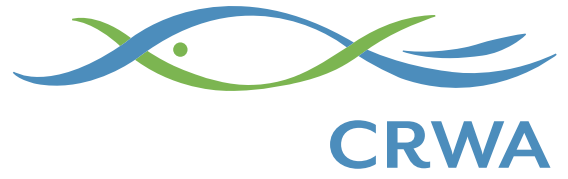


Charles River Watershed Association



# FY2018 Annual Report



## 53rd Annual Meeting Awardees

**Stephanie Pollack**, *Secretary and CEO of MassDOT*  
*Anne M. Blackburn Award*

**Matt Shuman**, *Watertown Town Engineer*  
*Rita Barron Public Official Award*

**Frances Gershwin**, *Muddy River Maintenance and Management*  
*Oversight Committee, Citizen Activist Award*

**Green Team**, *Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation*  
*Young Leaders Award*

**Diane Hall and Robert Sproull** *Ginger Lawrence Volunteer Award*

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# Welcome Letter

## From The Board and Executive Director

Dear Friends,

This was an exciting year for CRWA as Emily Norton became CRWA's fifth executive director. Emily, formerly the director of the Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club and currently a Newton City Councilor, replaced Bob Zimmerman, who retired after 28 years leading CRWA and serving as the voice for the Charles. CRWA's leadership transition has been smooth. Emily's advocacy and political skills, and her energy and enthusiasm are serving CRWA well as we launch new initiatives on climate change, adaptation, and resilience.

CRWA has come a long way since its founding in 1965, when volunteers literally pulled cars out of the river. While CRWA continues its grassroots and educational efforts, it has today grown into a highly effective science and research-based advocacy organization that works every day for a cleaner river and resilient watershed for the 35 Charles communities.

A recent study by the National Academy of Sciences found that rivers with organized watershed advocacy groups are more likely to be swimmable and fishable than those without them. This study also documented that increased donations to and expenditures by watershed groups resulted in better water quality. The impact of CRWA's dedicated staff and volunteers can be seen every day.

We could not carry out our important work without the support of our members and donors. *Thank you for your continued support of CRWA.*

*Linda McLane*

Linda McLane, President

# Welcome Letter

## From The Board and Executive Director

Dear Friends,

It is exciting to be sharing with you CRWA's first Annual Report since I became Executive Director in August 2018, taking over from Bob Zimmerman who had been leading CRWA since 1990. I am honored to join an organization with such an amazing track record of success protecting the environment. The song "Dirty Water" was released two years before I was born. When I was growing up in Newton, the river, within a mile of my house, was not only dirty, it was also smelly and dangerous.

At a time of increasing awareness of the threats to our environment, coupled with insufficient action on the part of government to solve these problems, it is good to be reminded that when pushed and prodded by citizens and advocacy groups such as CRWA, government can do big things and make people's lives better. Reducing the regular flow of raw sewage into the Charles River and Boston Harbor cost about \$5 billion, but yielded much more than that in benefits, as measured in property values, recreational opportunities, and human health.

My vision for CRWA is to continue the important river science, legal advocacy and green infrastructure projects we are known for, and to grow even more effective at getting important information into the hands of decision-makers in a way that empowers them to take action.

We know that climate change is bringing increased weather-related risks to communities in the northeast, and not just those on the coasts, but inland as well. Heavier precipitation, increased flooding, hotter summers and more frequent drought will all be exacerbated by our aging infrastructure. The solutions CRWA has been advancing, including green, resilient infrastructure, wetlands restoration, dam removal and water recharge, not only improve water quality in the Charles River, they are also vital tools to protect communities and natural systems from the impacts of climate change. We will be building and strengthening relationships with elected and appointed leaders in every Charles River watershed community so that we can work in partnership to deploy nature-based solutions that not only restore the Charles River, but also protect the lives of those who live within its watershed.

I invite and welcome your participation and support for this vital work.

*Emily Norton*

Emily Norton, Executive Director

# 2018 Highlights | Leading Environmental Restoration, Advocating for Climate Resiliency, and Enriching Quality of Life for Watershed Residents

Charles River Watershed Association is focused on understanding the pressures to the Charles River, developing restorative, resilient solutions and putting them into action.

## Assessing Water Quality

With 24 years of assessments, CRWA's water quality monitoring programs enable us to determine river and tributary health, to identify problems and to forecast days when the Lower Basin is unsafe for boating. This long-term data set also allows CRWA to analyze trends over time—analyses that are increasingly important with climate change. Sampling was conducted every month in 2018 and the results compiled in CRWA's comprehensive annual data report.

Researchers and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) also use this data; U.S. EPA's annual Charles River report card grade is based on CRWA's bacteria data. The river's A- EPA grade (up from a D grade in 1995) is remarkable, however, this does not fully communicate river conditions. Bacteria continues to be an issue in wet-weather, and summer cyanobacteria outbreaks represent a significant threat to public health. CRWA's 2018 monitoring data showed that water quality was generally best in the middle Charles (Medfield to Dedham), with bacteria concentrations passing the state's swimming standard every month at the Ames St. Bridge, Dedham. The poorest water quality was found in the Lower Basin, and particularly in the Muddy River, where bacteria concentrations exceeded the boating standard in 8 of 12 sampling months.



Over the past two decades, water temperature has increased at many

sampling locations. Dry-weather bacteria concentrations are also rising, due to the higher water temperatures and more frequent rainfall, both of which are symptoms of our changing climate.

## Improving Drought Management

The severe drought in summer 2016 demonstrated the inadequacy of the state's Drought Management Plan (DMP) in identifying drought early and instituting timely and effective responses. CRWA and the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance convinced the state to revise the DMP.

The result: a far better plan with improved metrics for identifying drought severity, renaming of drought levels to increase public awareness, improved state agency response coordination, and recommendations for curtailing nonessential water use, primarily for lawns, during drought. The new DMP is expected to be in place in Spring 2019.

CRWA's analysis of varying outdoor water use restrictions adopted by Charles River towns during the 2016 drought found that substantial amounts of water can be saved during drought through effective outdoor water use restrictions. Because the 2016 drought highlighted the unevenness of watering restrictions imposed by towns within the state's six drought regions, and identified critical gaps in state law, CRWA proposed legislation to give the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs authority to require uniform outdoor water use restrictions in each drought region, and towns the authority to enforce these limits. Passage of this legislation, an act relative to maintaining adequate water supplies through effective drought management, is a CRWA priority in 2019.



# 2018 Highlights

## Leading Environmental Restoration, Advocating for Climate Resiliency, and Enriching Quality of Life for Watershed Residents

### Developing a Milford Restoration Plan

CRWA and Milford Power LLC, owner of a gas-fired power plant in the Upper Watershed, finalized a settlement agreement in which the company agreed to fund development of a subwatershed restoration plan by CRWA and the Town of Milford. The settlement grew out of CRWA's concern that the plant's increased water use will exacerbate environmental impacts in the already water-stressed Charles River headwaters. Milford Power also agreed to contribute \$150,000 for implementation of restoration projects identified in the plan. These projects using green infrastructure, or nature-based solutions, will keep more water in the upper watershed while also educating residents about stormwater runoff pollution to the Charles. The Town and CRWA were also able to leverage

additional state grant funding for developing the restoration plan.



### Constructing a New Green Street for Watertown

As part of our Blue Cities Initiative, CRWA and the Town of Watertown transformed Edenfield Avenue, a residential street, into a "Green Street." The roadway was narrowed by 500 feet and seven bioswales and three tree trench systems were installed to treat stormwater runoff from the roadway and filter it back into the ground. CRWA led a field trip for Watertown Middle School students to learn about this new approach to stormwater management. CRWA's Director

of Blue Cities, Pallavi Mande, and Watertown's Town Engineer Matthew Shuman presented the project in a national webinar hosted by the U.S. EPA.



### Restoring Sherrin Woods

Working with the Boston Parks and Recreation Department and the Southwest Boston Community Development Corporation Green Team, CRWA performed restoration work at Sherrin Woods, one of Boston's largest urban wilds. The Green Team, a summertime youth job training program, led volunteers in removing a variety of invasive plants. Boston City Councilors Annissa Essaibi-George and Tim McCarthy, Boston Parks Commissioner Chris Cook, a local TD Bank executive, CRWA, and the Green Team spoke at the events.

### Keeping the Charles Clean

Fifty tons of trash were removed in 2018, thanks to over 3,000 volunteers who spent a combined 12,800 hours at the 19th Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup. American Rivers has recognized the Cleanup as the nation's largest mobilized volunteer event for the last two consecutive years. CRWA partnered with the Charles River Conservancy, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), Emerald Necklace Conservancy, the Esplanade Association, Waltham Land Trust, and Senator William Brownsberger to make the Cleanup even bigger and better, and is building on this success in 2019.



*Sailing on the Charles River*

## Celebrating the River

### Free Fun Friday

CRWA hosted its first Riverfest in partnership with Highland Street Foundation's Free Fun Friday summer program and the Newton Marriott. Over 900 participants enjoyed free canoeing and kayaking on the Charles with music, food, fishing lessons, story time, guided nature walks, and hands-on science demonstrations by CRWA's aquatic scientists. Educating citizens of all ages about our environment is key to creating new advocates for a healthy Charles River.

### Champions of the Charles Gala



In September, CRWA held its annual Champions of the Charles gala at the Museum of Science Washburn Pavilion. The Gala honored Bob Zimmerman and John Sullivan, Chief Engineer, Boston Water and Sewer Commission, for their unique partnership and dedication to the Charles River. Over 200 guests celebrated with cocktails and dinner overlooking the Charles, raising funds for CRWA's river restoration work. Our thanks to CRWA Directors Greta Meszoely and Bryan Natale for co-chairing the event, and lead gala sponsors, Boating in Boston and Head of the Charles Regatta.

### Moonlight Apres-Ski Party

Over 30 young professionals came together to ring in the snow season with CRWA as we hosted a cross-country ski party under the full moon beside the Charles River at the Weston Ski Track on Saturday, February 2 over cider sangria and games. The ski night raised over \$800 to support our work including water quality monitoring, an invasive milfoil project, and municipal trainings for climate resiliency.



### 36th Annual Run of the Charles

CRWA's signature event, the Run of the Charles, is the largest flat-bottomed boat race in New England and a major event in Greater Boston, hosting 1,500 racers and spectators each year! The 36th Annual Run of the Charles was quite a success, drawing international paddlers to compete and enjoy an early spring day out on a clean Charles. CRWA hopes this year's race will further grow accessibility and recreation on the river.

# Looking Forward

## Connect With the River and with CRWA in 2019

### Training Local Elected Officials

In 2019, CRWA will initiate “Climate Resilience 101” trainings for municipal elected and appointed officials in the Charles River watershed and beyond. The National Climate Assessment, released in November 2018, warned of dire impacts to the Northeast from climate change: more intense rains, recurrent flooding, more heat-related deaths, more frequent droughts and more evacuated and displaced populations.

Many local leaders are aware of threats to their residents and municipal infrastructure from climate change, but may not realize that nature-based solutions can offer protection from flooding and other climate change impacts. There is also value in local leaders having a better understanding of how decisions made outside their own town borders, especially upstream development and land use decisions, can either alleviate, or compound, these problems. We look forward to sharing our expertise, as well as learning from our local partners about solutions they are already employing, and how CRWA can best support them.



### Fighting for Improved Stormwater Management

Stormwater runoff is the largest source of pollution in the Charles River. Oil, grit, bacteria and nutrients on roadways and parking lots wash into municipal storm drains during storms and are discharged into the river through outfalls. Government studies and CRWA's own work show that nutrient, i.e. phosphorus, pollution, must be reduced in the Charles River by more than 50 percent.

The new municipal stormwater permit requires cities and towns to control stormwater runoff to protect our waters. But this permit will not protect the Charles because EPA is giving Charles communities 20 years to reduce their nutrient pollution to the river. The Charles simply cannot wait this long—the ecological consequences would be dire. CRWA therefore teamed up with Conservation Law Foundation (CLF) to challenge the permit in federal court. Groups seeking to weaken the permit also appealed. The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals put these cases on hold for the parties to explore a mediated resolution. If unable to reach agreement, the court will set a briefing schedule.

The new permit remains in effect during this mediation and municipalities are now taking necessary steps to map their stormwater collection systems, develop stormwater management plans, identify funding sources and eliminate illegal sewer interconnections; it will also hopefully drive local stormwater green infrastructure solutions.

### Advocating for a Better MassPike in Boston

As a longstanding member of the I-90 Task Force, CRWA supports the Massachusetts Department of Transportation's (MassDOT) new design for the I-90 Allston Interchange Improvement Project, a \$1 billion multimodal project that involves realigning the MassPike around the former toll plaza and railroad yards. This design will bring the MassPike down to ground level and elevate Soldiers Field Road above it. It will also create a wider ribbon of parkland along the Charles River in the narrow area known as the “throat,” allowing new bike and pedestrian paths, connections to the river, less traffic noise and spectacular vistas from the elevated Soldiers Field Road.





*Sailing on the Charles River*

Better management of the I-90 and Soldiers Field Road stormwater runoff will improve water quality in the river, reducing erosion, sedimentation and pollution while increasing flood storage capacity. Water absorption can be maximized by using permeable pavement materials on bike and pedestrian paths. The eroded riverbank can be restored with natural plantings to stabilize it and provide revitalized fish and wildlife habitat. CRWA looks forward to working with MassDOT and the Task Force to ensure that the project helps achieve our larger environmental goals for ecological restoration.



### **Restoring Fish Passage at Watertown Dam**

After successfully getting the Watertown Dam listed as a state Priority Restoration project, CRWA is working closely with the MA Division of Ecological Restoration and the dam owner, DCR, to investigate the feasibility of removing the dam. Removal would have significant ecological benefits: improving fish passage and habitat, especially for American Shad migration, and water quality.

Removing the dam would also provide additional flood storage for upstream areas, recreating a natural floodplain. Additional flood storage is critical in the age of climate change. While the dam is in fair condition, the state has categorized it as a significant hazard because of the densely populated communities downstream. In the coming year, CRWA will collaborate with partners to complete the investigation and to reach out to watershed residents and stakeholders about the study results and the benefits of removing the dam.

### **Enjoy the River in 2019!**

In addition to CRWA's Riverfest and Run of the Charles events, there are more ways in 2019 to connect with the river and with CRWA:

#### **Charles River Cleanup | Saturday, April 27:**

This year marks the 20th Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup! A lot has changed in the last twenty years, but one thing has remained the same: our volunteers' passion for the river. Stretching the entire length of the Charles, the Annual Earth Day Charles River Cleanup provides people with the opportunity to spend a day volunteering for the environment. To reduce waste and support environmental sustainability, CRWA is switching from signature Cleanup t-shirts to aluminum water bottles this year.

#### **37th Annual Run of the Charles | Sunday, April 28:**

Many exciting changes are in store for the 37th Annual Run of the Charles, CRWA's premier canoe and kayak race! We are shortening the race course to decrease its carbon impact, while making the race more accessible for spectators. We have added food, a beer garden, music, river games and family canoe lessons to the DCR Artesani / Herter Park finish line festival.

#### **Charles River Party (On the Docks)**

**| Thursday, July 25:** Celebrate the cleanup of Boston's once "Dirty Water" at sunset with CRWA's Friends of the Charles River! Join us on the docks of Community Boating on the Esplanade for music, food, beer and cocktails to enjoy this truly remarkable river and to support CRWA's work.

#### **Champions of the Charles Gala | Thursday, September 19:**

CRWA's annual Gala returns this September. We hope you'll join us for what's sure to be another memorable night on the Charles at the Museum of Science! students.

# Looking Forward

## Connect With the River and with CRWA in 2019

### Mentoring Environmentalists

As a science and research-based advocacy organization, CRWA is committed to training the next generation of environmentalists. Each year CRWA trains over a dozen college and graduate school students.

#### Rita Barron Fellow

CRWA's Rita Barron Fellowship program was established in 2005 in honor of former Executive Director Rita Barron. The one-year fellowship supports a Master Degree candidate, or recent grad, at CRWA. The program is designed to mentor young environmental professionals, giving them an opportunity to work closely with our science team. Graduates of the Rita Barron Fellowship have gone on to environmental careers, many involving research.



Lisa Kumpf, our 2018 Rita Barron Fellow, received her Bachelor's degree in Geology from UMass Amherst and is completing her Masters degree at Boston College. Through managing our monthly monitoring program, Lisa has grown in her understanding of the Charles and field science techniques.

Lisa has now been hired as CRWA's Aquatic Scientist and will be managing monthly monitoring, flagging and Canoeing for Clean Water programs.



### Science Program Associate

Nishaila Porter joined CRWA in 2016 after graduating from Wesleyan University where she majored in Earth and Environmental Science. She has been

involved in membership, volunteer management, publications and events during her time at CRWA and is now joining the science team as Program Associate. She will be working on river science, advocacy and coordinating volunteer programs.

Nishaila is also a teacher and mentor with The Net Mentoring Group, a Boston nonprofit dedicated to increasing academic opportunities and eradicating the achievement gap in STEM. Each year she leads a group of high school students as they explore STEM programming and take on engineering projects. Her favorite project was designing rockets; at the Franklin Field Rocket "Blast Off," Team Nishaila's rocket soared!





*Sailing on the Charles River*

### Canoeing for Clean Water

CRWA's popular volunteer aquatic invasive plant removal program, Canoeing for Clean Water, completed its 12th season! Its primary goal is to improve habitat in the Lakes District (area behind the Moody St. Dam in Waltham, Newton and Weston) by eradicating invasive water chestnut.

In 2018, 391 volunteers in canoes removed 14 tons of these weeds. Thanks to the efforts of local legislators, targeted funding in the state budget enabled DCR also to conduct large-scale mechanical harvesting of these weeds. Post season surveys show water chestnut coverage is the lowest in the program's history.

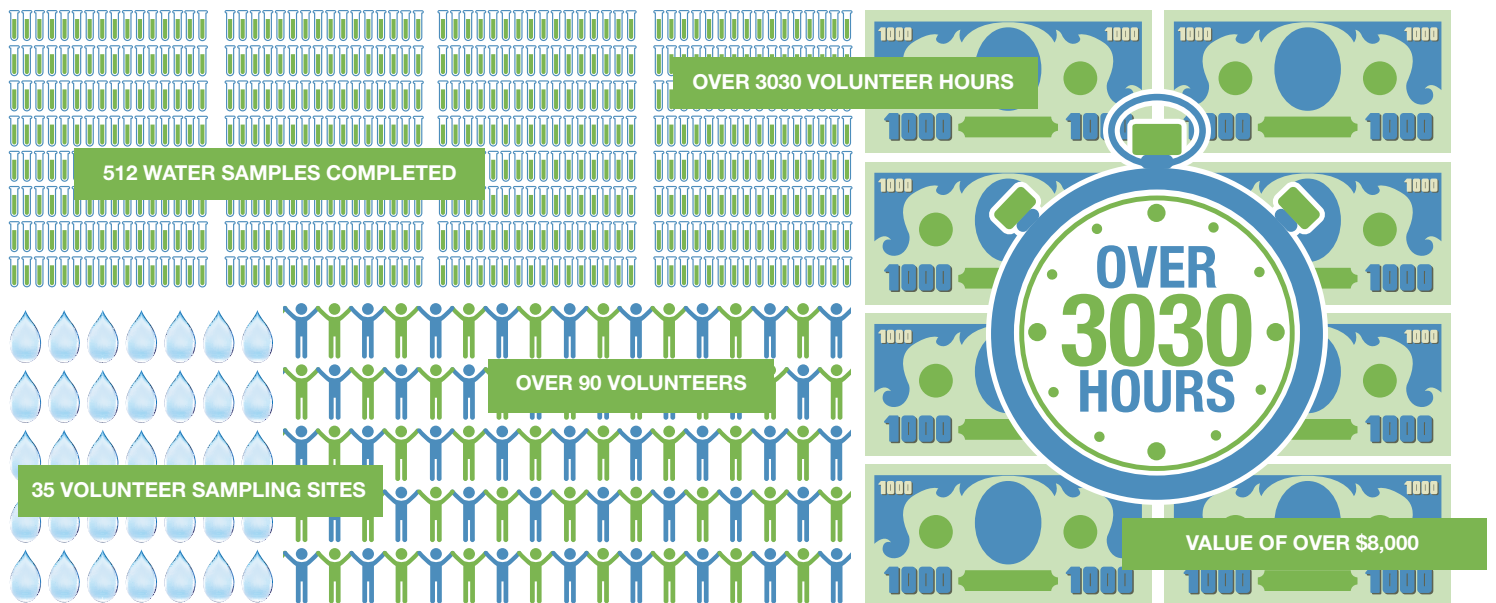
### Volunteer Monthly Monitoring Program

Without its network of citizen scientists and volunteers, CRWA would not be the organization it is today. Our

gratitude goes out to each member of the volunteer monthly monitoring program!

#### Volunteer Monitor Profile: Christina Gasbarro

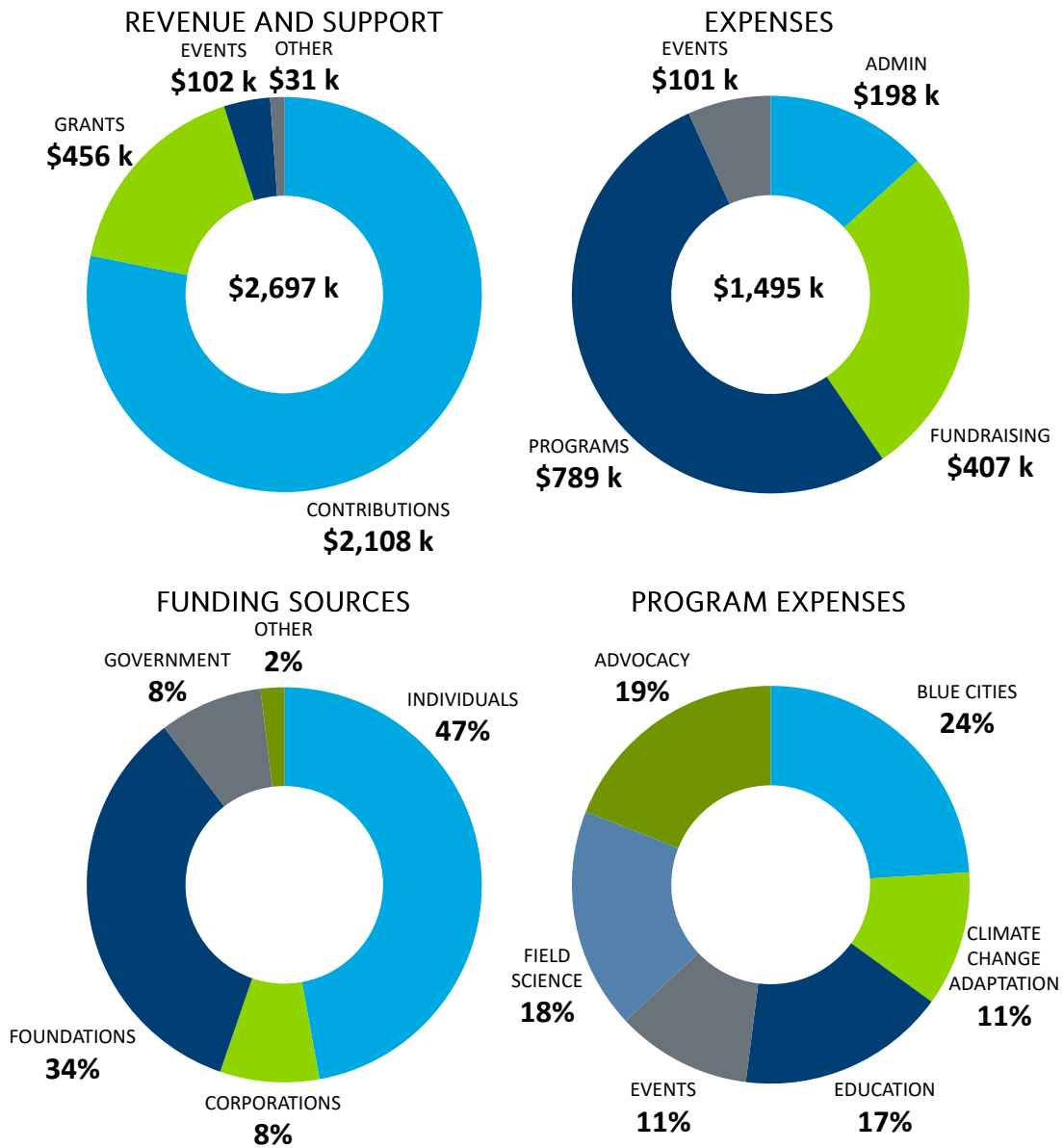
For the past 15 years, Christina Gasbarro has been a volunteer monthly water quality sampler. She brings this experience back to Woodside Montessori Academy's middle school, sharing the hands-on sampling scientific methods and real world application with students. Gasbarro believes that by determining the health of the river, one can also understand the effects of a watershed and how local residents are impacting their community, and hopes the students' interest in science-based research and advocacy will extend to the Earth as a whole.



# Finances | FY2018 Support Oct 1 2017 - Sept 30 2018

## FY 2018 FINANCIAL SUMMARY

October 2017 to September 2018



Figures are provisional, pending completion of CRWA's annual audit.

# Donor List | FY2018 Support Oct 1 2017 - Sept 30 2018

## Blue Heron Society (\$25,000 and up)

Anonymous (2)  
Allen and Selma Berkman  
Gordon Burnes  
Eaglemere Foundation  
Andy and Linda McLane  
Milford Power, LLC  
National Fish and Wildlife Foundation  
Richard Saltonstall Charitable Foundation  
Robert and Lee Sproull  
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## American Shad Society (\$10,000-\$24,999)

Bilezikian Family Foundation, Inc.  
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# Donor List | FY2018 Support Oct 1 2017 - Sept 30 2018

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*Sailing on the Charles River*

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 John Shields  
 Jon Skillman  
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 Willis Wang  
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 Whole Foods Market  
 Gerard Wolf  
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 Cultural Adventure Travel LLC  
 Deborah Danik  
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 Molly Diggins  
 Andrew Duffy  
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 Tracy Egan  
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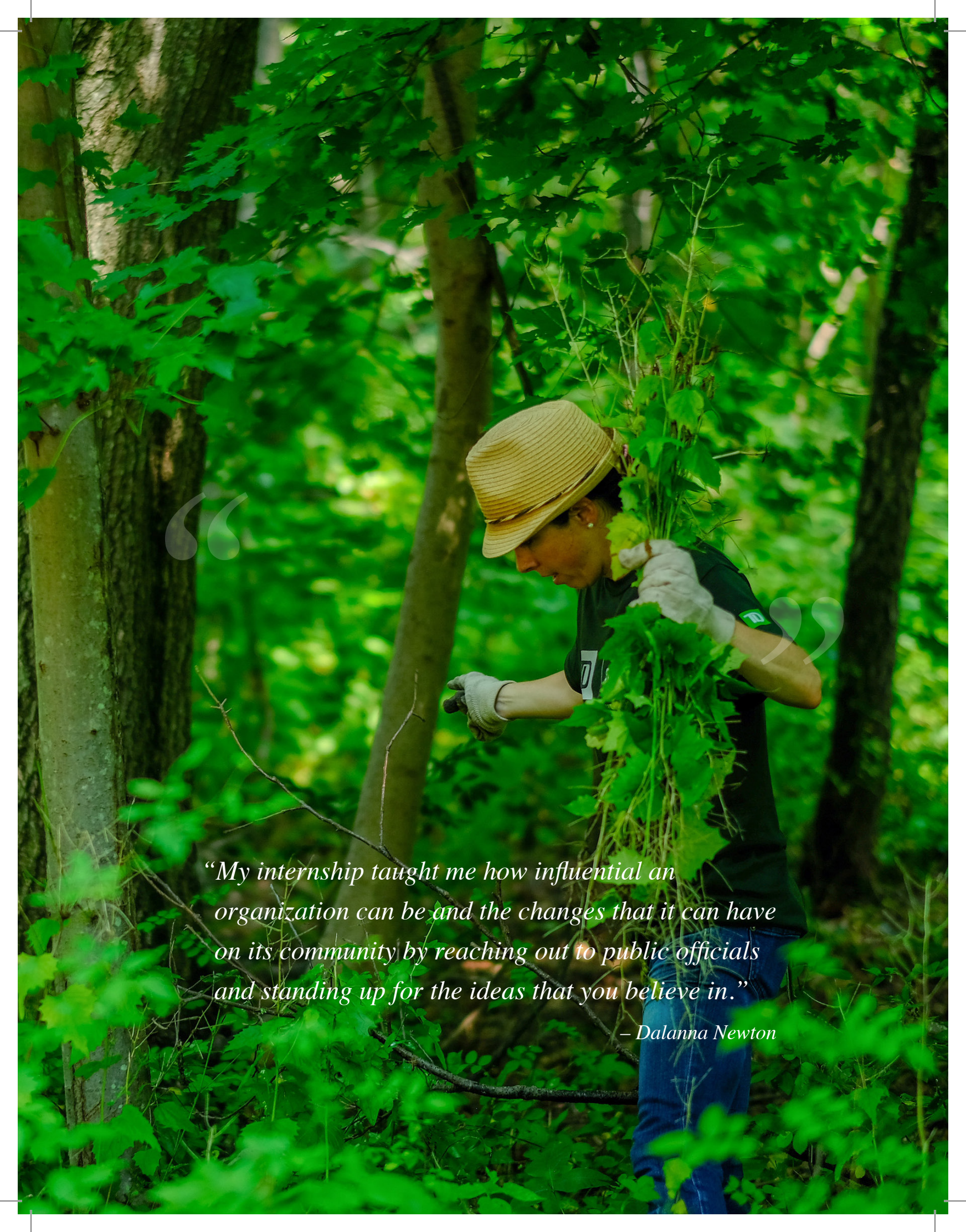
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*“My internship taught me how influential an organization can be and the changes that it can have on its community by reaching out to public officials and standing up for the ideas that you believe in.”*

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