

CURRENTS

WINTER 2017 | VOLUME 60, NUMBER 1

PROTECTING OUR WATERSHED FOR ANOTHER 60 YEARS



I am thrilled to be joining the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association at this important moment in its history.

For 60 years we have been working in partnership with our community to preserve and protect the streambanks, floodplains, forests, and meadows that are necessary for a healthy watershed and a healthy community. Together we have been incredibly successful – in 1962 we had 17.5 protected acres and today we have over 1300 acres forever preserved. We have extended the Green Ribbon Trail and created trails on our Preserves to provide 21 miles of recreational access for our community. We have encouraged our municipal leaders to collaborate on solutions for improving water quality in the Wissahickon, resulting in the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership, a nationally significant model for addressing

non-point source pollution impacts on water quality. It is clear to me, as I learn the history of this organization, that together WVWA and our community of members, supporters and friends, have the power to make real and lasting change. The preservation of those 1300 acres cannot be undone and our efforts will continue to benefit our community for generations to come.

The work of land protection and environmental conservation is all about thinking of and planning for the future. Unlike many nonprofits whose work helps to meet the immediate needs of a community (such as social service and health organizations), environmental nonprofits like WVWA invest in the future. We are working today to secure a healthy environment for our children, grandchildren and beyond. This is challenging because we can only guess as to what the future may look like or demand. For example, the world has

changed dramatically since WVWA's inception, with the climate change crisis, advancements in technology, and changing population demographics. Who would have predicted Nature Deficit Disorder or melting glaciers in 1957?

As the Watershed Association begins our 60th year we are taking time to reflect and ask ourselves, "What are the strategies and tactics we need today to best address the conservation challenges of tomorrow?" I want to hear from you – what do you think is the most important role of the Watershed Association in the next 60 years? I invite you to share your thoughts and ideas on Twitter using #CleanWissahickon, or send me an email at gail@wvwa.org

Yours truly,

Gail Farmer, Executive Director

INSIDE: BY THE NUMBERS - 3 | LEGACY OF SERVICE - 4 | THEN & NOW - 6 | CALENDAR

2016 HIGHLIGHTS



Above, left to right: All smiles at the annual Green Ribbon Trail Race, *Photo: Jamie Stewart*. Fall along the Wissahickon Creek in Gwynedd Valley, *Photo: David Freed*. Drilling logs at the Maple Sugaring Festival, *Photo: Jamie Stewart*.

As WVWA's 60th Anniversary celebration begins, let's take a moment to reflect on some of the past year's accomplishments.

In 2016, WVWA added 12.4 acres of preserved open space throughout the watershed, brought together 13 local municipalities to improve the health of the Wissahickon Creek through the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership, continued to educate through student programs, acquired two parcels of land, had record-breaking event attendance, and hired a new executive director to lead us into the next 60 years.

CONSERVATION RESOURCES

Last year the Dodsworth Run Preserve, a 9.4-acre property in Upper Gwynedd, was obtained through a generous donation from Merck & Co., Inc. This preserve is open to the public and has undergone many improvements. Additionally, a 3-acre parcel adjoining Pizek Preserve was acquired from Mr. and Mrs. Alan Gnessin. Funding for this project was provided by PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, WVWA and a generous donation from the Gnessins. This expansion provides added protection to the Sandy Run.

The Conservation Resources team completed a habitat management plan for the Crossways Preserve that will serve as a template for all other WVWA Preserves. Also at Crossways Preserve, a second year of data collection on bird populations at the MAPS banding station was completed.

WATER QUALITY

In August, 13 municipalities in the Wissahickon Watershed adopted an Intergovernmental Agreement

(IGA) ordinance to officially move forward with the Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership. This group has committed to working together on a plan to improve drinking water, mitigate damaging flooding, reduce streambank erosion, protect fish and wildlife and restore valuable recreation areas throughout the Wissahickon Creek corridor.

EVANS-MUMBOWER MILL

Since its acquisition in 1987, the mill has undergone extensive construction, renovation and improvements. All of these efforts allowed the mill to run smoothly last year with the help of dedicated volunteers performing standard maintenance. Improvements were made to the surrounding property by removing invasive plants and trees and replacing them with native species.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Last year brought record attendance at many of WVWA's annual events, most notably at the Maple Sugaring Festival, Creek Clean Up, Walk the Wissahickon, and Green Ribbon Trail Race. In addition, staff and volunteers reached thousands more community members through local community events, trail walks, birding programs and education programs.

EDUCATION

Through the generous support of Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) funding from several local businesses, WVWA staff and volunteers continued to provide academic enrichment programs to local students. Programs were held in both the classroom and in the field about Watersheds & Wetlands, Water Quality, Groundwater and the Evans-Mumbower Mill.

All this success could not be possible without the support of our members, donors, foundations, corporations and community partners. A complete list of donors can be found on our website:

WVWA.ORG/2016ANNUALREPORT

2016 BY THE NUMBERS

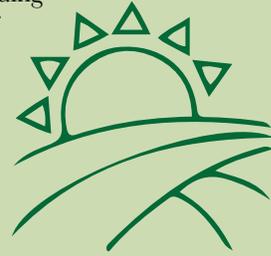
2,035

students from 12 schools participated in the education program. Elementary, middle and high school students learned about a variety of topics, from measuring stream flow to grinding flour by hand.



12.4

acres of land were preserved with the addition of Dodsworth Run Preserve and the expansion of the Piszek Preserve. Continuing to preserve open space is of vital importance to the mission of WVWA and to protect the local environment for the Wissahickon watershed community.



994

volunteers contributed 6,801 hours of work in support of our mission. Remaining true to the founding volunteer directors, WVWA relies on the support of our volunteer community in order to protect land, water and all life in the watershed.

170

birds across 29 species were banded and released at Crossways Preserve as part of a national monitoring project.



300

native plants, trees, and shrubs were planted in the Watershed.



13

suburban municipalities in the Wissahickon Watershed have adopted an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) to collaborate and share resources to clean the Wissahickon Creek.



60

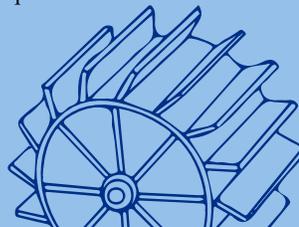
**YEARS OF PROTECTING
LAND, WATER AND LIFE
IN THE WISSAHICKON
WATERSHED**

1,154

community members financially supported our mission through membership, annual fund donations and designated gifts.

375

visitors learned about historical engineering and technology at the Evans-Mumbower Mill, Montgomery County's only water-powered working gristmill.



45

events engaged 2937 community members in educational and recreational activities throughout the watershed.

52

corporations, foundations and small businesses supported our work through sponsorship.

LEGACY OF SERVICE

Over 60 years ago, 9 volunteers met to address the effects of development on the health of the Wissahickon Creek, which resulted in the incorporation of the Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association in 1957. Volunteers have, and will always be, a critical part of the success of WVWA. With the dedication, skill and passion of our volunteers, WVWA is able to carry out the mission of protecting the quality and beauty of the Creek and enhancing all life in the watershed.

In 2016, 994 volunteers donated 6,801 hours of service to help maintain trails, monitor the health of the Creek, educate the community, organize successful events and assist with administrative work.

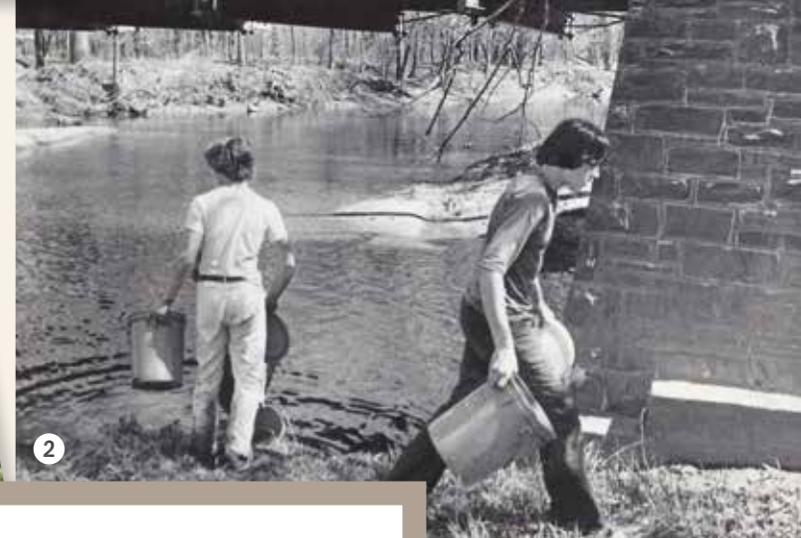
We are continuously working to enhance our volunteer program by offering rewarding opportunities. We are also educating volunteers on the work that WVWA is doing across all program areas to empower them to be ambassadors for the organization.

To learn more about volunteering for WVWA, visit, www.wvwa.org/volunteering.

This page, top to bottom:

1. Workday along the Wissahickon Creek on May 20, 1976.
2. Planting trees at the Byrne Family Preserve on April 10, 2016. *Photo: David Freed*
3. Girl Scouts accepting oak seedlings from students at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf in Mt. Airy. As part of WVWA's "Operation Acorn," these students grew the seedlings from acorns and gave them to the Scouts to be planted along the stretch of Route 309 at Laverock to prevent soil erosion. Photo taken May 14, 1964.

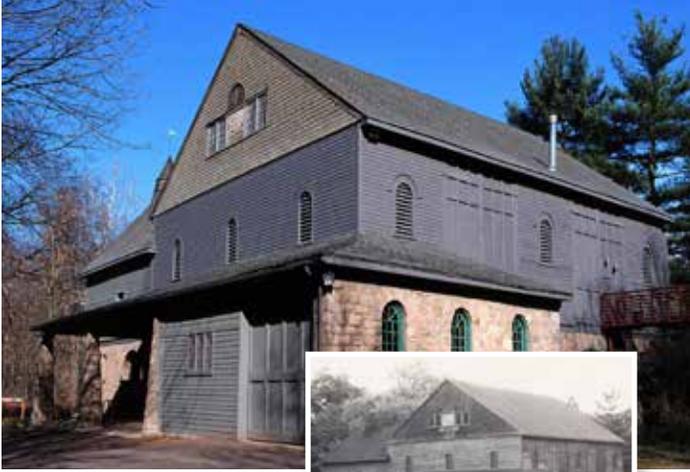




This page, clockwise from top left:

1. Volunteers at the Byrne Family Preserve on April 10, 2016. *Photo: David Freed*
2. 7th Annual Wissahickon Creek Clean Up on April 15, 1977.
3. Planting native species at Crossways Preserve on October 22, 2016. *Photo: David Freed*
4. 46th Annual Wissahickon Creek Clean Up on April 30, 2016. *Photo: Jamie Stewart*
5. Volunteers from MOM's Organic Market, SofterWare, WVWA Trail Stewards and staff removed invasive vines to protect a grove of 100-year-old Ash trees on December 9, 2016. *Photo: Keith Bance*
6. 46th Annual Wissahickon Creek Clean Up on April 30, 2016. *Photo: Jamie Stewart*
7. Young stewards participating in the Creek Clean Up (year unknown)
8. Protecting a newly planted tree at the Byrne Family Preserve on April 10, 2016. *Photo: David Freed*





1976 marks the year that WVWA began using the Four Mills Barn as offices. Today, the Barn has been renovated inside and features rain gardens and a pervious parking lot. *Photo: Jamie Stewart*



Children cross the former bridge at Four Mills Barn during the 1970s. A group crosses the bridge at Four Mills Barn during the 2016 Maple Sugaring Festival. *Photo: David Freed*



THEN & NOW



Looking up towards a canopy of Tulip Poplars in Penllyn Natural Area in 1971 and in Camp Woods in 2014. *Photo: Jamie Stewart*



The Evans-Mumbower Mill was acquired by WVWA in 1987 and was in a state of disrepair (photo, late 1980s). It has undergone extensive renovations including a new roof, an addition and a complete remodel of the inside to make it operational once again. *Photo: Jamie Stewart*



Information and membership table at the biennial Conservation Fair held in the early-1970s, and at the Creek in Crisis Conference in 2015. *Photo: Jamie Stewart*



Students participate in an education program (year unknown) and attendees learn about maple sugar in the same snowy courtyard in 2010. *Photo: Jamie Stewart*

UNDER CONSTRUCTION

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS



HAWKS NEST 1

With funding from REI and Merck & Co., Inc. and the help of local Eagle Scout Dominick Ortolani, WVWA is constructing the Hawk's Nest viewing platform at Dodsworth Run Preserve. This elevated platform, built to resemble a nest, will allow trail users to get a view of the vernal pool area and the Preserve from a "bird's" perspective. WVWA will complete the project by adding a boardwalk to allow for access and educational signs describing the vernal area.

PISZEK PRESERVE EXPANSION & TRAILS 2

WVWA preserved more land in the Watershed! An additional 3 acres were added to the Piszek Preserve making the total property 36 acres. You may have noticed the new road signage and parking lot. Additional trails through the Preserve are currently being built. Stay tuned for updates!

WISSAHICKON CLEAN WATER PARTNERSHIP

The Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership (formerly known as the TMDL Alternative) had its first official meeting and started the ball rolling towards the production of a Water Quality Improvement Plan for the Wissahickon Creek. Two delegates from each of the 13 municipalities and four wastewater treatment plants participating in the Partnership have been appointed to a Management Committee to oversee this process. WVWA will lead the outreach and education effort to the communities and municipalities over the next two years.

CHIMNEY SWIFT TOWER 3

Chimney Swifts are one of the most distinctive bird species in North America and some of nature's most effective pest controllers – one bird can devour more than 1,000 mosquitoes in a single day. In the last few decades, Chimney Swift populations have dropped precipitously, largely due to habitat loss. WVWA is working to create habitat in the form of nesting and roosting towers built to mimic chimneys - the first is currently being built at Crossways Preserve and will be completed in March of 2017.

CROSSWAYS PLAN

In 2016, WVWA completed the first Conservation Management Plan for Crossways Preserve, a document that will guide staff in the management of the preserve over a 10-year period, with the goal of increasing its biodiversity and value for wildlife. Implementation began this year with species monitoring, native plant installation, and invasive species removal. WVWA is excited to continue with habitat improvements in 2017.

NESTBOX PROJECT

For the second year, staff and volunteers monitored a nestbox trail as part of our Nestbox Project. A total of 47 Carolina Chickadee, House Wren, Tree Swallow, and Eastern Bluebird nestlings fledged from just eight boxes. Data was contributed to Cornell's Nestwatch Program and each nestling was banded so that we can gather information on local bird populations. In 2017, we'll be expanding the program by putting up American Kestrel and Eastern Screech Owl boxes.

OUR MISSION

The Wissahickon Valley Watershed Association's mission is to protect the quality and beauty of the Wissahickon Creek and to enhance life in the watershed by:

- Protecting and enhancing open space
- Promoting awareness of environmental issues through education
- Promoting wise land use
- Preserving historic sites significant to the history of the Wissahickon

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Richard Collier, Jr., *Chair*
 Cary B. Fleisher, *Vice-Chair*
 William F. MacDonald, Jr., *Treasurer*
 Cheryl L. Young, *Secretary*

Scott T. Bartow	Neil S. Brown
Mary S. Claghorn	Duane D. Deaner
Ellen T. Duncan	Susan M. Floyd
Daniel F. Hayes	Sara Hertz
Nancy B. Kreider	Mark P. Letner
George M. Riter	John Tierney
Neil Trueblood	

ADVISORY COUNCIL

Philip R. Albright
 George C. Corson, Jr.
 Thomas Dolan IV
 Saly A. Glassman
 Dolores E. Hillas
 Timothy P. Hughes
 Hugh G. Moulton
 Hugh A. A. Sargent
 John Shober
 Edwin R. Steel



FOLLOW US



[FACEBOOK.COM/WVWA19002](https://www.facebook.com/WVWA19002)



[@WVWA19002](https://twitter.com/WVWA19002)



[@WISSAHICKONWATERSHED](https://www.instagram.com/WISSAHICKONWATERSHED)

SHARE YOUR ADVENTURES!

#wissahickonwatershed
 #greenribbontrail
 #wvwa



Printed on
recycled paper

**EDITORIAL
STAFF**

Executive Editor:
Gail Farmer

Associate Editors:
Lisa Hansell
Madalyn Neff

Graphic Designer:
Leigh Friedman

VOLUNTEERS RECOGNIZED

Members, volunteers and friends joined together in Ambler for WVWA's Annual Meeting and 3rd Annual Volunteer Recognition to celebrate its legacy of service and community commitment to the Wissahickon watershed.



Left to right, awardees in attendance: Tony Repic of SofterWare Inc., Keith Bance, Mark Smith, Richard Collier, Jr., Nancy Smith, Edwin R. Steel

**THE 2016 AWARD
RECIPIENTS ARE:**

FRIEND OF THE WATERSHED

Catherine Ruhling

SWEEP AWARD

Nancy Smith

GREEN RIBBON AWARD

Keith Bance, Stan Barnett,
R. Fielding Lewis, Mark Smith

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE

Richard Collier, Jr.

LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT

Edwin R. Steel

TRAILBLAZER AWARD

SofterWare, Inc.

CONSERVATION CHAMPION

Wissahickon Clean Water Partnership

Donald Berger,
Springfield Township Manager

Michael LeFevre,
Abington Township Manger