

ANNUAL REPORT 2018

CLEAN, SAFE WATER FOR ALL



Raritan
Headwaters

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Raritan Headwaters Becomes an Accredited Land Trust

2018 was a banner year for Raritan Headwaters - it was the year we became an accredited land trust. We proudly waved our banners at the October National Land Conservation Rally in Pittsburgh among the newest group of land trusts to be accredited across the United States.

YOU MAY WONDER: WHAT EXACTLY IS A LAND TRUST AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO BE ACCREDITED?

Land trusts are nonprofits that acquire land and easements for conservation purposes. Raritan Headwaters is a land trust with a specialized mission: we have a legacy of preserving and stewarding lands that protect our region's rivers, streams and underground water resources. It's a mark of distinction and a national recognition of our commitment to professional excellence.

For 60 years, Raritan Headwaters has served as watershed watchdog for a 470-square-mile region in Hunterdon, Somerset and Morris counties. We have been preserving land since 1967. RHA owns and manages 11 wildlife preserves, holds 33 conservation easements and in partnership with others, we have preserved over 7,000 acres of critical open space. The accreditation seal we now display demonstrates our commitment to permanent land conservation in the North Branch and South Branch Raritan River watershed.

Thank you to all the partners, friends and donors who throughout the years chose RHA to collaborate and preserve precious lands that keep our watershed community healthy and a wonderful place to live, work and play. Through our land preservation, science, education and advocacy programs, RHA will continue to work to protect clean water for everyone within our reach.



Cindy Ehrenclou, Executive Director



RHA receives accreditation
at Land Rally

“Our Mission is to protect water in our rivers, our streams and our homes.”



Open Paddle



Annual Stream Cleanup



Pingry School Volunteers



2018 Sustainable Raritan Award

A Family Gift Breathes New Life into Fairview Farm

Thanks to a generous gift from the children of longtime friend and former trustee, Betty Merck, RHA's Fairview Farm campus in Bedminster is better equipped to carry out our mission of protecting clean water.

The Merck family's donation funded the creation of state-of-the-art spaces and the opportunity to improve access for the public to encourage exploration, learning and engagement. All was accomplished while maintaining the farm's historic charm, integrity and character.

The Brick Cottage, now officially named the Betty Merck Science & Education Center, has been transformed into a multipurpose space ready to welcome visitors of all ages with a media-equipped meeting room and an Exploration Room, a cheerful space where children can interact, learn and create nature-related arts and crafts.





The **Lab House**, also known as the old milk house - where milk was once cooled and stored before going to market - has been converted to a temperature-controlled, fully equipped science laboratory with microscopes and other water testing equipment. After completion, the Lab House was quickly put to use for researching microplastics in our local rivers and streams.



Across the parking lot is the **Raritan Room**, a nature interpretive center and classroom. This big, bright, open indoor/outdoor space is used for school field trips, summer camps and river-friendly adult workshops. It can be opened to the fresh air on warm sunny days and protected from the elements during rain and cold weather.



Fairview Farm Campus improvements have enabled RHA to welcome the entire community - school children, scouts, corporate partners, service clubs, family and friends to our beloved 170 acre wildlife preserve.

VISIT US! EXPLORE THE BIRD AND BUTTERFLY GARDEN, HIKE OUR TRAILS, ENJOY BIRDWATCHING, OR STOP BY THE BETTY MERCK SCIENCE & EDUCATION CENTER TO HAVE A LOOK. RHA IS PROUD OF ALL THE CHANGES ON FAIRVIEW FARM THAT HAVE BEEN ACCOMPLISHED IN AN ENVIRONMENTALLY-FRIENDLY WAY, MAINTAINING THE BUILDINGS' ORIGINAL FOOTPRINTS AND SERVING AS A MODEL OF SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE COMMUNITY.

Educating Children and Connecting to Urban Areas

Decades from now, who will be the watchdogs of the Raritan River and its watershed communities? Who will care enough about our drinking water and wildlife habitats to fight for their protection?

We rely on today's children to be tomorrow's environmental stewards. That is why RHA's Education Team has worked hard to create a curriculum that is exciting, engaging and hopefully creates transformative experiences for kids of all ages - turning them on to the wonders of nature and wildlife!

Because of generous support from our friends and donors, we have been able to expand our education curriculum's scope, depth and impact. In 2018, more than 15,000 children participated in a school or scout program, field trip, nature camp and/or one of the many RHA activities and family events hosted throughout the year!



15,000+

CHILDREN PARTICIPATED
IN RHA EDUCATION
PROGRAMS

LIFECAMP

For the past five summers, we've taken our WaterWays program to Greater Newark LifeCamp located on the Lamington River in Pottersville. LifeCamp is a non-profit organization offering an enriching summer day camp experience for 300 Newark area youths.

During the six-week program, kids ages 6-13 put on water shoes, look for crayfish under rocks, and use nets to scoop up other tiny creatures, including insect larvae, fish, and snails. They learn how certain "benthic macroinvertebrates" are found only in streams with clean water. The kids find out about the sources of their drinking water, how their own behavior affects the quality of their water, and what they can do to help protect natural resources in their own communities. It is inspiring to watch the kids squirm at first sight of these little creatures, then embrace them as they start to understand how the smallest of things, including themselves, play an important part in the bigger world.

In 2018, The Bogs' 2% for Outdoor Education Grant was awarded to Raritan Headwaters to support our partnership with LifeCamp. The **\$5,000** grant award supported our efforts to expand our reach and continue to inspire kids of all ages and backgrounds to become tomorrow's nature enthusiasts.



RIVERFEST

RiverFest is our new, interactive assembly program that increases our ability to expand our reach to thousands of school children. It can take place any time of year, indoors or outdoors, for groups of up to 200 students. RHA educators - along with RHA-trained teachers, parents and community members - set up multiple stations with hands-on activities that teach ecology, chemistry, math, physics and other STEM disciplines - all relating to water. There's a macroinvertebrate station, where kids can examine tiny critters in stream water. At the bubble station, students learn about the geometry of soap bubbles. At "Incredible Journey," they pretend to be a water droplet as it completes its water cycle journey. All activities correspond to **Next Generation Science Standards** and by participating in a RiverFest event, the school receives credit for our River-Friendly School Program, as well as the NJ Eco-Schools and Sustainable Jersey for Schools programs.

In 2018, RHA expanded its reach by **bringing RiverFest to Irvington**. Irvington is New Jersey's eighth most densely populated town, more overcrowded than neighboring Newark. The partnership with Raritan Headwaters and Irvington School District provides much-needed environmental programming at the elementary school level. In the spring of 2019, RHA will welcome Irvington public school students to Fairview Farm to experience our outdoor classroom.



Science + Advocacy = Water Protection

At Raritan Headwaters, we're experts in the science of water and how to protect it. We don't guess or assume. We base our actions and recommendations on the data we've collected.

MICROPLASTICS STUDY

Microplastics in the environment are impacting aquatic life and human health. These tiny bits of plastic can be mistaken for food by small fish and other organisms, which in turn are eaten by larger creatures and become part of the food web. Microplastics are also affecting our drinking water quality - in our homes, our schools and workplaces.



We could not have done this ground-breaking study without our state-of-the-art lab house made possible by the Merck family and equipment funded by the John Ben Snow Memorial Trust!

Dr. Kristi MacDonald, RHA's director of science, launched a pilot study in the South Branch of the Raritan River to study the potential sources of microplastics in the river. We worked with environmental science interns from Rutgers University to sample water at 10 locations upstream and downstream of wastewater treatment plants. Samples were brought back to the new Lab House at Fairview Farm for analysis - microplastics were present at all 10 sampling sites.

WHAT IS RHA DOING ABOUT IT?

Dr. Kristi McDonald is taking the lead to develop strategies to work with wastewater treatment plants to minimize the introduction of microplastics into our waterways and to educate the public on how to decrease their use of plastics. Secondly, policy director Bill Kiber is working in Trenton to support legislation that will help us reduce plastic use statewide. He is talking to legislators and helping them translate the plastic pollution issue to their constituents.

WHAT CAN YOU DO ABOUT IT?

WE HUMANS HAVE CREATED THE PROBLEM - SO HOW CAN WE HELP TURN THIS AROUND?

Here are a few simple things each of us can do every day to reduce microplastics in the environment:

- Use reusable grocery bags
- Say “no thank you” to plastic straws
- Avoid plastic bottles - carry a reusable container
- Read labels - be mindful of the materials in your clothes, soaps, toothpaste, and cleaning products
- Participate in RHA’s Annual Stream Cleanup



EVERYONE CAN MAKE A POSITIVE IMPACT AT OUR ANNUAL STREAM CLEANUP!

In April 2018, over 1,600 volunteers removed 14 tons of trash from stream banks within the watershed, including 7,643 plastic bottles and 2,688 plastic bags. Not only does the cleanup beautify the areas around rivers and streams, it improves stream health by preventing litter from washing into the river and becoming a hazard to fish and wildlife. Every plastic item picked up is one less that will degrade into microplastic fragments.



IN 2018, RHA’S STREAM MONITORING PROGRAM CELEBRATED ITS 25TH ANNIVERSARY! OVER THE YEARS WE HAVE TRAINED HUNDREDS OF CITIZEN SCIENTISTS TO CONDUCT BIOLOGICAL AND CHEMICAL MONITORING OF SURFACE WATER IN EACH OF OUR 52 SUBWATERSHEDS, OVER 65 SITES, ASSESSING 1,404 MILES OF STREAMS.

STREAM MONITORING IN THE UPPER RARITAN WATERSHED - OUR 2018 REPORT CARD

So what is the state of our watershed? Between A-F, what grade do we give our streams? Sixteen percent of local streams scored “excellent” in water quality, 56 percent scored “good,” 25 percent scored “fair,” and 3 percent scored “poor.” Streams with excellent or good ratings are acceptable for aquatic life, under the federal Clean Water Act, while streams with “fair” or “poor” ratings are not acceptable.

Our goal is to receive an ‘A’ for our entire watershed! RHA advocates that stream health can be improved through better stormwater management, green infrastructure, stream bank restorations, river-friendly best management practices and the protection of forests and wetlands.



If You Don't Test the Health of Your Drinking Water - Who Will?

Raritan Headwaters makes it easy and affordable to test the health of your drinking water.

For over 30 years, we have partnered with municipalities to offer residents the opportunity to test their water. We have 27 partner municipalities in our Community Well Test Program, including four that joined in 2018: Hillsborough, Bridgewater, Frenchtown, and Peapack-Gladstone. If you miss your community's testing dates, well testing is available year-round through our offices in Flemington and Bedminster.

In 2018, over 6,300 individual water samples were analyzed through our program. The most common tests were for coliform bacteria and nitrates, but we also tested 491 homes for lead and 534 wells for arsenic.

With over 64 inches of precipitation, 2018 was New Jersey's wettest year on record. Stormwater recharged our aquifers, carrying pollutants that entered wells. Our data demonstrated a dramatic spike in tests that failed for E. coli and coliform bacteria.

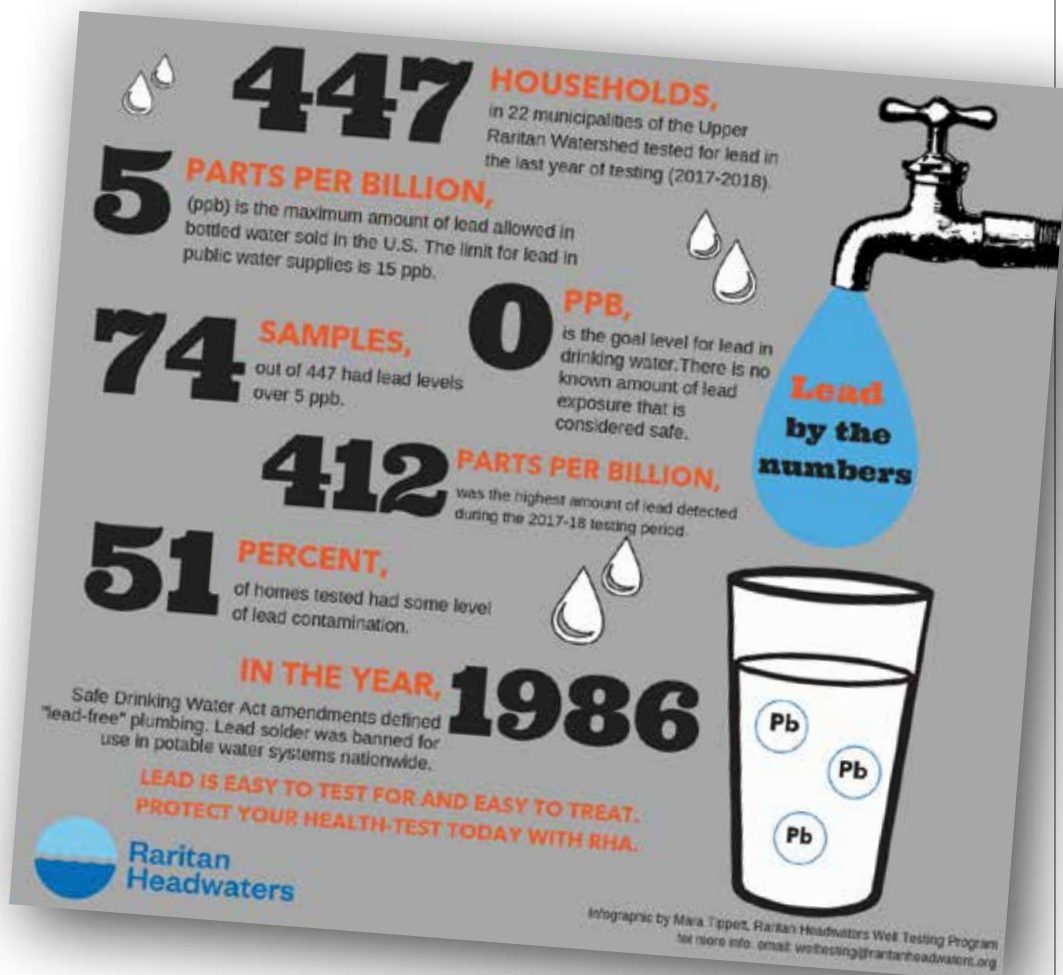
Due to concern for the abundant use of road salt throughout the region, we tested 400 wells for conductivity and salinity. Our tests indicate an increase in Chloride levels. Chloride is corrosive and may exacerbate lead issues in homes or mobilize other naturally-occurring groundwater contaminants like uranium and arsenic.

Awareness is the first step towards improved public health. If contamination is discovered in your drinking water, RHA can lead you to solutions to restore your clean water - and peace of mind!





GET THE LEAD OUT!





2121 Club Grants Wishes for a Mobile Classroom and New Website

Born out of need, creativity and commitment to RHA, the 2121 Club is the brainchild of long-time supporter, friend and cheerleader, Gates Hawn. When RHA came to Gates with a challenge of how to raise funds for an important and slightly impossible dream wish list, Gates jumped into action, creating a group of super supporters and naming the group after Fairview Farm's address - 2121 Larger Cross Road.

Gates and his wife, Mary Ellen, led the charge and invited other generous supporters to join them. What followed overwhelmed us. So many enthusiastic and gracious donations! The 2121 Club is certainly a special group of wish-granters and we are grateful for each and every member.

Last year, the 2121 Club granted two big wishes. For some time, RHA had been in need of a fresh new website which we are happy to say is up and running, easy to navigate, and chock full of usable information! Just as exciting, a fully-equipped mobile classroom has hit the road, expanding RHA's education and outreach programs to children and communities that have historically been beyond our capacity. Keep your eyes peeled for the big blue van!

Wishes do come true! Many thanks to the amazing 2121 Club for all you do!

It's no secret that Raritan Headwaters is a special organization with a special mission. When our family learned about Cindy Ehrenclou's desire to take RHA's innovative programs to children in urban areas we jumped at the chance to support the initiative. We have a 15 year relationship with the Irvington School District, and this was truly a great partnership opportunity!"

- Jim Petrucci | 2121 Club Donor



If you are interested in becoming a member of the 2121 Club, please contact Beth McConnell at BMcConnell@raritanheadwaters.org.



FOX HILL PRESERVE, TEWKSBURY - A LINK IN A 10-MILE TRAIL

We are working with colleagues to fulfill a vision for a "10-Mile Trail" circling the village of Oldwick. Hiking and equestrian trails will wind through the countryside, connecting preserved parks and farms for citizens to enjoy.

RHA is proud to be owner of one link in this collaborative conservation effort. Our 65-acre Fox Hill Preserve was created in three parts -- first by the donation of 45 acres in 1974 by Mrs. Esther Johnson who strongly believed in the values of preservation and stewardship. She understood that donating the land to us was the best way to ensure that the property would remain in a natural condition, enhancing the health of the countryside and the entire community.

Our thanks to the Tewksbury Land Trust, New Jersey Conservation Foundation, Tewksbury Township and Hunterdon County for their partnership and of course, the families who had the foresight and conviction to protect the land and resources that define Tewksbury's bucolic landscapes.

Volunteers Help Steward our Preserved Lands

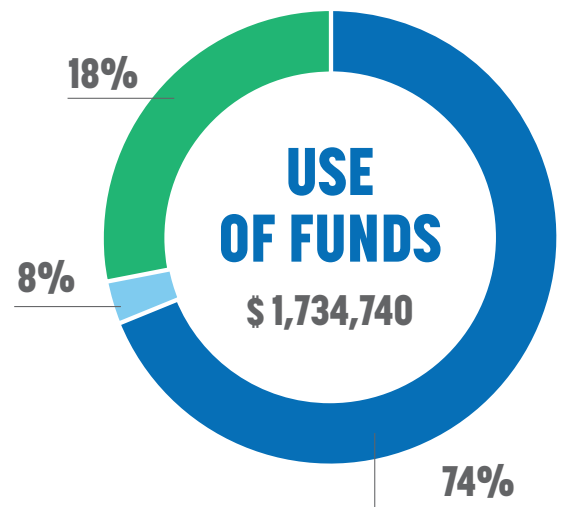
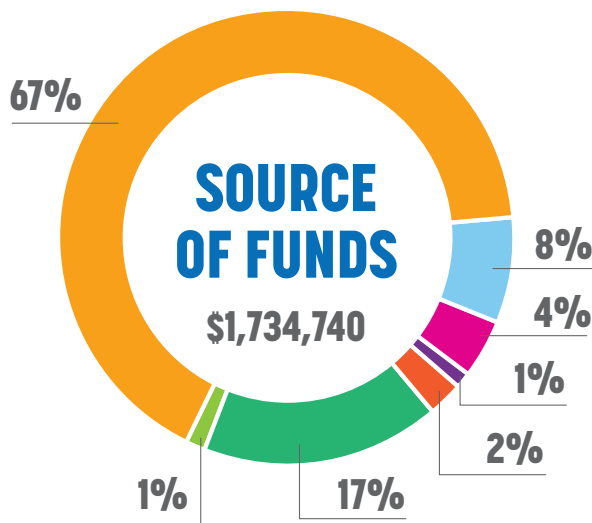
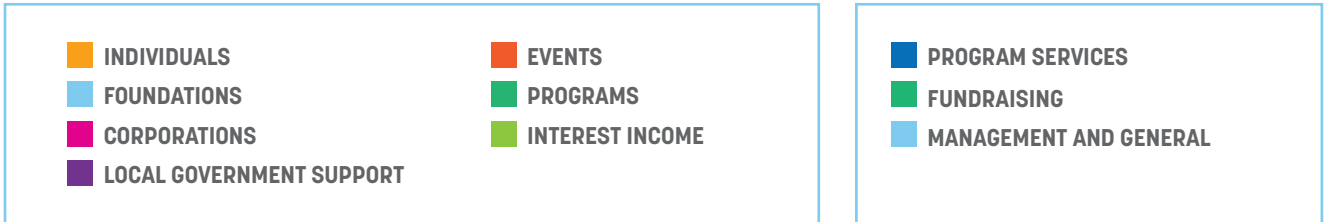
In 2018, 720 corporate partners, scouts, students and individual citizens worked to restore and improve the natural habitats on our wildlife preserves. These dedicated volunteers planted 1,215 native trees and shrubs, cleared trails, removed acres of invasive plants, and carried out important projects to enhance public access.

THANK YOU! WE CAN'T DO IT ALONE!



Fiscal Year October 1, 2017 - September 30, 2018

Raritan Headwaters Association is a non-profit 501 (c)(3) conservation organization which operates on a fiscal year that begins on October 1st and ends September 30th. Our accounts are audited on an annual basis by the accounting firm of James M. Wood, CPA. Presented are two graphs depicting the Functional Expenses and Support Revenue of the Association for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2018.



Note: Source of Funds from Individuals - In addition to contributions received from individuals over the 2018 fiscal year, RHA's operating budget is supported by a board-approved draw from an endowment established to support our science, education, advocacy, land preservation and stewardship programs.

RHA by the Numbers 2018 - Our Donor Impact



"We are grateful to the following individuals, families, foundations, organizations, municipalities and businesses that made gifts to Raritan Headwaters Association from October 1, 2017 through September 30, 2018. This generous support over the past year made our important conservation work possible. We also want to thank the many volunteers who lend their time and talent year-round." – Stew Brunhouse, RHA Board President

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IN-KIND

Thank you to the following donors and friends who graciously donated their time, talent and treasures to benefit and support RHA.

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2019 PROGRAM CALENDAR

Low-key programs designed to get you outside and enjoying the watershed! You can find the complete list of events and registration information at www.raritanheadwaters.org/calendar

FEBRUARY

2/10 - WINTER HIKE



MARCH

3/8 - WOODCOCK WATCH



3/14 - RAIN BARREL WORKSHOP



3/22 - SPRING FAMILY CAMPFIRE



APRIL

4/13 - STREAM CLEAN UP



4/17 - STREAMSIDE MEDITATION



MAY

5/5 - OPEN PADDLE



JUNE

6/1 - RIDE FOR THE RIVER
MOTORCYCLE POKER RUN



6/21 - SUMMER FAMILY CAMPFIRE



6/24-27 - FIREFLY VIEWING NIGHTS AT
FAIRVIEW FARM



JULY

7/14 - MEET THE RIVER



7/27 - RARITAN RIVER SOJOURN



AUGUST

8/4 - OPEN PADDLE



8/17-18 - RARITAN RIVER SOJOURN



SEPTEMBER

9/8 - GRAN FONDO



9/7-8 - RARITAN RIVER SOJOURN



9/15 - OPEN PADDLE



9/21 - 60TH CELEBRATION AT FAIRVIEW FARM



OCTOBER

10/13 - COUNTRY FAIR



NOVEMBER

11/10 - LANTERN WALK



DECEMBER

12/6 - WINTER FAMILY CAMPFIRE





**Raritan
Headwaters**

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Trout by Wende Dasteel

The Year of the Brook Trout - 2019 RHA Celebrates 60 Years!

Seeing native brook trout in our headwater streams is a reason to celebrate! Why? Because native trout thrive in clean, cold water and for 60 years RHA has been working to protect our water resources, restore forests and preserve open space in the watershed. This work is key, not only to supporting this beautiful species, but to ensure safe, clean water for all.

**SAVE THE DATE! Raritan Headwaters' 60th Anniversary Celebration
September 21, 2019, Fairview Farm**