



# Musconetcong River News

Summer 2022

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Asbury, New Jersey

## Musconetcong Receives Segment C Designation

By Karen Doerfer, Communications and Development Associate

Sixteen years ago, this year, the Musconetcong received National Wild and Scenic designation for the upper and middle sections of the River, from the Saxton Falls dam to US-46 in Hackettstown, and Kings Highway to the railroad culverts south of Bloomsbury. The Wild & Scenic Rivers Act safeguards the free-flowing character of rivers by precluding them from being dammed, while allowing for the public to enjoy them. It encourages river management that crosses political boundaries, and promotes public participation to develop goals for protecting streams. Through this designation, sections of the Musconetcong are protected in partnership with municipalities, peer organizations, and the National Park Service through the Musconetcong River Management Council, while respecting private property rights.

This 2006 designation also allowed for future designation of an additional

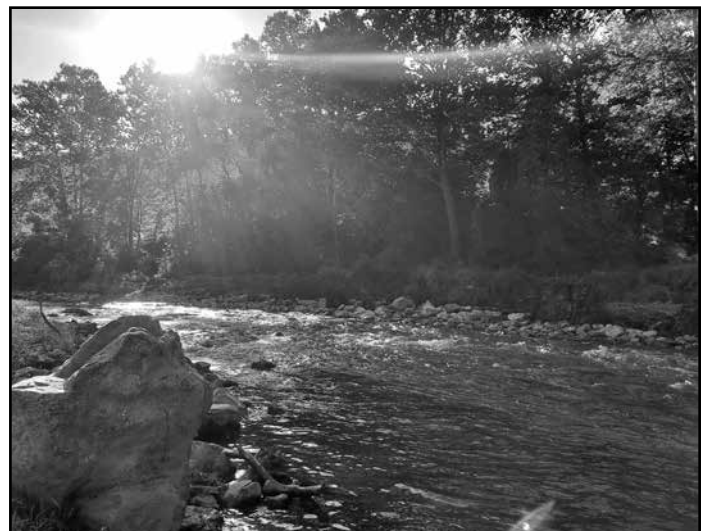
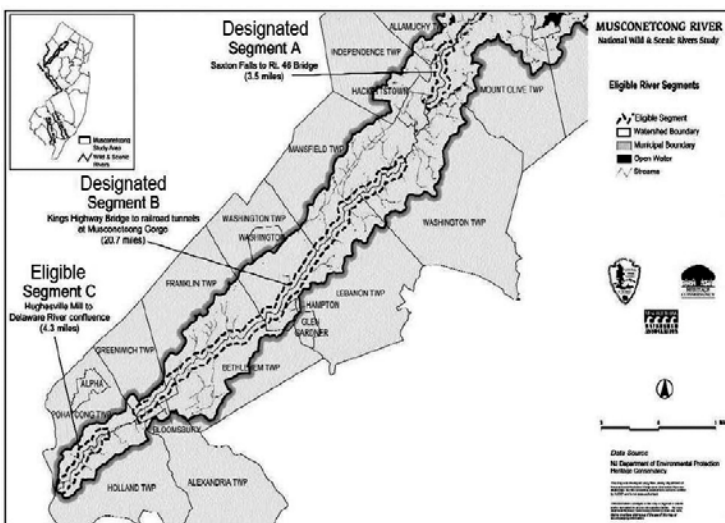
segment, from the former Hughesville dam to the Delaware River. Holland Township passed a resolution of support of Wild and Scenic designation in 2002 and Pohatcong Township passed a resolution of support in July, 2018. Even without this segment being designated, it has been a focus of river restoration. Since 2011, MWA and the Musconetcong River Restoration Partnership removed three abandoned dams on this section of the River, improving fish habitat and recreational boat passage. However, it was not fully protected by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, and the two Townships could not become voting members of the River Management Council.

In June, the Musconetcong National Wild and Scenic River received its last eligible segment designation of 4.3 river miles being added to the National Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Along with federal protection, this designation

brings in additional municipalities to elevate local river concerns into actions. Segment C of the Musky boasts three public river access points used by anglers and kayakers and three Historic Districts, including two villages established about 300 years ago.

Of the approximately 3.6 million miles of streams in the U.S., less than one percent are protected by the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. MWA is proud to acknowledge this federal recognition, completing a designation journey begun over 16 years ago, with many helping along the way. Expect to see National Wild and Scenic River signs being installed at bridges crossing this new segment later this year.

To learn more about projects happening in the Musconetcong Watershed, or to protect water quality in the Musconetcong River, visit our website and subscribe to our email updates. ☾



*This map depicts all sections of the Musconetcong River with Wild and Scenic designation, which now includes the segment from the former Hughesville dam to the Delaware River.*

*Musconetcong River at former Hughesville dam site in Pohatcong Township.*

# MUSCONETCONG WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

PO Box 113, 10 Maple Ave.  
Asbury, NJ 08802

**908-537-7060**

[www.musconetcong.org](http://www.musconetcong.org)

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## A Note from the Executive Director, Tom Dallessio

As the new Executive Director of the Musconetcong Watershed Association, I'm both honored and thrilled to lead this amazing organization. Sometimes we take for granted the things that are truly invaluable. MWA is one of those gems, and after a few short weeks, I remain in awe of the natural and cultural resources in this very special place, and the people that work and/or volunteer to cherish and nurture these assets. Summer is the time of year when we kick back a little and perhaps experience more of what nature has to offer. While I can't (and shouldn't) say I've taken it easy, I can report that my introduction to all that MWA has to offer has been memorable. On my first day, I experienced the variety and breadth of experiences the Musconetcong Watershed has to offer. Christa Reeves, Sam Johnson and Craig Fleming took me to the River and walked me through the incredible scientific research they've undertaken. With each explanation, I could see the love they have for the Musconetcong, and feel the deep connection they've made through their monitoring and testing programs. Later, Bill Leavens walked me through the Asbury Mill and the awesome opportunities restoring this artifact will provide to current and future generations. I subscribe to Philip Johnson's axiom "One Cannot Not Know History." Between Bill's stories and Alan Hunt's research, I've become a big believer in the power of the Mill to serve the Watershed in ways that can educate, engage and empower residents and visitors. The Mill gives us many opportunities to expand our knowledge, considering how our past and present can inform and enhance our future.

Within the first week, I learned more about our Great Waters project from Alan and Jane Heckt, and saw how they are working with collaborators like Trout Unlimited to survey those who fish and hike to expand opportunity and choice for all. And, Annie Polkowski shared her work to remove the Beatty's Mill Dam and restore the island next to our Mill. These and other MWA projects advance our mission to protect and



*Left to Right: Bill Leavens, Chuck Gullage, Tom Dallessio. Chuck Gullage led a staff and Board tour of the upper Musconetcong Watershed earlier this summer.*

*Photo Credit: Tim Johnston, Board of Directors*

improve the quality of the Musconetcong River and its Watershed. The kid in me delights in the experience of Camp Musky. As Camp Counselor, Ryan Jiorle recruited Junior Camp Counselor Luke Kluthe and several volunteers to bring the wonders of the Watershed to children from 5-12 years old. For the rest of us, that wonder still exists! And, it serves as a reminder of how great the Watershed is for experiential learning. I owe a special thanks to Karen Doerfer, whose organizational and communication skills are critically needed, and to the Board of Trustees, who continue to offer good counsel and assistance. While most are relaxing during the lazy days of summer, the officers and other current and former Board members have been checking in routinely to make sure my transition would go smoothly.

As we all celebrate 30 years of advancing MWA's mission, we're excited to consider a vision for the next three decades. The Board and staff have embarked on a strategic planning process, providing us all with the roadmap for our short-and long-term future. We'll be sharing that plan with you in the next newsletter, and look forward to you joining us on this journey. In the meantime, I wish you the best of summers, and hope that the joy, energy and peace of this season remain in you throughout the year. Enjoy! ☺

# Fishing for Pebbles

By Craig Fleming, Water Quality Intern

It's easy to picture. An early June morning: The sun is rising, drying out the morning dew, and warming up the air, as a lingering breeze pushes gentle clouds through the awakening sky. After acknowledging the beauty of it all you make your way down to the river, but instead of a fishing rod, you have your trusty gravelometer in hand. Rather than hooking a fish, this simple aluminum device allows MWA's Water Quality team to measure bed sediments ranging from fine sand to large cobbles, measuring over 7 inches. These measurements are conducted as part of MWA's pebble count project, which uses the Wolman pebble count method, and is a valuable sampling tool that gathers information such as stream character, channel formation and hydraulics, erosion rates, and sediment supply. The Wolman Method requires a sampling duo to make their way from downstream to upstream one step at a time. The morning waltz is done in a zig-zag pattern in which each stone, randomly chosen, passes through the appropriate hole of the gravelometer. Working bank to bank,

the team measures each sample – approximately 200+ pieces of sand, cobble, gravel, and boulder – to understand the average size at each section of Musconetcong River at 5 sites.

MWA aims to provide insight on sediment composition in sections of the river where dam removals occurred, prior to and throughout the restoration process. This information is important because, in sections of the river where there is heavy fine sediment deposition, the water quality is threatened. Specifically, in regions where dams remain, the macroinvertebrate population could be negatively impacted, which could then trickle up the food chain and have an adverse impact on crucial fish populations.

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service awarded MWA a grant to conduct pebble counts, focusing on gathering



*Fleming, MWA's Water Quality Intern, conducting a pebble count downstream of the Beatty's Mill dam.*

post-dam removal data at the site of the former Hughesville dam as well as pre-removal data downstream of the Warren Glenn dam. So far, the Hughesville dam post-removal data is showing a positive trend toward larger sediment grain sizes – nearly doubling in average grain size over the past three years! This is largely due to sediment being removed from behind the dam, before it was notched and then removed. This bodes well for water quality, since the macroinvertebrate populations prefer to call larger sediment sizes home. When there is inadequate sediment removal prior to a dam being taken out, a phenomenon known as “sanding” occurs downstream. If the streambanks of a river are not adequately stabilized at a dam removal site and immediately upstream, a phenomenon known as “incision” will occur. This is where the art and science of river restoration come together, stability is what is needed and it can be a balancing act that only the years will reveal.

Another exciting sampling location is at Beatty's Mill in Hackettstown where samples from upstream and downstream of the fragmented dam provide a well-rounded picture of how that section of the river will change once the dam is removed.

Though tedious, the continued collection of data through pebble counts will continue to support clean water in the Musky, and prove once and for all that fishing for pebbles on a sunny June morning may lead to more sustainable rod fishing for years to come. 🎣

## Farewell, Denise!

Denise Manole served her last ten months as the 2021-2022 Upper Delaware Watershed Ambassador, serving out of MWA's River Resource Center.

Over these last ten months, she has partnered with the MWA and other organizations in the Upper Delaware Watershed. With the MWA, she coordinated the annual Musconetcong Watershed Clean-Up, where volunteers removed 164 bags of trash and recyclables from the watershed. She also helped with a tree planting along MWA's Educational Trail where we planted 75 trees along the River, in partnership with the Delaware River Climate Core.

Most recently, Denise coordinated a



tire pull with the goal of removing tires from the Musconetcong River. Her team removed nearly 20 tires at four different sites along the River, along with a large piece of fence and a bag of trash.

In the larger Upper Delaware Watershed, Denise led five environmental stewardship trainings and more than 50 environmental educational programs.

Growing up in the Upper Delaware Watershed, she enjoyed reconnecting with the community and having a part in keeping our environment clean and healthy. Denise is excited to continue her adventures in the environmental field, and we thank her for her support this year. 🎣



# 50 Years of the Clean Water Act, Protecting Our Natural Resources

By Christa Reeves, Water Quality Program Coordinator

This year marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Clean Water Act (CWA). Two years prior to this, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was created, and this was a key piece of legislation in their arsenal to help protect and repair America's waterways. Before the CWA, two-thirds of our waterways were impaired and considered too polluted to fish or swim in. The now infamous Cuyahoga River fires were one of the sparks that led to a wave of attention being focused on water quality. TIME magazine picked up the story and ran with it with captions that stated that the river "oozes rather than flows." It was the final fire (there were at least 13 documented) in 1969 that inspired the first Earth Day in 1970, in which 20 million people participated. Other inspirations were Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* and the Santa Barbara oil spill in January 1969.

On October 28, 1971, Edmund Muskie (D-ME) introduced S. 2770, a bill to amend the Federal Water Pollution Control Act, an older and ineffective piece of legislation from 1948. The objective was to "restore and maintain the natural chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters," S. 2770 would ultimately become known as the Clean Water Act (CWA). The final version passed the House 366 to 11, passed the Senate unanimously, 74 to 0, and overrode a veto from President Nixon. Such was the clamor for repairing and restoring the Nation's waterways. This Act ended the culture of dumping raw sewage and untreated industrial waste into our waterways. Industry-specific discharge standards now prevent more than 700 billion pounds of toxic pollutants from being dumped into our Nation's waters each year.

The Clean Water Act touches the Musconetcong River in several ways. A handful of industries and two wastewater treatment plants have discharge permits to the river, mostly around Hackettstown and Mount Olive Township (Section 402). Water Quality Management Plans are meant to coordinate new surface and groundwater discharges to avoid cumulative impacts (Section 208). Uses

for all rivers are designated, with goals to achieve those uses (Section 303(c)). The Musconetcong River is designated for swimming (primary contact) and fishing, wading, and boating (Secondary contact). However, through another section of the CWA, the State monitors water quality (Section 305), and we know that more work needs to be done to achieve water quality for primary and secondary contact uses (Section 303(d)). The CWA also prevents the filling of streams and wetlands (Section 404). While the CWA has been very effective for reducing 'end of pipe' discharges to waterbodies, stormwater runoff and non-point pollution – the two most significant pollution sources for the Musconetcong River – are more difficult to manage since they come from many, diffuse sources.

While all parts of the CWA are important, the MWA is actively funded by a section passed in 1987, Section 319, Funding for Nonpoint Source Control. We are sampling sections of the Musconetcong River to understand inputs of bacteria and nutrients, such as phosphorus. We are working closely with partners at Montclair State University to understand not just the amount of bacteria in the river, but the source. This is called microbial source tracking, and it can tell us if the bacterial pollution is from wildlife, like deer, agricultural runoff or humans, or by way of leaky septic systems. When all of the sources of the pollutants are identified, the next phase begins, to create a 9-Element Watershed Restoration Plan. This document will outline the where, who, what, and how we go about restoring that section of the watershed. One of the elements is to implement Best Management Practices (BMPs) to help control or eliminate pollution from entering our waterways. Other actions include municipalities keeping their stormwater management plans up to date.

Do non-point source reduction strategies work? Within a targeted area, and with multiple landowners working together,



*Original Caption: "11/3/1952 – Cleveland, OH – Firemen stand on a bridge over the Cuyahoga River to spray water on the tug Arizona, as a fire, started in an oil slick on the river, sweeps the docks at the Great Lakes Towing Company site in Cleveland Nov., 1st. The blaze destroyed three tugs, three buildings, and the ship repair yards."*

bacterial pollution on West Portal Creek decreased by 97% over a ten year period. This came through sustained partnerships with landowners, agencies, and non-profit organizations, including North Jersey RC&D. We share these stories through the *West Portal Creek* film (2021) accessible from our website.

The Clean Water Act is not entirely a top-down approach. Like with the West Portal Creek project, it takes a bottom-up effort, and team approach to work effectively. Likewise, the CWA is an example of "cooperative Federalism" – where national goals are laid out, and the States have to identify how they can best achieve the goal of protecting and restoring the "physical, biological, and chemical integrity" of our Nation's waters. Our Great Waters NJ initiative aims to ensure that the State is doing the best it can to protect our waters for recreational uses, and our partnership with the National Park Service to manage the Musconetcong National Wild and Scenic River largely relies on the State making sound water quality decisions. Our collective interest in the Clean Water Act, including public comments on permits and regulations, and doing what we can on our own land, volunteering water quality monitoring, and helping with a riverside tree planting is all little "d" democracy work that is essential to keeping our waters clean. 🌱

# Hurray for Headwaters! Summer Fun in the Great Waters of New Jersey

*By Jane Heeckt, Project Coordinator, Great Waters NJ Initiative*

Summer is here! As the mercury climbs, thousands of New Jersey residents head out to the Highlands to beat the heat. Some come to hike or camp with their families under the shade of tall trees. But more come out to paddle and splash in the cool, fresh waters of Northwestern New Jersey.

From the sandy shores of Lake Hopatcong to its confluence with the Delaware River, the Musconetcong flows for 42 miles among the lush green hills and shady slopes of Morris, Sussex, Warren, and Hunterdon Counties. With 59 public access points, there are many places to launch a boat or river tube, or wade into its refreshing waters – waters kept cool and clear thanks to its upstream headwaters.

The headwaters of the Musconetcong start above Lake Hopatcong in northern New Jersey. This vast network of lesser streams, springs, and wetlands keep water clean, healthy, and flowing strong. These waters may take the form of tiny brooks that emerge from rocky slopes well off the beaten path. They may be springs that bubble up with the melting snow then slowly disappear. Or, small streams that flow freely when the water table is high but shrink into shallow pools when it's low. They may even appear as marshy meadows nestled among pastures and fields. Some headwaters are not even mapped. But visible or not, headwaters contribute far more to a river and its surrounding environment – and wholesome summer fun – than most people realize.

Larger downstream waters like the Musconetcong are supported by their headwaters in three important ways. They help maintain water volumes and regulate runoff. They filter and dilute harmful pollutants and keep them from reaching dangerous levels. They help maintain sediment at healthy levels.

## **Pump up (or down) the Volume**

Once the mercury begins to rise, water levels begin to fall. But in the Highlands, huge volumes of water emerge from the countless springs that dot the hillsides and are gathered up in myriad small

streams. This water finds its way into the Musconetcong and keeps it splashable and boatable even in the dog days of summer.

They play an equally important role in keeping excess water from overwhelming downstream waters during wet periods and from the strong summer storms that frequently lash our region. They intercept excess rainfall, and channel it over a wide area. Their rough and irregular banks effectively reduce water velocity, and help keep it from pouring downstream.

## **Dilution of Pollution**

Nonpoint source pollution—such as fertilizers, household chemicals, and road salt – can easily wash into rivers, and rivers in more developed areas, such as the Musconetcong, are particularly vulnerable. These substances have a detrimental effect on water quality. Road salt and chemicals can kill off the organisms that keep our water clear. Fertilizers can feed algae growth, turning once sparkling waters into a poisonous green soup. And high levels of any toxin are harmful to wade or swim in.

Headwater networks create a web of protection that keep this kind of pollution out of rivers. Streams that are bounded by trees and other natural vegetation trap pollutants and prevent them from flowing directly into downstream waters. The large volumes of clean, fresh water they send downstream can dilute chemicals and other pollutants, and keep them from reaching dangerous levels.

## **Sedimental Journey**

Sediment – the loose particles that settle to bottom of a water body – is a natural part of a river. Whether it is carried by wind or water, sediment is necessary for maintaining the water's equilibrium.

Headwaters deliver a slow and steady supply of sand, clay, silt, soil, and organic matter to downstream waters. This sediment helps form beaches, spits, sand bars, and estuaries. It supports critical habitat for aquatic plants and animals. It provides healthy levels of vital nutrients and minerals that keep waters thriving.



*The Great Waters NJ Initiative works to protect the rivers in Northwestern New Jersey, making it safe for swimming and fishing.*

Too much sediment, however, is harmful to streams and the plants and animals that live there. Suspended sediment makes waters cloudy, and can inhibit plant growth. Excessive silt can bury and suffocate the eggs of fish and other animals. Toxic compounds and harmful bacteria can bind with soil and other sediment particles, and wash into downstream waters, making them unsafe for recreation. Too much sediment can also make rivers too shallow for boating and paddling. By channeling stormwater across a broad area and reducing its velocity, a healthy and intact headwaters network can trap huge amounts of sediment and prevent excess particles from washing downstream.

## **Be a Headwaters Hero!**

Do you love to cool off in the Musconetcong, or any of the lakes, rivers, and streams of Northwestern New Jersey? Do you want to keep our Great Waters fresh, clean, and cool for generations to come? Visit [greatwatersnj.org](http://greatwatersnj.org), and learn more about our Great Waters and all that they have to offer, the risks that they face, and what you can do to help protect them. Then take action! Share your own Great Waters story. Sign the petition urging local officials to support greater protections for Great Waters, their headwaters, and the lands that surround them.

No matter the season, the lakes, rivers, and streams of Northwestern New Jersey are among the finest in state—and beyond. Help keep it this way! ☺

# Attention 2022-2023 high school students

*Start snapping pictures for the upcoming  
Musconetcong River Nature Photography Contest!*

## Photo Submission Categories

- Flora & Fauna: Plants, animals, fungi, etc.
- Musconetcong Landscapes: Pictures of the river, lakes, mountain ridges, etc.
- Working in the Watershed: Agriculture, historic buildings & bridges, and cultural subjects
- Playing in the Watershed: Pictures of people fishing, hiking, paddling, etc.



## Rules

- Free to participate!
- Photographs must be taken within the Musconetcong River Watershed. Not sure what that means? Check out the map at <https://www.musconetcong.org/watershed-maps>
- Panel of judges will select winners and runners-up, plus a fan voting category!
- Detailed rules to follow in fall 2022

## Timing

Take your pictures during the summer and fall, with judging occurring during winter 2022-2023. Winning entries will be displayed throughout Musconetcong River Watershed, with winners receiving 16"x20" prints of their photographs.

## Eligibility

Any student in grades 9 – 12 enrolled in a "Watershed High School" for the 2022-2023 school year: Delaware Valley, Hackettstown, Hopatcong, Jefferson Township, Lenape Valley, Mount Olive, North Hunterdon, Phillipsburg, Roxbury, Sparta, Voorhees, Warren Hills, West Morris Central, technical schools (Hunterdon, Morris, Sussex, & Warren), & anyone ages 14 – 18 living in areas served by these schools

Questions? Email Ryan Jiorle, Community Engagement Coordinator for the Musconetcong Watershed Association, at [ryan@musconetcong.org](mailto:ryan@musconetcong.org), or call our office at (908) 537-7060.





# 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](mailto:info@musconetcong.org) with "Subscribe" in the subject line. We hope you and your family stay healthy and safe.*

**Friday, July 29** *MWA Riverfest at Donaldson Farms.* 5-9 pm. Donaldson Farms, 358 Allen Road, Hackettstown, NJ 07840. MWA has partnered with Donaldson Farms' Friday Nights on the Farm event series to provide a festival celebrating our 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of watershed protection. This year's Riverfest at Donaldson Farms will feature food trucks, a raffle, and music provided by The Emulators 80's. Admission is required – children under 4 are free.

**Thursday, December 1** *Asbury Mill Fundraiser.* 6 pm. Hawk Pointe Golf Club, 4 Clubhouse Drive, Washington, NJ 07882. Join us and support the continued restoration of the historic Asbury Mill. Cocktail hour is from 6-7 pm, followed by dinner, special guests, and a silent auction. Tickets and information will be posted to MWA's website this fall. There are table options, if you would like to sponsor this event. Please call Karen Doerfer at (908) 537-7060, or email [karen@musconetcong.org](mailto:karen@musconetcong.org).

## 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](mailto: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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Meetup  
Musconetcong  
River Area  
Outdoor Activities

For more information or to register for any of these events, please email [info@musconetcong.org](mailto: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: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

### Mail to:

Musconetcong Watershed Association  
PO Box 113, Asbury, NJ 08802

- ◆ **What's Inside:**
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- ◆ 50 Years of the Clean Water Act, Protecting Our Natural Resources
- ◆ Hurray for Headwaters! Summer Fun in the Great Waters of New Jersey
- ◆ Attention 2022-2023 High School Students!

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