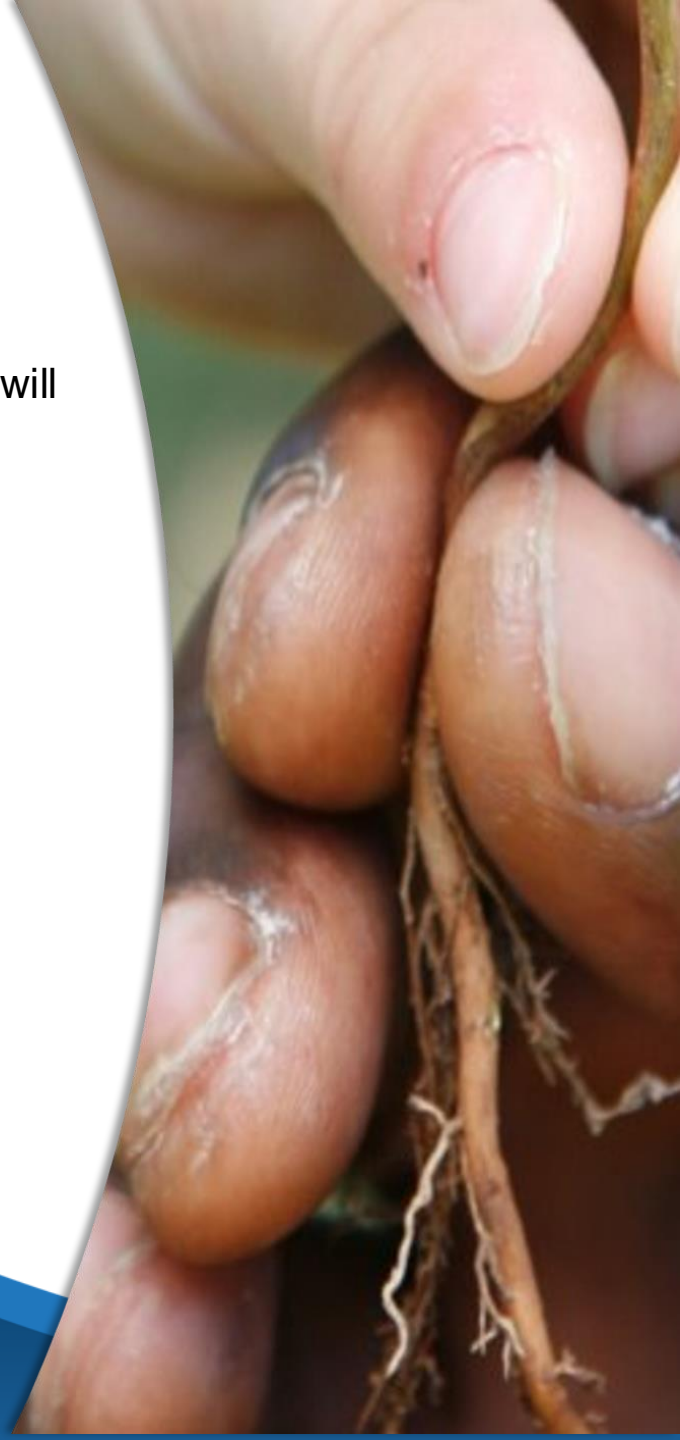
JUSTICE EQUITY DIVERSITY INCLUSION REPORT

2017 - 2023

Environmental Justice

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

To learn more about how **we embed the issues of justice, equity, diversity and inclusion into our work**, please read our [JEDI Report](#).





A bright path ahead!