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WELLSPRING

A publication of The Watershed Institute. Keeping central New Jersey's water clean, safe, & healthy since 1949.

INSIDE THE NEWSLETTER:

Discover Tree

Frog Trail

3

Jeff Hoagland:
Celebrating 40 years
of Leadership

5

Watershed FEST

7

The
Watershed
Institute

75 Years

From The Executive Director

This has been a year of milestones for The Watershed Institute. We've celebrated the Watershed's 75th anniversary, the 40th anniversary of one of our most beloved and respected leaders, a groundbreaking policy breakthrough, and a myriad of other accomplishments.

Since our founding in 1949, the Watershed has been at the forefront of virtually every major issue affecting water in New Jersey. From stormwater and wastewater management to open space and wetlands protection, highway and energy infrastructure, and sustainable agriculture.

Fueled by the generous financial support of thousands of individuals like you, the leadership of hundreds of Trustees, contributions of thousands of volunteers, and the dedication of scores of talented scientists, advocates, and educators, the Watershed has a proud legacy of impact.

No one has done more to advance the Watershed's mission than Jeff Hoagland, our education director for the last 40 years. Jeff is the most extraordinary naturalist and inspirational teacher I've ever known. He can turn the most jaded among us into an evangelist for nature. While it's impossible to fully capture Jeff's magic without being with him in nature, Donna Gregory, our senior manager of communications, did a wonderful job writing about him for this newsletter (see page 4).

Under Jeff's leadership, connecting children to the joy of nature continues to be a priority at the Watershed. There is mounting evidence that exposure to nature provides physical and mental health benefits and inspires greater concern for and action on behalf of the environment. Tree Frog Trail, our new nature play area, is designed to foster connections between children and the outdoors (see story on page 3).

Our policy advocates also reached an important milestone this year when the New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection (NJDEP) proposed the "Resilient Environments and Landscapes" rule (REAL) under Governor Murphy's "Protecting Against Climate Threats" (NJPACT) initiative.

In anticipation of rising sea levels and larger storms, the REAL rule would require more aggressive action to protect new homes and businesses from flooding. The REAL rule would also begin to address the "redevelopment loophole" by requiring that when older developments that were built without stormwater mitigation measures are converted into new uses through redevelopment, modern stormwater management strategies are incorporated.

We urge you to contact the Governor using this QR code to thank him for proposing the REAL rules and encourage him to reject calls from some groups to weaken the rules. The half measures advocated by some are not sufficient to address our pressing climate crisis.



Thank you for your financial support that helps make possible our work in land conservation, environmental advocacy, watershed science, and education of children, teens, and adults.

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jim".

Jim Waltman
Executive Director
The Watershed Institute



Discover Tree Frog Trail: Where Adventure Meets Imagination!



Nestled within the tranquil beauty of the Watershed Reserve, Tree Frog Trail is our enchanting new children's play area, located just steps away from the Kate Gorrie Butterfly House and the scenic Hickory Loop Boardwalk. This magical space invites young adventurers to explore, play, and let their imaginations run wild in a safe, natural environment.

Tree Frog Trail is a joint project of the Watershed's Director of Conservation and Sustainability Kory Dudash, a landscape architect, and our Camp Director Jessica McDermott, who has a degree in museum education and worked at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia before joining the Watershed staff. The new feature was designed by Jeanne Maier from 12Squared Design and was made possible by generous donations from several individuals and institutions including the Stony Brook Garden Club of Princeton, The New Jersey Committee of The Garden Club of America, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

As we welcome families to this exciting addition to our sanctuary, we're offering a unique opportunity to leave a lasting legacy by sponsoring a bench. Your sponsorship not only supports the enjoyment of our young visitors, their parents, grandparents, and guardians, but also helps to preserve the beauty and serenity of the Watershed Reserve for future generations. Be a part of this special place—sponsor a bench today and make your mark on Tree Frog Trail!

Contact Jenny Kershner for more information
jkershner@thewatershed.org

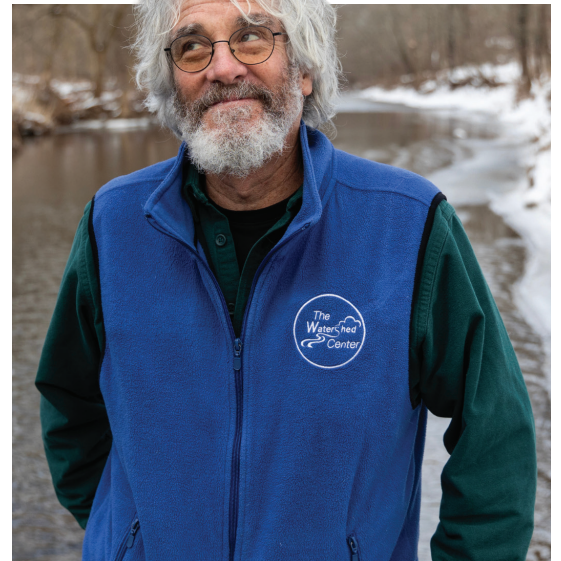
"Being a volunteer at the Watershed since 2021, I have watched numerous children delight in its many interactive programs. But the Watershed is more than just fun. It is a place where children develop a real understanding of the importance of clean water and the natural environment, becoming the future for protecting these resources. When my husband and I heard about the new children's play area and the sponsorship for benches, we thought it was an opportunity to introduce more children to the Watershed and instill in them a lifelong love for the environment."

**—Watershed Volunteers
Ann and Bob Russell**



Jeff Hoagland: Celebrating 40 Years of Leadership

For forty years, Jeff Hoagland has devoted himself to environmental education, creating a legacy at The Watershed Institute that spans generations and has left an indelible mark on both the community and the landscape. Through his unwavering dedication, he has nurtured curiosity and a deep respect for the environment in thousands of students, parents, educators, and colleagues. Jeff's journey with The Watershed Institute is more than a career; it is a lifelong commitment to safeguarding the natural world, inspiring others to connect with it, and empowering them to protect it.



A Legacy of Influence and Inspiration

Jeff Hoagland's influence can be seen in a wide array of students and educators, many of whom have carried his passion for environmental stewardship far beyond the Watershed's grounds. Over the years, his students have grown into roles as scientists, environmental educators, and advocates who make tangible differences in communities across the country. Some have even returned to the Watershed, bringing their own children to Jeff's programs or joining the organization as colleagues, extending his legacy to the next generation.

Many interns trained under Jeff have gone on to work in prominent environmental organizations, including the Grand Canyon National Park, Bowman's Hill Wildflower Preserve, and the United States Forest Service. His influence is also felt in local and state conservation efforts, where parents and other community members, once inspired by Jeff's teachings, now contribute as volunteers or serve alongside him as staff at the Watershed. This generational ripple effect is a testament to his impact, which he humbly attributes to the organization's faith in him and the opportunities he's been given to build an environmental education program that has become a core element of the Watershed's mission.



Shaping The Watershed's Education Program

When Jeff joined the Watershed Institute in the early 1980s, the organization's educational focus centered on ecological principles, helping students connect with their environment through programs about habitats, insect life, and aquatic ecosystems. With Jeff's guidance, these programs tapped into students' innate sense of wonder, nurturing their appreciation for the natural world while instilling conservation and protection values.

Over time, Jeff saw the need to adapt the curriculum to address evolving environmental challenges. Programs began to shift from solely teaching natural history to incorporating elements of STEM and rigorous science-based inquiry. Jeff's foresight was instrumental in expanding the Watershed's focus to encompass clean water, sustainable ecosystems, and climate resilience—a shift that mirrored both the pressing global environmental issues and the evolution of New Jersey's educational standards. Today, under Jeff's influence, the Watershed's programming is both robust and dynamic, equipping students with scientific knowledge, problem-solving skills, and an understanding of their personal and civic responsibilities to the environment.



"There's always been a sense of urgency in this work, but today, as environmental challenges mount, our focus has intensified," Jeff explains. "It's not just about instilling knowledge but empowering students with the attitudes and skills to make a real difference."

A Vision for the Future

Looking ahead, Jeff envisions the Watershed's education program continuing to evolve to meet the changing environmental landscape. He sees an expanded focus on creating opportunities for middle and high school students to engage in community-based environmental action, fostering a generation that is scientifically literate, environmentally responsible, and passionate about conservation.



"We need to create paths for students to have agency in the environment," he says. "Whether through classroom work, extracurricular programs, or hands-on internships, I want students to leave here with the tools and confidence to become leaders in environmental stewardship."

Personal Inspirations and Lifelong Connections

Jeff's connection to the natural world was kindled in his youth, where he spent his childhood roaming fields, streams, and forests around rural New Jersey. He recalls his early days spent exploring the Washington Crossing State Park Nature Center, a place that would become his first professional home years later. His passion was encouraged by teachers and mentors who recognized his excitement for the environment and deepened his understanding of ecology. This lifelong love affair with nature, he believes, is rooted in evolutionary memory—a connection to the natural rhythms and cycles that shaped his identity and, ultimately, his career.

Jeff credits the Watershed for giving him a platform to grow as an educator and as an environmental steward.

"I have lived on the property for two decades," he reflects, "and know every square foot of it. I feel part of this community, like The Lorax—a protector of this environment."



A Lasting Impact and a Legacy of Environmental Stewardship

Over his forty years at The Watershed Institute, Jeff is most proud of the lasting environmental education programs he has built, the community he has cultivated around them, and the role he has played in making environmental education a respected pillar of the Watershed's mission. His colleagues recognize Jeff as a visionary whose creative and physical energy never wanes, and who has made believers of those around him, building a team of dedicated educators who share his passion and commitment.

For Jeff, the work is more than a job; it is a calling. He finds inspiration daily in his colleagues—each of whom, he says, considers their role the most important work for the environment. This community of like-minded individuals, combined with his deep-seated love of nature, fuels him.

"We are all born with an affinity for nature," he says. "But in today's culture, that relationship isn't always nurtured. I feel incredibly fortunate to have found a home at the Watershed where I can inspire others to rekindle that relationship with the natural world."

As The Watershed Institute honors Jeff Hoagland's forty years of service, his legacy stands as a testament to the power of environmental education. His influence will undoubtedly continue to inspire future generations, who will carry forward his passion, wisdom, and commitment to the natural world. Jeff Hoagland has not only educated minds but has also touched hearts, creating a legacy of stewardship that will resonate for decades to come.

Celebrating a Special Bond with Houdini at the Watershed Center

In the heart of our community lies a story of compassion, embodied by our resident turtle, Houdini, and her remarkable bond with Gerianne Linden, Director and Preschool Teacher at Rocky Hill Cooperative Nursery School.



Over twenty years ago, Gerianne and her son Kenny first encountered Houdini during a visit to the Watershed. Enchanted by the turtle's charm, they became lifelong admirers. As Gerianne began sharing the wonders of nature with her preschool students through excursions to the Watershed, her connection with Houdini deepened, sparking a meaningful initiative.

During one visit, Gerianne and her students were inspired to make a difference. Through chores, the children raised \$500 and, with support from parents, transformed Houdini's modest pond basin into a vibrant habitat, complete with a platform, turf, and bamboo surroundings.



Join us in welcoming our 2024 new trustees:



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Pennington



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Christina (Tina) Overman,
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Jaqueline (Jackie) Rooke,
Pennington



William Wilson,
Iselin

More than 300 attendees raise record amounts at Watershed FEST

The Watershed Institute's FEST 2024 was a remarkable success, bringing together community members and supporters for an evening of fun, partnership, and fundraising to protect our environment. With the enthusiastic participation of attendees, the event raised approximately \$254,000 to support the Watershed's essential conservation, advocacy, education, and science programs—all dedicated to ensuring clean and safe water. The success of FEST was made possible by the dedication of our talented FEST Chairs, Karin Belgrave, Adrienne Longo, Jackie Rooke, and Nicole Ziegler, alongside FEST Advisors Tracy Dart and Alicia Merse, and the hard-working FEST Committee. Thank you to everyone who attended and for being vital partners in our mission!



Scan to watch our anniversary video
bit.ly/watershedanniversary



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NJ Watershed Conference

Resiliency through Restoration

PLANNING FOR RESILIENCY requires that we establish long-term, flexible, strategies that not only address the current challenges we face, but also address future impacts of climate change.

RESTORATION STRATEGIES should include nature-based solutions to reduce the amount of stormwater running off impervious surfaces in our highly developed watersheds, increase groundwater recharge to support needs to times of prolonged drought and heat, and help us better achieve regulatory goals for clean water.

Join the Conversation
www.thewatershed.org



**Registration
is Now Open!**
February 21, 2025
at The College of New Jersey
and ONLINE



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Your Donation Will Help Us Keep Water Clean, Safe & Healthy!



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thewatershed.org