

WELLSPRING

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

**The
Watershed
Center
Turns
10!**

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A Message from Our Executive Director

The Watershed Institute remains committed to science-based solutions, community engagement, and strong advocacy to ensure lasting protections.



The new federal administration has brought dramatic change to Washington, DC and grave concerns that decades of bipartisan progress towards environmental protection will be reversed. With this backdrop, our work to protect clean water and healthy ecosystems has never been more urgent.

Climate change is intensifying extreme weather, increasing flooding, droughts, and storms that impact our communities. The new administration's deletion of language about climate change from websites across the federal government and threats to fire more than 1,000 EPA employees doesn't change these facts.

The Watershed Institute is proud to have helped spearhead bipartisan efforts in New Jersey to address water pollution and flooding. Our goal is to move beyond merely slowing environmental decline and work to restore our degraded streams, rivers, and watersheds.

New Jersey voters have consistently voiced their demand for strong water protection. It is time to redouble our commitment to clean water as a right for all, not a privilege for a few. The Watershed Institute stands firm in calling for bipartisan support for robust, science-based environmental safeguards, community engagement, and strong advocacy to ensure lasting protections. Thank you for your unwavering support.

Growing threats, from unchecked development and harmful algal blooms to PFAS contamination, put public health and wildlife at risk. Municipalities need stronger support to implement effective protections and, together, we must take decisive action to safeguard our water resources.

This March, we celebrate World Water Day, with the UN theme of Glacier Preservation. While glaciers may seem distant from our daily lives in New Jersey, their rapid melting is directly influencing extreme weather patterns and sea levels, threatening extreme flooding in our state.

Join us for World Water Day (story on page 3) on March 22 and be part of the movement for a sustainable future!

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

Jim Waltman
Executive Director
The Watershed Institute



Join Us for Our **WORLD WATER DAY** Celebration!

We are excited to invite you to our **Free World Water Day Family Event on March 22** at the Watershed Center. This year, this internationally observed celebration of fresh water will focus on Glacier Preservation. Our event will bring together environmental advocates, educators, and community members for a fun, engaging, and informative experience.

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS:

Exhibits and Demonstrations – Learn about the latest in water conservation, renewable energy, and eco-friendly practices from industry leaders and innovators including Princeton Plasma Physics Laboratory, PolyGone Systems and Princeton University’s High Meadows Environmental Institute Integrated Ground Water Modeling Center.

Interactive Activities – Participate in hands-on activities and demonstrations designed to educate and inspire individuals of all ages. Engage with Watershed Educators to learn more about the Water Cycle. Try a blind taste test of local waters and vote for your favorite.

Take a walk to the vernal pools to see a fascinating habitat.

Community Engagement – Learn how you can make your home and community River Friendly. Connect with local organizations who are helping to protect water resources.

World Water Day is an initiative of the UN and serves as a global reminder of the vital role that water plays in our daily lives and the urgent need to protect it. **Join us in celebrating World Water Day and be part of the movement for a sustainable future!**

WHY SHOULD WE CARE ABOUT GLACIERS?

Glaciers are a critical component of the Earth’s water cycle, and their health directly impacts water availability, weather systems, and ecosystems worldwide.

- Accelerated glacier melting due to climate change disrupts the natural balance of the water cycle, leading to:
 - Sea level rise and inundation of low-lying areas.
 - Increased flooding during excessive melt periods.
 - Reduced freshwater availability as glaciers shrink.
 - Long-term changes in precipitation and drought patterns.
- Glaciers stabilize local and global temperatures, influencing evaporation rates and cloud formation.
- As glaciers shrink, exposed darker surfaces (like rocks) absorb more heat, increasing local evaporation and altering weather patterns.



What Is *Your* Watershed Institute?

The Watershed Institute is more than just a place—it's a haven for discovery, learning, and connection with nature. For decades, this unique organization has served as a resource for students and environmentalists. Each visitor to our Watershed Center and Reserve and each participant in our many programs around central New Jersey brings their own perspective, and The Watershed Institute meets them with a diverse range of activities and opportunities.

We recently conducted a survey to find out how people are experiencing the Watershed so that we can be sure to meet community needs. What is *your* Watershed Institute? Let's explore the many ways people experience and cherish this special place.

"I think it is a sensationally designed building that lets in a lot of natural sunlight. Aside from the designs, I think the exhibits are very cool."

"I can't believe there is free coffee. It is such a joy to visit the center and to get to hang out with my toddler while my older kids are in class."

A HIKER'S PARADISE

For nature enthusiasts, The Watershed Institute is a trailblazer—literally. With 10 miles of well-maintained trails winding through lush forests, serene meadows, and tranquil streams, it's a sanctuary for hikers. Whether you're a seasoned adventurer, a nature enthusiast, or a family looking for a leisurely walk, the beauty of the surroundings in every season ensures every step is a moment to savor. If you are lucky, you might even have a chance encounter with a mink, a great blue heron, or the threatened red-shouldered hawk.

"I love the boardwalk. It's nice to have a non-muddy place to hike with our kids when the weather is not perfect."



A CLASSROOM WITHOUT WALLS

Education is at the heart of The Watershed Institute's mission. We offer classes and workshops that bring science, sustainability, and the natural world to life. From interactive field trips for school groups to adult workshops on conservation and environmental stewardship, The Watershed Institute inspires a lifelong love of learning.



In 2024, **3,824** school-aged students participated in Watershed Institute education programs.

221 teachers attended Watershed training last year.

AN OUTLET FOR CURIOSITY AND ADVENTURE

Families love exploring Tree Frog Trail, a nature-inspired play area where kids can climb, balance, and leap like tree frogs in a beautiful outdoor setting. This engaging space invites children to connect with nature through active play and imagination.



Parents can relax as their little ones navigate log stumps, wooden structures, and interactive features designed to spark curiosity, learning, and adventure.



A PLACE TO MAKE CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

Each summer, children at The Watershed Institute's Nature Camp dive into outdoor adventures that foster a love for nature and create lifelong memories. Surrounded by beautiful trails, streams, and wildlife, campers engage in hands-on activities while building friendships and discovering the wonders of the natural world.



AN OPPORTUNITY TO GIVE BACK

For volunteers and donors, The Watershed Institute is a community. From reserve stewardship to welcoming visitors, stream cleanups to stream testing, and wildlife management to financial support, there are countless ways to contribute to preserving the environment. The Watershed Institute isn't just about lending a hand, testing water, or donating money, it's about becoming a part of a movement to protect the natural world for future generations.



More than **800** volunteers serve the Watershed year-round.

About **600** volunteers participate in stream clean-ups.

"I am very happy to support the Watershed Institute. My partner and I have taken walks several times on your beautiful grounds, and we especially enjoy the peace and views of the meadow area."

AN INTERACTIVE ANIMAL EXPERIENCE

Animal lovers of all ages come to The Watershed Institute to experience its live animal exhibits. These exhibits offer an up-close look at native species and their habitats, providing insights into the delicate balance of our ecosystem. Whether you fancy eels, turtles or cockroaches, our Discovery Room is an eye-opening experience for children and adults alike.



"The Discovery Room is the best part of the building as it is home to all the critters and has a lot to keep little ones busy."

"I love gathering there with other mothers and their children for learning, exploration, and friendship. It is a safe space to explore and a comfortable place to be inside while our children play."

A BUTTERFLY SANCTUARY

Visitors to the Kate Gorrie Butterfly House delight in the serene beauty of fluttering butterflies amid vibrant native plants. Families, nature enthusiasts, and photographers stroll through the outdoor enclosure, watching butterflies gracefully dance from flower to flower. Children excitedly observe caterpillars munching on leaves, while gardeners take inspiration from the lush habitat, learning how to support pollinators in their own yards.



A TRUSTED RESOURCE FOR PROFESSIONALS

We offer expertise and support for environmental professionals, municipal officials, environmental lawyers, architects, and advocates through technical training, webinars, and the NJ Watershed Conference, which continues to expand its reach and impact each year. Professionals and environmental advocates look to us for up-to-date information and advice related to legislation, policies, and practices.



300 people attended the NJ Watershed Conference in 2024.

6 technical webinars were offered and **130** CEUs were awarded last year.

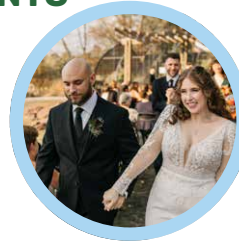
A LEADER IN RIVER-FRIENDLY CERTIFICATION

Our River-Friendly Certification Program empowers residents, businesses, and schools to take action for clean water and habitat restoration. Last year, more than 150 individuals and four schools earned certification, demonstrating their commitment to sustainability.



A UNIQUE VENUE FOR SPECIAL EVENTS

From weddings to corporate retreats, our 950-acre reserve provides stunning, sustainable event spaces designed for meaningful, low-impact gatherings.



"Thank you for making our wedding beautiful in a meaningful location"

A RETREAT FOR MIND AND SOUL

For some, The Watershed Institute is simply a place to pause, reflect, and reconnect with themselves. Whether sitting by a stream, meditating in a quiet meadow, or soaking in the seasonal colors, visitors often find peace and rejuvenation in its serene landscapes.



"I love the wildflower gardens in front, and the waterfall that forms in a rainstorm and crashes down onto a rock!"

"I love the laboratory as well as the nature shop/coffee corner. It is such a beautiful space to enjoy a warm or cold drink and relax after a lovely hike."

A COMMON GROUND FOR ALL

The Watershed Institute is many things to many people because it reflects the diversity of those who visit.



Hikers, students, volunteers, artists, families, and nature lovers all find something here that resonates deeply with them. It's not just a destination; it's a community hub, a learning center, a natural refuge, and a source of endless inspiration.

What is your Watershed Institute? Is it the trails? The classes? The opportunity to give back? Or simply the joy of being surrounded by nature's wonders?

Whatever it may be, The Watershed Institute is here for you—ready to meet you where you are and help you connect with the natural world in meaningful ways. Come explore, engage, and discover your own Watershed!



A DECADE OF THE WATERSHED CENTER

This year, our Leed-Platinum certified Watershed Center celebrates its 10th anniversary. The state-of-the-art building was designed as a model of sustainability, featuring energy-efficient systems, rainwater management, and sustainable materials. The building has not only supported conservation efforts but also served as a hub for environmental education and community engagement, housing our offices, laboratory, Discovery room, gift shop, Johnson classrooms, and Gorrie Hall. The Watershed Institute is grateful for the more than 300 individuals and institutions whose generosity made the Center possible. The Watershed Center continues to stand as a shining example of how design can play a key role in protecting our local waterways and ecosystems.



Honoring Pat Heaney:

A Precious Gem in Environmental Education

For four decades, Pat Heaney has been a steadfast force in environmental education, touching countless lives with her passion, wisdom, and unwavering dedication to the natural world. As the Assistant Education Director at The Watershed Institute, Pat has inspired generations of educators, students, and environmental stewards, leaving an indelible mark on the field and the world.

At this year's Alliance for New Jersey Environmental Education (ANJEE) Conference, Pat was honored with the **Precious Gem Award**, a fitting tribute created specifically to honor Pat's tireless contributions to environmental education. For 15 years, she has played a pivotal leadership role within ANJEE, helping to shape its vision and expand its reach. Her colleagues and friends agree: Pat is not just a leader but a mentor, a guiding light, and an instigator of goodness in every sense of the word.

Pat's work is infused with an infectious enthusiasm that makes learning about the environment an unforgettable experience. She embodies the spirit of the Lorax, tirelessly speaking for the trees and all living things that depend on them. Her passion is not limited to the daylight hours; she also celebrates the moon, ever mindful of nature's cycles and the interconnectedness of our world.



Pat Heaney (second from the right) receives the Precious Gem award.

Whether she is developing innovative programs at The Watershed Institute, mentoring new educators, or championing the importance of environmental literacy, Pat's impact is immeasurable. Her peers admire her ability to blend knowledge with joy, advocacy with action, and science with storytelling. She has a rare gift of making people feel seen, heard, and empowered to make a difference.

Those who have had the privilege of working alongside Pat describe her as not only a remarkable educator but also a cherished friend. Her warmth, humor, and boundless energy make every interaction meaningful. She is a true gem in the environmental education community, and this well-deserved recognition serves as a testament to the legacy she has built and continues to nurture.

Congratulations, Pat, on receiving the Precious Gem Award! Your dedication and passion shine as brightly as ever, illuminating the path for all those who follow in your footsteps. The world is a better place because of you.

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11th Annual Solstice Trail Run**

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



Learn more at
thewatershed.org