

# THE Voice OF THE RIVER

Fall 2020 Newsletter



## How We Turn a Drop into a River, Together

Extreme heat and drought are becoming the norm for New England summers. Summertime is also when we use water the most, and the combination of increased heat and decreased rain during periods of high demand has a devastating impact on the river. Normally, the river would be able to withstand even severe droughts, but current water demand is more than a healthy Ipswich River can sustain. We need a change and fast. Thankfully, our communities have the power to craft achievable solutions. The change isn't an easy one, and no one thing will ensure the future of reliable water. But it all starts with changing how we think about water use.

Change for the river may come from grassroots efforts or policy, but adjusting our perceptions of water use is the biggest lift. Over the past year, we have worked on a MA Division of Ecological Restoration (DER) funded grant that looks at how Community Based Social Marketing (CBSM) can encourage positive behaviors and establish measurable outcomes. This approach stresses public commitment and engagement, the promotion of positive behavior norms, and peer to peer advocacy. Through this demonstration grant, we are refining a framework that will hopefully help improve water quality and quantity not only here but statewide.

The 14 communities that use water from the watershed have a variety of different water restrictions, implementation timetables, and bylaws and unbelievable as it may sound, most water withdrawn from the river has no use restrictions at all! To build a more sustainable future, we need both voluntary and regulatory changes and most of all more collaboration.



Even during significant drought, 30 million gallons per day are withdrawn from the river's watershed. The result is what you see here: Ipswich River staff and interns stand in the middle of the drying river in late August. This section of river, which has many riffles that provide critical habitat for fish and macroinvertebrates, is particularly impacted by low flows.

To move the region towards better water conservation practices, Ipswich River and Greenscapes Coalition partners surveyed members about their yards, including how they most use their outdoor spaces. With images like Bob Lemoine's grandchildren playing in his never-been-watered lawn (below), we aim to change perceptions about what it means to have a yard.



Our municipal partners have been provided a road map towards more resilient water in our recently completed Net Zero Water Use Policy and toolkit. We are now rolling the toolkit out to towns, a process that involves engaging our Town Representatives, municipal boards and committees, and town officials. These partnerships will help to clarify the perceived barriers to action on water conservation, and help to develop the best possible plans for water neutral growth.

You too can protect the river and help make your own town water neutral. Highlighted within this issue are several residents who are engaging their communities and promoting positive behavior changes. We also discuss how partnerships and stakeholder engagement are increasing the effectiveness and reach of these efforts. Our river needs the support of individuals like you to affect change in your wider community. Please join us in making tangible change happen.





## Stronger Together

Collaboration can be messy. But now more than ever, collaboration is vital to make progress in our fractured society. We co-founded long-standing partnerships to identify common needs and leverage expertise and resources. The PIE-Rivers Partnership (Parker, Ipswich and Essex Rivers), Greenscapes Coalition, and Great Marsh Coalition all help answer an important question: What can we do to make our communities stronger, together?

More recently, a newer collaboration is helping us answer this question. Three towns (Topsfield, Boxford and Ipswich), Trout Unlimited, and Ipswich River have joined forces. We are tackling a bigger job than any of us could do alone: restoring an entire sub-watershed. The Howlett Brook Restoration project ([ipswichriver.org/howlett-brook](http://ipswichriver.org/howlett-brook)) addresses various community needs in our towns. Michelle Rowden, Regional Coordinator for Massachusetts' Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness program (MVP), believes in its importance. "We are funding part of the project and are pretty excited about it. The MVP program strives to fund projects that provide the highest level of climate resiliency for the greatest number of people. The positive ecological benefits that come along with resiliency are also really important."

Our communities, like our river, face a myriad of challenges that demand collaborative approaches. Extreme weather. Aging infrastructure. Demand for growth. Resource equity. Climate justice. Increasingly, we see a need for resiliency in all aspects of our communities. Resiliency planning can benefit both our physical environment and our social frameworks. Involving all stakeholders gives communities a better chance to achieve success. Regional partnerships can break down barriers to collaboration.

If we want a resilient Ipswich River community, we need to involve all stakeholders. Everyone deserves a clean and safe environment. As one example, surprisingly few Ipswich River members identify as Hispanic or Latinx. Yet across Essex County, we have more than 65,000 Hispanic or Latinx residents. For a long time, we have included students from communities like Salem, Lawrence, and Lynn in our free educational programming. But our membership remains predominantly white. In response, our board is currently reviewing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion concepts. Our next strategic plan will incorporate these concepts. Together, we can help ensure everyone living in communities linked to the river has a seat at the table.

"When I started as Ipswich River's Environmental Planner, I was excited to work across town boundaries," says Patrick Lynch. "But there is so much we still need to do. We are dealing with unprecedented global challenges, during an uncertain political climate. Healing the deep fractures in our society starts right here in our towns. We must keep working to bring greater equity into all aspects of our programming. I'm excited we're taking on this task. Together, we can nurture an Ipswich River community that is rich in perspectives and better prepared for the future."

### The Power of People

Literally thousands of people voluntarily take part in the defense and restoration of the Ipswich River. We are members, volunteers, scientists, elected officials, partners, business and communities all joining together for a collective cause. In this issue, we are proud to highlight some of the ways that each of you are helping to protect the river.

Admittedly, this year has been difficult for all of us and the River. The Pandemic has changed everything in our lives and made it more difficult to work on behalf of the river we love. But that work must continue. The River's biggest problem, water withdrawals, reared its ugly head this summer. The occurrence of two drought declarations within two months is a harbinger of the future.

We have been buoyed by the continued outpouring of encouragement and generosity from all of you and take solace in the respite the river has provided to our lives this year. I think it's fair to say that never before have so many people enjoyed being out on or along the river. Our members, volunteers and partners have remained steadfast in their incredible support during these difficult times and we are on track to gain more new members than any year in our history. Thanks to this continuing support, we are well poised to tackle the issues facing the river so it can benefit future generations. The river is in good hands, because of you.

WAYNE

Wayne Castonguay  
Executive Director

## Ipswich River 2023: Will You Help?

We are in the middle of our Strategic Planning Process which will chart the course for our organization for the next three years. Thanks so much for those of you who have already provided your voice to the plan. If you haven't yet taken our member survey, please do so at [surveymonkeys.com/r/IRWA2021](https://surveymonkeys.com/r/IRWA2021) and look out for additional opportunities to become involved in the process over the next few weeks — your voice is needed! Thank you!



For her Eagle Scout project, Mira Plante worked with community members to install 10 erosion gardens in Middleton. The conservation project uses native plants to tackle soil erosion and also provides stormwater buffers and additional recharge areas. Says Mira, "As a team, we made a positive impact on the Ipswich River Watershed and its inhabitants. I'm excited to be part of the inaugural class of female Eagle Scouts!" It's so great when community members roll up their sleeves and help the river. Cheers to Mira!

# Local Residents Take the Lead on Restoration

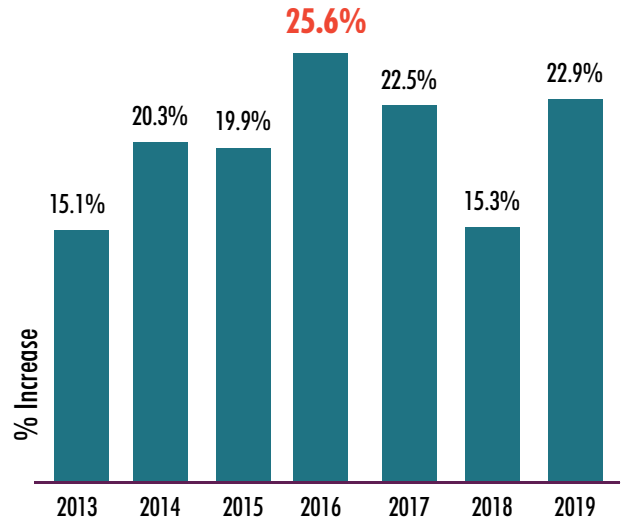
Greenscaping is our term for the one yard at a time, holistic approach for increasing resiliency through nature-based landscapes. Along with reducing outdoor water usage, landowners can use native, drought tolerant plants to create vibrant landscapes with multiple benefits. Benefits like local food from kitchen and community gardens, pollinator waystations, bird habitat, healthy food webs, natural nitrogen fixing, noise and heat reduction, and neighborhood safety all go hand in hand with river friendly land use practices.

The Greenscapes Coalition provides the resources and expertise to help residents like Mira Plante of Middleton take the lead on restoration. Mira reached out for advice planning her Eagle Scout project. She planted native plant gardens at several Middleton canoe landings that are reducing erosion and acting as recharge areas that replenish groundwater and capture stormwater before it can flow directly, unfiltered, into the river.

Like many of you who have taken the Greenscapes Water for People pledge, Mark Logsdon of Reading has never watered his lawn. By posting a pledge lawn sign, he is showing his community that a welcoming, enjoyable outdoor space for his family doesn't come at the cost of depleting or contaminating our shared water resources. The data provided by our pioneering participants in the lawn sign campaign demonstrates the collective impact of individual behaviors. By not watering their grass, these residents are saving around 410,000 gallons of water a week during the summer. If only a small fraction of people in Ipswich River communities were to join the effort, hundreds of millions of gallons of water could be saved each year.

In more developed landscapes, such as in Salem and Peabody where lot sizes are smaller on average and many folks without yards rely on community open spaces, Greenscaping can be even more impactful. We all have a role in protecting the environment, regardless of where we live, and benefit from bringing nature into our community. This is the topic of Outreach Manager Rachel Schneider's October 13th presentation as part of the Essex National Heritage Commission's (ENHC) "Redefining Heritage" series. Ipswich River is also creating a series of traveling displays, funded by ENHC that address environmental issues impacting both communities and the river. The displays, on various topical areas such as drought and stormwater pollution, provide actions that individuals and groups can take to make change happen at the local level. Keep an eye out for these posters in your community!

## How Much More Water Are We Using in Summer?



In 2016 water use increased **25.6%** from winter to summer, despite the historic drought.



Rosie, Arthur and their father Mark Logsdon are among the first to take the Greenscapes: Water for People pledge and put a lawn sign in their yard. Rosie is excited about saving water and her rise to stardom as the voice of Francesca the pig in the campaign video. Watch the video and take the pledge at [greenscapes.org/waterforpeople](http://greenscapes.org/waterforpeople)

## Donate Now at [www.ipswichriver.org](http://www.ipswichriver.org)

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Town/City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_

You may make check payable to IRWA and mail to: **IRWA, PO Box 576, Ipswich, MA 01938**

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

### Enclosed is my tax deductible donation of:

- River Steward \$1000
- Patron \$250
- Friend \$100
- Family \$50
- Individual \$40
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

For:  Annual Appeal  Membership  
 In honor of \_\_\_\_\_

**Thank you for your support!**






**IPSWICH RIVER**  
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*The Voice of the River*

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The river sustains us and provides respite. Please see inside.

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Ipswich River interns Grace Evans and Ngodoo Atume enjoy a paddle together (below). At the end of her internship, Grace took a social isolation group out for a guided paddle (above). Keep the river flowing and paddle-able, donate to the Annual Appeal today!



## 1,486 Great Escapes

More of you got out on the river this year than ever before. With two months still left in the paddling season, Riverbend has already had 1,486 members and their guests visit, more than last year's total! These months of physical distancing and great uncertainty have many of us appreciating the escape provided by natural spaces more than ever.

Give your thanks to the river for all that it provides.

- Take the Greenscapes Water for People pledge and post a lawn sign in your yard.
- Make a gift to the Annual Appeal to support further water conservation efforts and make a positive difference.

The river cannot survive through year after year of drought and excessive water withdrawals. You can help, please donate today at [ipswichriver.org/donate](http://ipswichriver.org/donate).

## Connect With Us!

**Image on the Water:** Virtual Photo Show: Month of November

**Ipswich River Update with Wayne:** Thursday, November 12th via Zoom

**PIE-Rivers Annual Meeting:** Thursday, December 3rd via Zoom

Visit [ipswichriver.org/calendar](http://ipswichriver.org/calendar) for more details