



Musconetcong River News

Winter/Spring 2023

Published quarterly by The Musconetcong Watershed Association

Asbury, New Jersey

President's Message

This special issue of the *Musconetcong River News* highlights the impactful work of the Musconetcong Watershed Association. From road salt monitoring and PFAS in Fish, to the continued restoration of the historic Asbury Mill and the creation of a new Musconetcong Island Park, MWA has been on the move, conserving our natural and cultural resources for current and future generations.

Building on a new 5-year Strategic Plan, MWA is focusing efforts on planning, education, advocacy and stewardship to conserve the Musconetcong Watershed and its waters for people and nature. With strategies and tactics that will be measured and accomplished, we're excited for the future.

If you're an MWA member, you can be especially proud that the Board, staff and volunteers have been incredibly busy, from water quality monitoring to workshops and trainings. If you're not a member, read more about what we do, and consider joining us!

With Spring right around the corner, we look back on several of the great events of the past few months. And, we eagerly anticipate future events. Check out our Calendar of Events and help us build a better future.

Enjoy reading this newsletter, and feel free to share happenings in your part of the watershed.

Yours in conservation,

Richard Cotton
MWA President

MWA Launches New Series to Help You Protect Our Watershed

By Ryan Jiorle, Community Engagement Coordinator

February 16 was the maiden voyage for the MWA's "Watershed Allies Training" series, a new initiative designed to give participants skills and direction for tackling environmental issues in their community.

MWA Executive Director Tom Dallesio led our first training on "Engaging Your Municipality on Development Decisions," to help residents get involved at the right time and talking to the right people if they're concerned about development in their towns.

Whereas our River Talk series is primarily a "presenter-audience" format designed to give people interesting information related to the Musconetcong, the Watershed Allies Trainings is a "facilitator-participant" format. This means if you attend one of these trainings, you'll have a greater opportunity to ask questions, share your experiences, and leave with

applicable skills to take back to your own neighborhood.

Because of the highly interactive nature of these events, registration will be limited, but we'll record and post the sessions publicly so everyone has a chance to benefit from them afterward. A tentative schedule for the remaining 2023 Watershed Allies Trainings is below, with dates and topics subject to change:

- Thursday, May 11:
Making Your Public Comments Count
- Saturday, September 9:
DIY Septic Inspections
- Thursday, November 16:
Identifying and Reporting Environmental Hazards

If you have any questions or want to learn more about this new series, please contact Ryan Jiorle at ryan@musconetcong.org.

Thomas Kean Jr. Visits MWA

Congressman Thomas Kean Jr. paid the MWA a visit recently to hear about the work we're doing in the Musconetcong Watershed as well as the restoration of the historic Asbury Mill. We were also joined by Bethlehem Township Mayor Paul Muir, Franklin



Township committee member Bonnie Butler, and Paul Kenney, our liaison to the National Park Service. We're always grateful and excited when our elected officials take an interest in

supporting our mission of protecting and improving Musconetcong Watershed and its waters for people in nature. We look forward to many more collaborations in the future.

MUSCONETCONG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

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Creating Musconetcong Island Park

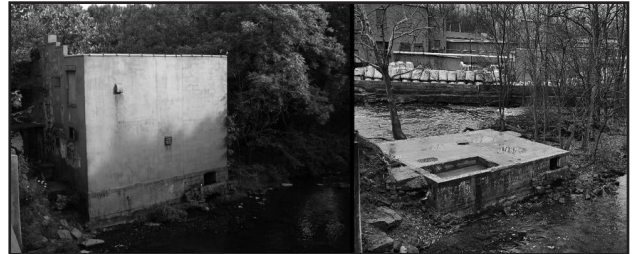
Astride the Old Main Street Bridge on Asbury-West Portal Road in Bethlehem Township, Hunterdon County, is a quarter acre island park in the Musconetcong River! The island contained a former mill building donated by Asbury Carbons to the Musconetcong Watershed Association in 1999. The area is a favorite spot for fishing, swimming and kayaking, and it is connected to the Asbury Historic District and Bethlehem Township by a sidewalk.

MWA has received funds from the NJ Green Acres Program, the National Park Foundation, and Coca Cola Foundation to remove this abandoned building to create a new park and allow the public access to the island for recreation.

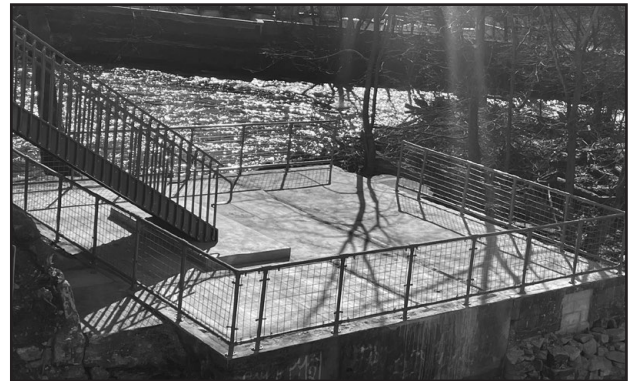
MWA was awarded a Green Acres grant in 2017 and secured matching funds in 2018 from the National Park Foundation as part of a special Wild & Scenic Rivers 50th Anniversary funding round, supported by the Coca Cola Foundation. In early 2018, MWA received permission from the NJ State Historic Preservation Council for the building's demolition, with a provision to photo document the building interior and

exterior, conduct an oral history project recording experiences of those who worked in the Laboratory and Graphite Mill, and install an interpretative sign sharing the history of the area. The demolition took place this past January and the park was constructed shortly thereafter.

An official opening will occur in the Spring. In the meantime, come enjoy our new park! 🎧



BEFORE: Existing Island Lab Building on the left, concrete platform that remained after building demolition on the right



AFTER: Stairs and platform of the new Musconetcong Island Park

Welcome, Steven and Craig!

Steven Gransky has joined MWA's team as the new Communications and Development Manger and Craig Fleming is our new Water Quality Field Specialist.

Born and raised in New Jersey, Steven left the state to serve five years in the US Army, spending time in South Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas and Hawaii. After his service he went on to pursue his education at Hawai'i Pacific University, graduating with a Bachelor of Science in Mass Communication in 2019. Steven served Hawai'i Pacific University's University Relations office for four

years as their Communication Project Manager, crafting digital and print communications based around university advancement and alumni relations.

Craig Fleming was an MWA intern who has seamlessly transitioned into this full-time position. He is a graduate of Centenary University with a degree in Environmental Science and a minor in Chemistry. Craig lives in Oxford and enjoys hiking and kayaking in the watershed. He's collecting informative data as well as coordinating our vast Riverwatchers volunteer base. 🎧

Developing NJ's First Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan

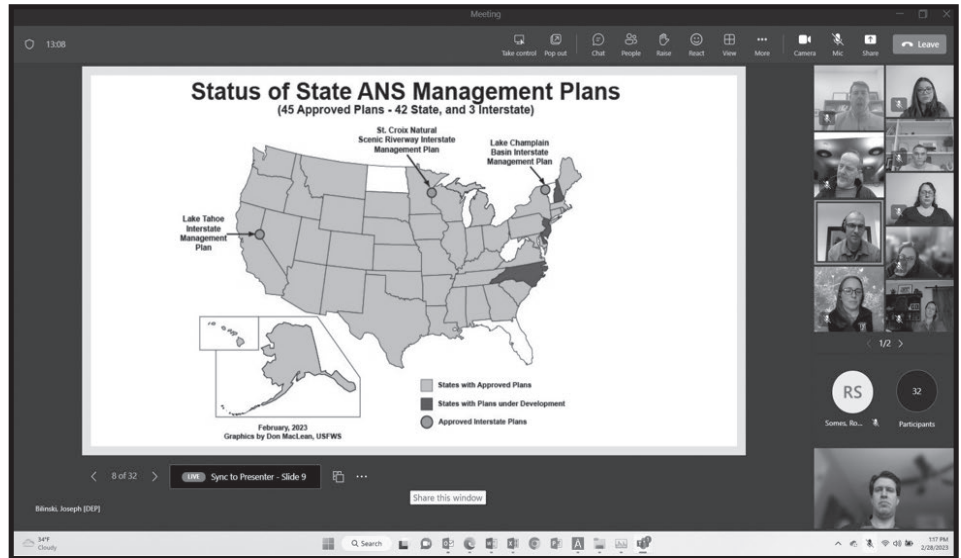
By Alan Hunt, Director of Policy and Grants

Back in 2018, when MWA first learned that the highly invasive New Zealand Mudsnail was in the Musconetcong River and threatened trout habitat, we learned that New Jersey was one of only five states that did not have a management plan for aquatic invasive species.

Why does a plan matter? Let's say we ask anglers to clean their waders, since fish gear seems to be the primary method it spreads in our river. But, let's say another organization says to clean your boat, because their river has more boating than fishing. Without a state-wide plan, or a larger, regional plan, messages to the public will be confusing, and hinder the control of an invasive species. No one organization can solve the problem, and coordination is needed.

An Invasive Species Plan can be funded by the federal government, and once a plan is in place, the State can receive funding for its implementation. In late 2019, we spoke with the NJDEP leadership about the need for a plan, and we co-wrote a letter requesting the plan's development with Trout Unlimited. Through our joint advocacy network, 39 organizations signed on to the letter.

Since then, MWA has monitored conversations at NJDEP to ensure the planning effort was moving forward. In 2022, NJDEP applied for funding to develop an Aquatic Invasive Species Plan. Part of the creation of an Aquatic Invasive Species management plan is to create decontamination protocols. MWA is engaged with a workgroup that is doing just that. MWA has contributed the section on New Zealand mudsnails, since they have a more rigorous decontamination protocol than most invaders, it is of the utmost importance that the correct information be included. Once the funding was received, NJDEP hired a contractor to develop the plan. In February 2023, the first Aquatic Invasive Species Management Plan Work Group meeting was held, and the right-handed mudsnail was proposed as one of the top 20 species to control. The plan could be completed as soon as the year's end.



Slide from the first Aquatic Invasive Species Management Work Group showing that NJs now has a plan under development.

What could the plan do to benefit the Musconetcong River watershed? States with their own plans developed educational materials and signage, launched coordinated communications campaigns, built boat and gear cleaning areas, funded research for biological controls through their land grant universities, and requested federal funds for eradication. Some States and major river basins, like the Chesapeake

Bay Watershed, receive Congressional funding for managing and eradicating aquatic invasive species.

It's more resources that we could bring to solve the problem, but through monitoring, policy research, relationship cultivation, and some smart advocacy, a small watershed association like ours was able to work with partners to catalyze a much bigger management effort. 🎧

MWA Executive Director Thanks Hunterdon County Board of Commissioners for Grant



MWA Executive Director Tom Dallesio spoke before the Hunterdon County Board of Commissioners on February 7th to thank them for their County History Partnership Program (CHPP) grant. This will enable the MWA to produce "River Voices," an oral history project of individuals with historic and cultural connections to the Musconetcong River. This is a new program that aims to broaden and diversify the audience for New Jersey history.

Stay tuned for updates as this project moves forward! 🎧

Fishing for the “Forever Chemical”

By Christa Reeves, Water Quality Program Coordinator

In the world of water quality, you can't help but notice all the talk and attention that PFAS has been getting. And for good reason. Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS/PFOS are a group of chemicals estimated to be in tens of thousands of manufactured compounds. Due to their structure, they are excellent at repelling oil and water and because of a strong carbon-fluorine bond, they are extremely durable, hence the term “forever.”

These unique properties are the basis for commercial and industrial uses, including food production, and from there they make their way into our waterways. They might as well be called the “everywhere chemical.” They can be found in almost all American's blood and from the testing of umbilical cord blood and breast milk, this indicates that exposure begins before birth. Not only are they everywhere and persistent in the environment, but they bioaccumulate or, builds up, in tissue. Not just our tissue, but the tissue of the animals we eat, like fish.

Like microplastics last year and bisphenol A (BPA) the year before that, the issue

seems to be that they interfere with our hormones resulting in endocrine disruption. Research links PFAS to health problems including reproductive problems, low birthweight, thyroid issues, kidney and testicular cancers and diminished immune function. Those Teflon, non-stick pans for your eggs aren't seeming so worth it now.

There has been much focus on PFAS in drinking water due to several lawsuits filed by those living near disposal sites or manufacturing facilities, but that is only part of the story. New research shows that “a single serving of freshwater fish per year with the median level of PFAS as detected by the U.S. EPA monitoring programs translates into a significant increase of PFOS levels in blood serum.” (Barbo et al., 2023). Or another way to look at it is, one fish serving can be equivalent to drinking contaminated water for a month. A study of 500 anglers in France found blood serum levels in the 75th and 95th percentile compared to the general population (Denys et al., 2014). So, how can you know if this is an issue in your area? An interactive map has been compiled by the Environmental Working

Group and can be found at www.ewr.org. It lists the region, fish species, and levels of each PFAS compound found in the fish tissue. While it is not comprehensive to every waterbody, it can give some insight into a regions level of contamination.

Beyond the issue with fish consumption, your drinking water must also be considered. For information on drinking water and contamination sites, nj.gov/dep/pfas, has many available resources. Testing for PFAS and its associated compounds is currently very expensive, \$300 per test and is required when and if you want to sell your home, under the NJ Private Well Testing Act. But the maps provided by these two websites can give you a pretty good idea of levels in your area. Most activated carbon filters have a high removal rate, around 99%, this includes the counter-top pitchers. Just be sure to read all the fine print when it lists its efficacy for contaminants removed. While the utility authorities and agencies make determinations and limitations for these chemicals in their slow and steady way, you can stay informed and keep your family safe. 🍷

Volunteer Spotlight

MWA is a small organization that gets a lot done, and our volunteers are a huge reason for this. Whether through environmental stewardship, education, or fundraising, nearly all of our programs and projects benefit from volunteer support.

Liz Dancer is one of our riverwatchers and participates in ongoing projects such as macroinvertebrate sampling and road salt monitoring.

Tell us about your background:

I live in the Finesville, but I grew up in Southern NJ. I went to Del Val University and got my Bachelor of Science in Animal Biotechnology and Conservation/Conservation Wildlife Management. I spent the next couple years doing field jobs all over the US, such as wetland vegetation surveys and studies in egret colonies. I then started graduate school at Stockton University and while doing that I started working at



Liz Dancer

Davey Resource Group (previously Amy S. Greene Environmental) in November 2015. I've been there ever since and I am currently Senior Environmental Scientist. My work involves delineations, land use permitting, habitat assessment, and mitigation monitoring.

What brought you to volunteering for MWA?

I have always volunteered to meet like-minded people that care about natural

resources in the area. Living in Finesville, the Musconetcong River is virtually in my backyard, and I met Christa Reeves during a freshwater Mussel Group Training this past summer and she set me up as a Riverwatcher. With MWA it works out really well that they have connections established with my job, and it has been a great way to broaden my horizons and meet new people.

What advice would you give to somebody looking to volunteer?

Definitely do it! I've done so many different types of volunteering: grassland bird surveys, scuba diving cleanups, etc. and it has led to some tremendous experiences that have benefited me as a professional and as a person. Because of this, I am able to be involved in lots of projects at my office, and having supervisors come to me for input because of my experience has been very rewarding. 🍷

Road Salt Resilience

By Craig Fleming, Water Quality Field Specialist

Last winter the MWA launched a monitoring program aimed at better understanding the impacts of road salts in our watershed. With the help of our River Watchers, we were able to start to identify the relationship between chloride and conductivity. Conductivity is a measure of the water's ability to conduct an electrical current whereas chloride, a key component in road salt, possesses the ability to facilitate a current in water. We know that in high enough concentrations, chloride is toxic to aquatic vegetation and wildlife, so this relationship proves to be indispensable (USGS, 2019). However, for this technique to become a functioning method, a more robust data set must be accrued.

This need for data is why, this winter season, our River Watchers have set out again with conductivity meters and chloride strips in hand, to revisit those 25+ sampling locations from last season! This effort will prove itself fruitful when the MWA can, with its robust data sets, have meaningful discussions with stakeholders to change the current expectations surrounding road salt application and storage. The goal is to continue to support the watershed's inherent ability to recover from a disturbance, or in other words, the ecosystem's resilience. Without this, human induced salinization will continue to inhibit ecosystem functions (Hintz and Relyea 2019).

In the meantime, what can you do to help strengthen your ecosystem's resilience? This task can be easily achieved if you just remember the acronym S.A.L.T. By knowing which Salt to use, sodium chloride for temperatures above 15 or calcium chloride for temperatures as low as -20, you can reduce the amount of ineffective application. The Amount of salt applied does not translate directly to its effectiveness - meaning one 12-ounce coffee cup is enough salt for 10 sidewalk squares, anything more is wasteful. The Location of salt is important for both while it is in use and in storage; Salt should only be applied to essential walkways that have been cleared of any snow and Salt should be stored in a container that prevents it from leaching



Ray Merrell and Michael Wittig conducting sampling at Waterloo Valley Rd in our Hackettstown Region

into the environment - doing this not only reduces the amount of superfluous chloride exposure but also saves money! Last, but not least, Time is knowing when to apply road salts. Never apply road salt when it is raining or if rain is in the immediate forecast because all it will do is wash the salt right into the storm drain and out to the nearest waterway.

The toolbelt for smart salt skills doesn't just stop at S.A.L.T. There are a variety of other techniques one can put in place to reduce cold-temperature salt use. A great pre-treatment method involves creating a brine solution from roughly 2.5 lbs of salt per one gallon of water, mix until all of the salt has dissolved, and apply to walkways with a watering can. A useful post-application tool would be to sweep up any excess salt crystals if you've accidentally oversalted, and save them for the next time they'll be needed. Sand is a tool that can be used to combat one of the myths surrounding salt application. It is often misconstrued that the more physical salt crystals there are, the greater traction one has; however, this is not the truth. Instead, consider using sand as an alternative for more traction.

If citizens put these previously mentioned tools into place, alongside the MWA's road salt monitoring efforts, together we can ensure the resilience of our ecosystem and with it, the biodiversity of its flora and fauna we've come to cherish. 🌱

Join the Annual River Clean-up—Our Largest Event of the Year!

The MWA is hosting its annual River Clean-up Saturday, April 15th, at 9:00a.m., at various locations throughout the watershed. With nearly 20 clean-up sites, you can find the place that's most convenient for you! The MWA provides the bags and gloves, as well as a small thank-you gift while supplies last, so you just need to sign up and show up ready to serve, and we take care of the rest.

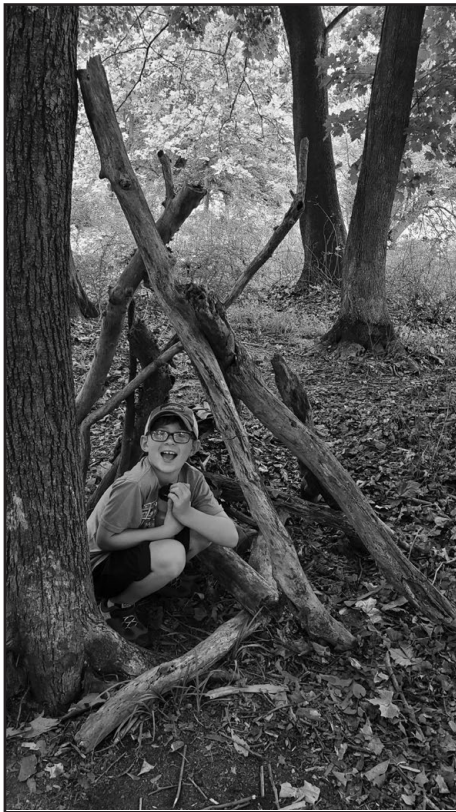
When you sign up, you'll notice a question asking if you'd like to tally all of the trash you collect—don't worry, it's totally voluntary, since this is more of a commitment than grabbing trash and dropping it in a bag. However, for all who are willing, this action will help us better understand what specific forms of litter are most prevalent in our watershed, which could guide future outreach and potential solutions. After all, despite the hundreds of volunteers who assist with this event year in, year out, there's still always more litter. Although we need to continue this effort, we also need to think about how to stop the flow of trash to prevent future impacts to our beloved river.

If you're interested in learning more about the clean-up, head to <https://www.musconetcong.org/river-cleanups>, where you'll also find a link to sign up. If you plan to sign up a group of 10 or more people—or if you have other questions—please contact Samuel Bauer at cleanup@musconetcong.org. We hope to see you out there! 🌱



Camp Musky—A Summertime MWA Tradition

The MWA's wildly popular summer camp program, Camp Musky, will be running Monday, July 10, through Friday, August 11. The first two weeks will be half-day camps, while the remaining three will be full-day camps. So, if you have children or grandchildren ages 5 – 12 and are looking to get them involved in an outdoor- and nature-centric experience, this camp should be at the top of your list. With over a mile of trails along the Musconetcong River and access to a shallow, slower-moving section of the river for water-based activities, campers get exposure to different ecosystems and activities that are both fun and educational. If you'd like more information, please visit <https://www.musconetcong.org/camp-musky> for details on dates, ages, pricing, and registration. If you still have questions, call our office at (908) 537-7060 or email Ryan Jiorle at ryan@musconetcong.org.



Celebrating Our Mill

Recently, MWA held the annual Asbury Mill Dinner to celebrate our past and look forward to our future. MWA President Richard Cotton welcomed MWA members, Mill supporters and guests gathered at Hawk Pointe Golf Club.

Keynote speaker Paul Muir talked about the importance of this historic structure and the incredibly value of the Musconetcong Watershed Association. As the Mayor of Bethlehem Township and Executive Director of the Red Mill Museum Village in Clinton, Muir congratulated MWA on its outstanding achievements and thanked the association for taking the lead in conserving this most important community asset.

Visual artist Gabriela Zeltvayova Lindemulder presented MWA with a

beautiful work depicting the Asbury Mill. MWA President Richard Cotton and MWA Executive Director Tom Dallessio accepted the gift with Mayor Muir and Gabby Lindemulder.

MWA would like to thank our Asbury Mill sponsors:

Platinum: Cotton Cattle, The Merrill G. and Erita E. Hastings Foundation, First Energy, Hawk Pointe Golf Club and The Lodge at River Valley

Gold: Cabbage Throw Farm, The Red Mill Village and Studebaker Holdings LTD.

Silver: Classic Ballroom Dance Studio, Dykstra Associates, Chuck Gullage, Hunter Research, Princeton Hydro and Thrivent.



Richard Cotton, Gabriela Zeltvayova Lindemulder, Tom Dallessio, Mayor Muir



Beautiful artwork gifted from Gabriela Zeltvayova Lindemulder



Mayor Muir speaking about the value of MWA

SAVE THESE DATES!

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) takes the health of our members, staff, and board seriously. We advocate for the health of the river because clean drinking water improves the health of communities. We have been closely monitoring the social distancing guidelines on group gatherings in New Jersey and have adjusted many of our events accordingly. When possible, we have offered online alternatives, but please check our website for the most up-to-date information.

For more event updates, you can subscribe to our Instream Updates by emailing info@musconetcong.org with "Subscribe" in the subject line. We hope you and your family stay healthy and safe.

Saturday, Apr 15 Musconetcong River Clean-up. 9:00 a.m. Dirty hands make a clean river! Each year, MWA and volunteers clean up at various locations along the Musconetcong River from Lake Hopatcong down to the Delaware River Confluence. So, if you live close to the Musconetcong River, you live close to one of our clean-up sites! We provide volunteers with supplies, including trash bags and gloves. Check our website to register!

Sunday, May 7 23rd Annual Run for the River. 10 am-12 pm. Start/Finish: Franklin Township Fire Department Station 3, 410 Old Main Street, Asbury, NJ 08802. Join us and get #MovingfortheMusky! Registration will open at 8:30 am, Walkers start at 9:45 am, Runners start at 10 am. Information on in person or virtual registrations are available on our website at musconetcong.org/run-for-the-river.

MWA's River Talk Series

Each month, MWA hosts an interactive workshop, highlighting different issues, causes, or interesting facts about the plants, wildlife, and towns in the Musconetcong Watershed. This is your chance to meet MWA Board and staff as well as our project partners and friends of the organization who are experts on an array of subjects!

If you'd like to be first to know about upcoming River Talk events, email "River Talk Info" to info@musconetcong.org to be added to our email list. We hope to see you soon!



We're Social! Follow us on:



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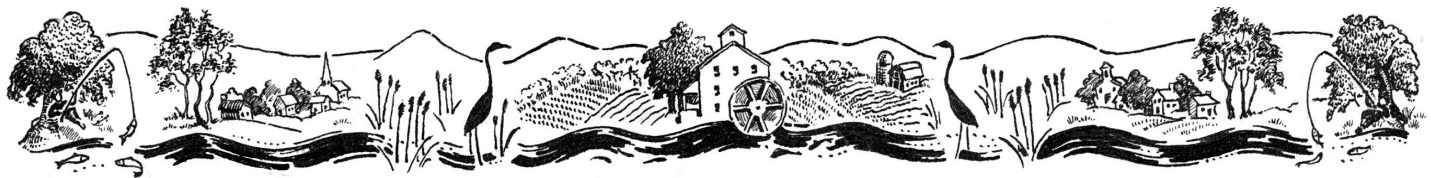


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Meetup
Musconetcong
River Area
Outdoor Activities

For more information or to register for any of these events, please email info@musconetcong.org or call (908) 537-7060, unless otherwise noted. MWA River Resource Center (RRC) is located at 10 Maple Avenue, Asbury, NJ.



The Musconetcong Watershed Association

The Musconetcong River Valley is rich in scenery, history, natural resources, and recreational opportunities. The river rises up in Lake Hopatcong - New Jersey's largest spring-fed lake - and is shadowed by 1,000-foot Highland ridges and slices through a deep, limestone river valley, flowing swiftly to the Delaware River. Along the way the "Musky" passes by state and county parks, bustling towns, vital industries, historic villages, and some of the most productive farmland in the state.

The Musconetcong Watershed Association (MWA) is a non-profit organization formed in 1992 to protect and enhance the Musconetcong River and its related resources through advocacy and environmental education programs, scientific research and river restoration projects. The MWA scope spans the 158 square-mile Musconetcong River Watershed, and includes portions of four counties, and all or portions of 26 municipalities. The Musconetcong River became part of the National Wild and Scenic River System in 2006.

MWA members are part of a network of individuals, families and organizations who care about the Musconetcong River and its watershed. They are kept informed about issues concerning the river and its related resources by receiving quarterly issues of the Musconetcong River News.

MWA Membership Application

Please enroll me as a member of the Musconetcong Watershed Association. I have enclosed a check payable to MWA for the amount indicated below:

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Student | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Sustainer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$30 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Steward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Champion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 + Life Member | |

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

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Mail to:
Musconetcong Watershed Association
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