

NEWSLETTER

April $\overline{1^{st}}$ – September $\overline{30^{th}}$, 2024

First Bi-monthly Membership Meeting of 2025

Wednesday, January 8, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.

Join us on Wednesday, January 8 at 6:30 p.m. at John Boggs Hall in Port Elizabeth for the first membership meeting of 2025. As attendees you will enjoy a sneak peek into the upcoming year and explore how to best get involved in CU Maurice River's community-led conservation efforts. Staff will provide an overview of 2025 programming and volunteer opportunities.

Please note the change in location from the previous year. Over the last year and a half, the membership meetings have been hosted at The Authority building – a welcoming, well equipped, and modern space. While we will miss this space, CU Maurice River has decided to change the venue of its membership meetings in support of the wetland restoration and rare plant protection projects that will start during 2025. We hope you will come out on this occasion to learn more about these projects and how you can make a difference by volunteering to assist the restoration efforts on the Wild and Scenic Manumuskin River.

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

A gentle reminder... Your membership goes the extra mile in supporting local watershed conservation work. As we are closing out another successful year, please make sure not to skip a year of membership. Did you renew it in 2024? Give us a call or follow this link to renew today. https://cumauriceriver.org/join-renew-donate/

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2025

CU Maurice River Staff is currently outlining the Calendar of Events for all of 2025. If you have any suggestions for interesting destinations, topics, or volunteer opportunities, we want to hear them. We will see how we might include them or incorporate them into future planning. Please email your ideas to info@CUMauriceRiver.org. The 2025 Calendar will be uploaded and available on the CUMR website for your perusing by the first week of January.

FUNRAISERS

Upcoming Fun-Raisers

The Holiday Match - The Holiday Match will be running until the New Year. This year's zany premise is yet to be determined. But get ready because our Board President Jane Morton Galetto is surely cooking up a delectable read for her holiday audience. Make sure you follow along to get yet another window into Jane's wacky imagination –in addition to her depth of knowledge and appreciation of everything *Down Jersey* - as she employs her odd fundraising techniques. The curious wildlife facts are real, the history is real, the locations are real, and the need to raise funds is also EXTREMELY REAL! But humorous anecdotes? We will leave trusting those to your discretion.

Saturday, March 8th, 2025- Annual Chili Bowl at the Mauricetown Firehall. Starting in January we will be collecting auction items at the CU Maurice River office. Most items should be new; examples might include works of art, jewelry, or vintage collectibles. All must be in excellent condition. Please include estimated or known value and place your name on your donation/s. Would you like to join the Chili Bowl Planning Committee or Chili Chef Team? If so, let us know that you would like to help put on our largest event of the year by emailing us at CUMauriceRiver.org.

May 11 - World-Series of Birding. This year's team consisted of veteran team members, all of which are highly skilled birders. The team's mascot is the osprey, sometimes called a "fish hawk" thus our team's moniker. CU Maurice River would like to extend another thank you to the Team Captain Mary Watkins and her birding team colleagues Tony Klock, Kathy Michel, and Jim Blumenstein. On May 11, these CU Naturalists and birders set out on a 24-hour quest to spot and hear as many distinct species as they can find within the NJ Delaware Bayshore. This year the team counted a whopping 140 species!

CU Maurice River would also like to thank the Cristelli Family for sponsoring the World Series of Birding Fish Hawks team t-shirt. It is due to the Fish Hawk's volunteerism, your generosity, and our Board President's dedication to funraising, that \$22,625.00 was raised in support of CU Maurice River's mission.

July 18, 26, 27, 28 - Raise the River. The first edition of this summer fundraiser was held in 2021. It is a multiday event designed to get people on to the river. Paddlers set out on water trails to raise money for river conservation and education. Paddlers ask their friends and family to sponsor their paddle by contributing to CU Maurice River. This year the excursions took the RiverRaisers to Willow Grove Lake, Laurel Lake, and the Wild and Scenic Muskee and Manumuskin Rivers. 81 paddlers joined us on the water.

This year for the second time, we closed out the event with The RiverDinner at the Union Lake Sailing and Tennis Club. As a farm- & bay-to-table inspired meal, the menu boasted locally sourced food, drinks, and goods. We served summer veggies next to Delaware Bay crabs and oysters. The Raise the River Committee Members put together an auction comprised of 17 baskets that included at least one *Down Jersey* experience and many local goods. All were either donated by watershed businesses or purchased by volunteers from businesses. The dinner was completely sold out.

This event would not have been possible without the dedication, generosity, and volunteerism of the most awesome RiverDinner Planning Committee and CU Maurice River's community. A big thank you is owed to our partners who hosted different activities like the Union Lake Sailing Club, Laurel Lake Homeowners Association, and Al & Sams Canoe and Kayak; as well as the multitude of businesses and organizations who donated to the menu or auction including (but not limited to) Glasstown Brewing Company, Mission Spirits, Cedar Rose Winery, Cumberland County Cultural and Heritage Commission, Clay College, Bayshore Center at Bivalve, Barney and Debbie Hollinger, Flora for Fauna, The Levoy Theater, Maurice River Cruises, Barn Studio of Art, Wildflower Vegan Café, R&R Flaim Farms, YMCA-Vineland, Custard Corral, Al and Sam's Canoe and Kayak, Summersweet Native Nursery, East Point Lighthouse, The Sea Chest, The Charlesworth Restaurant, The Bonanza II, Downe Township Green Team, South Jersey Land and Water Trust, Cohansey Area Watershed Association, Sweet Amalias, and the many volunteers who prepared these baskets that overflowed with their appreciation for *Down Jersey*. \$14,843 was raised. "Raise the River!"

ANNOUNCEMENTS

September 16. New Staff Member. Cynthia Hornblower joined CU Maurice River's Staff as the new Membership and Events Coordinator. Many of you may already know Cyndie. She joined CU Maurice River in 2015 and was an active volunteer with her daughter Maddie for various years. Together they volunteered at dragonfly sampling, swamp pink training/certification and reTURN the Favor, while also taking advantage of offerings like the Eco Fair, Frog Slog, Elevate, Pat Sutton's Garden Tour and the Chili Bowl. Over the last years, she has been working in an office setting where she managed promotional mailings, invoice processing, customer service, administrative aspects of project tracking, and in-house events for staff and customers. Over this past summer, Cyndie knocked on CU Maurice River's door and said she was searching for a position that would marry her appreciation for the natural world with her job skills. I could tell her that CU Maurice River has the right position for her. After interviewing CU's Executive Director and Personnel Committee, Cyndie was hired as the new Membership and Events Coordinator. She will oversee membership outreach, account management, and community building activities. She will also assist the Events Committees with the orchestration of fundraisers.

In her free time and at her home, Cyndie manages a Butterfly Waystation where she raises and releases local species like eastern black swallowtails, red admirals, painted ladies, and variegated fritillaries. You may also run into her at ecominded community festivals where her *start up* could very well be hosting an educational table. Her business is called Wonderland Waystation which aims to preserve native butterflies and their host plants by fostering appreciation and improved conservation through educational experiences.

OUTSTANDING RESOURCE VALUE MANAGEMENT

Biodiversity

Environmental consultants Clay Sutton and Dr. Paul Kerlinger continue to dedicate pro-bono time to the revision of the waterfowl and raptor papers that summarize the data and knowledge gained from the 35 Year Maurice River Winter Raptor and Waterfowl Study. CU Executive Director coordinates with the consultants and connects them with resources to assist in their development of the papers. CU Volunteer and former NJDEP ArcGIS Specialist Tom McKee has worked closely with consultants to produce maps that will illustrate the authors' findings. These papers were reviewed, and a final draft was completed in August 2024.

April – June: Jane and Pete Galetto continue to build and repair osprey platforms with the help of dedicated volunteers. Over the spring and summer, Jane and Pete also monitor the platforms and collect data on nest success.

04.13.24 – East Point Lighthouse, reTURN the Favor Training. This year's RTF training was held at East Point Lighthouse. Only an indoor portion was offered as the winds were too strong to hold a proper outdoor session. Meghan Kolk from the Wetlands Institute and Bill Pitts from NJ Fish & Wildlife presented shorebirds and horseshoe crabs. There were 38 people in attendance.

- 05.21.2024 East Point Lighthouse, reTURN the Favor Workgroup This was the first CUMR led RTF event this year. The group of volunteers went out and flipped/rescued 1,181 crabs and reported 7 diamondback terrapin carcasses. 15 in attendance
- 05.28.24- East Point, reTURN the Favor Workgroup. This was the second CUMR led RTF event this year. The group of volunteers went out and flipped/rescued 1,703 crabs. The crabs rescued were located mostly along the boat ramp and in vegetation. 13 in attendance
- 06.04.24 East Point, reTURN the Favor Workgroup. This was the third CUMR RTF program led. The group went out and flipped/rescued 316 crabs. The crabs rescued were located along the boat ramp and in vegetation. Many families with their children joined this effort. The group had a great time learning in the great outdoors. There were 31 volunteers.
- 06.08.24 East Point, reTURN the Favor Workgroup. This was the fourth CUMR RTF program led. The group went out and flipped/rescued 562 crabs. The crabs rescued were located along the boat ramp and in vegetation. For this outing we had a local cub scouts group join us. There were 31 volunteers.
- 06.11.24 East Point, reTURN the Favor Workgroup. This was the last CUMR led RTF walk this year. The group went out and flipped/rescued 244 crabs. The crabs rescued were located along the boat ramp, rocks, and vegetation. 3,443 crabs flipped/rescued this season by CUMR. There were 11 volunteers.

06.08.24: Parvin State Park BioBlitz. 11 people volunteered in the BioBlitz at Parvin State Park. Americorps Watershed Ambassador for WMA17, Cameron Shapiro, led part of the group in macroinvertebrate sampling in Muddy Run. Two of the staff members from Parvin State Park and Mike Hogan from South Jersey Land and Water Trust led a walk searching for reptiles and amphibians. Macros found included: Net-spinning caddisfly, grass shrimp, swamp darter, dragonfly nymphs, water scorpion, damselfly nymph, limpet, water boatman, water beetles, leeches, musk turtle, right gilled snails, scuds. We also found a musk turtle and some small fish in our nets.

Habitat And Water Quality Protection

April-September: A Rutgers Environmental Stewardship Program Intern, Ian Borgo has been working with CU Maurice River toward reinvigorating and modernizing CUMR's water quality program with the objective of installing water quality meters at essential locations within the Wild and Scenic designation area. As sea level rise affects wetland health, the end goal of this project is to collect data on conductivity, temperature, and depth upstream. New data sets will allow CUMR to compare current conditions with the data collected by CU Community Scientists on the Manumuskin. This data will clarify the status of freshwater wetlands within the system and inform future restoration projects. Over this last summer, Ian has been working with the manufacturer to fix language and connection issues in the meter that was purchased. These issues, caused by the waterway's remote location, were finally resolved in September. The first meter is scheduled to be installed in October. It will be placed at the site of the globally rare freshwater tidal flora species, sensitive joint-vetch (*Aeschynomene virginica*).

April - September – Growing Protection of the Sensitive Joint-Vetch (SJV) and the Manumuskin Wetlands. Over the last year, CUMR has been designing a project for the restoration of this river's wetland habitat and to bolster its meadow's SJV community. CUMR Executive Director has been coordinating partnerships to bring this project together. These include NJ Conservation Foundation, Duke Farms, Raritan Valley Community College Center for Environmental Studies, Pinelands Preservation Alliance, and Cape May Plant Materials Center. CUMR submitted and received a \$76.5K cooperative agreement through various US Fish and Wildlife Service funding opportunities including the Endangered Species and Partnership Programs.

April – September - Watershed Stewards' Wildlife-Friendly Designations

CU Maurice River continues to promote improved property stewardship within the Wild and Scenic Maurice River Watershed through its Wildlife-, Stream-, and Eco-Friendly designation program. Staff is hosting a series property stewardship effort by awarding them with Wildlife-Friendly designations. Each of these members have taken significant measures towards creating properties with wildlife and water quality including green areas enhanced with native species, rain gardens, rainwater conservation, compost receptacles, wildlife habitat, and more. From extreme property transformations to cleverly designed micro-gardens, each of these members improved their best management practices in support of local water and habitat quality. The last installment of this series was held during this period.

Make-n-Take Stewardship Workshops:

04.24.24 – Vineland Public Library, Make-N-Take Workshop: Rain Barrels. Graiff Farms donated barrels for this workshop and a team of volunteers washed, cut, drilled, and prepared them in preparation of the workshop at a member's house. At the workshop, the Americorps Watershed Ambassador for WMA17 Cameron Shapiro spoke on the importance of water conservation. Julia Wiberg, Program Coordinator, led the workshop and offered resources for installation and upkeep. There were 22 people in attendance and 7 volunteers helped with drilling.

April - September – Centerton Dam Removal. CUMR Executive Director Karla Rossini continues to work with the Centerton Lake Homeowners' Association to remove their dam listed as a potential community hazard by the NJDEP Dam Safety Program. The first grant submission was presented to the NRCS in the previous autumn. Unfortunately, upon review, the NRCS decided they would be unable to fund the project. However, with the help of TNC's Beth Styler, NRCS has agreed to give the project proposal another review. During this period, CUMR Executive Director worked with the HOA to submit a second grant application for review.

Sept. 9 – Meeting with the NJ Department of Transportation – TNC, NPS, and CUMR had a meeting with the dam owner NJDOT to discuss the potential removal of the only dam in the Manumuskin Watershed, the Cumberland Pond Dam. From the conversation, the partners learned that this structure, while listed in poor condition, was recently (c.2020) restored. The "poor" listing is due to the data that still needs to be completed. The NJDOT stated that removal would not be possible currently but could be reconsidered during the next dam safety inspection pending the status of the structure.

April – September. Wildlife Garden Stewardship and Education. Backyard gardeners join CU Maurice River at the rain gardens and naturalized urban spaces to lend a hand in maintaining these demonstration sites, while learning about the local flora and fauna species – and BMPs.

- 04.30.24, 05.01.24, 05.02.24, 05.03.24: WheatonArts Volunteer Workgroups. Volunteers did spring cleaning at WheatonArts in preparation for ECO Fair. They removed last year's stalks and did some weeding. There were 20 volunteers in total over 4 days.
- 04.25.24: First United Methodist Church Volunteer Workgroup. Seven volunteers removed 12 bags of weeds, removed all old stems and used them as much, and pulled Tree of Heaven.
- 05.14.24: First United Methodist Church Volunteer Workgroup. Five volunteers continued spring cleaning at the First United Methodist Church Serenity Garden and finished weeding all the beds.
- 06.13.24: WheatonArts Volunteer Workgroup. Eight volunteers focused on weeding grasses going to seed, rabbits foot clover and horseweed and filled 6 large barrels full of weeds!
- 08.30.24: WheatonArts: The Great Horseweed Yank. Eight volunteers gathered at the WheatonArts Circle Oasis Garden to pull horseweed for the morning.
- 09.12.24: First United Methodist Church Volunteer Workgroup. Volunteers removed 16 bags of weeds. A large majority of that was mugwort. ~10 tree of heavens were removed from the rain garden area. Bidens bipinnata is an exciting new addition to the garden that has self-seeded. There were 7 volunteers including 4 members of the church.
- 09.19.24, 09.20.24, 09.24.24: WheatonArts Volunteer Workgroups. There were 15 participants over 3 days that weeded the areas we plan to plant on our fall planting day in October.

04.27.24: The Tomlins', Manumuskin River Cleanup, Campfire, & Potluck. Fifteen volunteers pulled large pieces of debris off the eastern shoreline of the Manumuskin around Vicky and Rob Tomlin's house. Debris pulled out included 4 tires, a large crab trap, three plastic trash barrels, large pieces of styrofoam, numerous wooden planks, a table, and more. There was a special guest appearance from Smokey the Bear! Vicky and Rob hosted us with a campfire and potluck afterwards for those who wished to stay.

June – July. Cumberland County Summer Youth Employment Program. CUMR worked with the County to hire an intern which was fully funded through SYEP. This intern worked on digitizing and mapping historic data that CUMR has on file

from both the bluebird and sensitive joint-vetch community science projects that started in the late 90s. This updated information will make managing these projects easier and will help staff better analyze the successes of these flora and fauna management initiatives.

08.01- 08.03.24- Leamings Mill, Italia Avenue, Garden Road, Dragonfly Mercury Sampling. Community scientists took to the water in search of dragonfly larvae at three local sites as a part of the 10th anniversary of the Dragonfly Mercury Project. The samples collected have been sent off to the University of Maine for testing to establish mercury deposition in local waterways. Over 50 biota and 3 water samples were collected and submitted for testing this year. There were 14 total attendees.

09.03.2024. *Pre-project Drone Footage*. CU Executive Director along with former ArcGis specialist and volunteer, visited the Manumuskin with Youth Volunteer Vera Rossini to get pre-project footage of the Manumuskin River wetland restoration site.

09.28.24: Alliance Beach, Annual Waterways Cleanup. A new partnership was begun with a company, DS Smith, in Vineland who brought 19 staff out with an incredible work ethic. 60 bags of trash were picked up in just under two hours. Two CUMR volunteers removed trash by kayak from the water and the opposite streambank. Sizable items collected included 2 couches, 2 tires, an artificial Christmas tree with all the ornaments on it, 2 kitchen chairs, and a few other large pieces of debris.

Invasive Species Management

04.23.24: Neighborhood Wildlife Garden Volunteer Workgroup. Eight volunteers removed old stems and invasives such as Bradford pears, Tree of Heaven, Norway maple seedlings, English ivy, and Asiatic bittersweet. We also transplanted some small red cedars into the back portion of the garden and cleaned up the hellstrip.

April-September, Wetlands Restoration. CUMR Executive Director is working with Restore America's Estuaries to fulfill necessary requirements in order to secure the project funding that was awarded in June 2023. CUMR and RAE initially aimed to sign contracts by May; however, the contract was signed at the end of August. Pending final permitting approvals, the proposed project will remove *Phragmites australis* from the Wild and Scenic Manumuskin. Now that the contract has been signed, CUMR has resumed outreach activities with the Riverfront Property Owners and signed the contract with the environmental consultant. Currently we are working on defining the data collection protocols and drafting the EPA QAPP application for approval.

07.16.24: CU Maurice River office, Parrot Feather Mapping Training. In this training session, volunteers learned about the history of parrot feather on the Menantico, why it's a threat, and our project plan on mapping its extent. They learned how to identify several aquatic invasives including parrot feather watermifoil (Myriophyllum aquaticum), water forgetme-not (Myosotis scorpioides), and pond water-starwort (Callitriche stagnalis). They also got an overview of the sampling locations and learned how to use the GPS unit to collect data in the field on the presence of these aquatic invasives. Volunteers visit their assigned sites independently in teams to collect the data over the following week. This data has been given to the Program Manager and input. It will inform us of the next steps for the recovery of the Menantico River.

09.17.2024: Rotary Presentation. CU Maurice River Executive Director gave a presentation at the Vineland Rotary Club on the upcoming wetlands restoration project along the Manumuskin River.

09.30.24: Volunteer Workgroup at CUMR's Wetland Revegetation Site at Amcor Packaging. CU Program Manager and a volunteer gardener were joined by 10 employees from Amcor Plastics to clean up this riverfront industrial property and the surrounding natural area. Amcor employees helped clean up the Wetland Revegetation site that was planted in 2020 by CUMR. Numerous invasive species including multiflora rose and autumn olive were removed. Some aggressive natives were trimmed back like hempvine and blackberry.

Access

April-September - Waterway Access Map. Princeton Hydro developed an online ArcGIS Story Map of recreational resources on the river: a paddle trail for the Maurice River Watershed. CUMR Executive Director gathered mapping data, provided images, and drafted text. CUMR has also provided audio files to be included in a self-guided river tour within the Story Map. During this time, a soft opening was released and CUMR has been collecting input and data from its membership to add to this online tool.

OUTREACH, ENGAGEMENT, AND COVERAGE

- 04.06.24 Barn Studio of Arts Spring Fest. CUMR Administrative Assistant and three volunteers worked as ambassadors at the Barn Studio of Art's Spring community festival in Millville, NJ. Ambassadors engaged with roughly twenty members of the community at this cultural sight over a three-hour period and provided organizational information and general information about the Wild and Scenic Maurice River, along with postcards containing the programming schedule for the upcoming year.
- 04.08.24 Cumberland County Leadership Program: Having graduated from this program last year, CU Executive Director led a walk for this group at the Maurice River Bluffs Preserve. The participants learned about the different resources and industries that make up Cumberland County. This was a great opportunity to introduce promising professionals to the area's conservation history.
- 05.04.24: WheatonArts ECO Fair. Robin A. Jess was contracted to be the keynote speaker at the Eco Fair. She is the botanical illustrator who designed NJ's Pinelands license plate and created an art exhibit of 40 watercolors of pineland plants in cooperation with the PPA and funded by the Geraldine Dodge Foundation. At this event, she gave a talk entitled "Botanical Illustration: Capturing a Moment" in which she discussed the importance of botanical illustration, different artistic methods used, and how it differs from nature journaling. Thirty people attended her talk. CU Volunteers hosted three tables: one education table in the garden, one education table in the festival, and one outreach table. For the educational activity we gave kids nature journals to complete during the festival for a prize.
- 05.11.24 Horseshoe Crab Festival CU Maurice River Administrative Assistant and 5 ambassadors tabled the Downe Township Horseshoe Crab Festival held in Fortescue. The festival gave ambassadors not only a chance to promote the Wild and Scenic Watershed, but also the reTURN the Favor program with members of communities that host the Horseshoe Crab migration. Over 5 hours, CUMR engaged with about 300 community members.
- 05.17.2024 Interview with National Fish and Wildlife. CU Maurice River was interviewed by a US Fish and Wildlife Service Communications staffer, who wrote an article on the CUMR's green infrastructure projects that were installed between 2020-2021 with funding from the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation.
- 06.02.24 Barn Day. CU Maurice River Administrative Assistant and 7 ambassadors worked at an information and habitat education table at the annual Barn Studio of Art's Barn Day in Millville, NJ. Interacting with approximately 100 community members over 5 hours CUMR ambassadors assisted children in an interpretive paint-a-landscape activity of the Barn Studio's surroundings and native gardens while also promoting the Wild and Scenic Maurice River's scenic values.
- 09.12.2024: Maurice River Cruise. CU Maurice River Executive Director met with Nancy Cohen and her associate to discuss the role of the river and its natural resources in leading to the development of the world's largest glasstown. The initial meeting happened on April 16. Nancy had never been on the river before, so CUMR organized a river cruise on Captain Dave's pontoon boat. CUMR invited some of the area's most studied historians on the glass industry, direct family members to the former owners of Wheaton Industries, and local glass artists that are keeping the glass tradition alive.
- 09.14.24: Mauricetown RiverFest. CU Maurice River once again partnered with Cumberland County Heritage and Cultural Commission and the Mauricetown Historical Society to organize this community festival that celebrates the interplay between the natural and cultural resources of the Maurice River. This year's event highlighted the work of renowned and upcoming artists whose work is inspired by the watershed landscapes. There were 17 participants at the Artist Speaker Panel and 25 participants for the Architecture Walk. Twelve CU Ambassadors helped at the CUMR table.
- April September, SNJ Today. CU Board President continues to submit articles to the local newspaper, SNJ Today which are published on a weekly basis. These are included in the Feature Section under *The Great Outdoors* which explores the region's natural and cultural wonders. Many of CUMR's events receive the spotlight by her online articles and newspaper proper.

PARTNERSHIPS AT WORK

National Park Service's Wild and Scenic Partnership Program – CUMR has been contracting with the National Park Service to implement aspects of the Maurice River Wild and Scenic Rivers Management Plan since c. 2004. Prior to this, CUMR was awarded NPS Partnership grants beginning in 1996. Proper administration of the Wild and Scenic River Management Plan remains a cornerstone of our work. In the second and third quarters of 2024, CUMR continued to work with the River Manager, Paul Kenney, to meet new reporting expectations and modify formats successfully.

06.18.24 – *Meeting with the City of Millville*. CU Executive Director and Program Manager met with the City's Shade Tree Commission and Engineering department to discuss solutions and appropriate funding opportunities for the repair of the Maurice River Bicycle and Walking Trail. A solution would need to include the dike repair, erosion control measures, and wetland restoration.

From 2021 – Land Preservation. Since 2021 CUMR Executive Director has been assisting New Jersey Conservation Foundation's Delaware Bay Watershed Regional Manager Rob Ferber to preserve a 120-acre lot within the NJ Pinelands and on the Wild and Scenic Manumuskin River located in Vineland. Preservation is expected by the end of this year or the beginning of 2025. Currently, CUMR is coordinating debris and litter clean up on the same property as part of the Green Acres criteria for conservation.

09.09.2024 - Laurel Lake Homeowners Association. At the Millville Planning Board, CU Executive Director supported the LLHOA's position and objected to the inclusion of the lot just east of Upper Laurel Lake and on Buckshutem Creek (C1-Designation) into an overlay zone - Area in Need of Redevelopment. CUMR also objected to the inclusion of the "Triangle" (Silver Run, Dividing Creek, and Buckshutem Roads) into the same redevelopment overlay zone. The Planning Board decided to remove the property adjacent to Upper Laurel Lake but did not do the same for the Triangle.

FORUMS, COALITIONS, ADVOCACY, AND THE LIKE

South Jersey Bayshore Coalition – CUMR continues to coordinate the meetings of SJBC. CUMR drafted a sign-on letter in response to the closure of the East Point Lighthouse and coordinated the revision and sign on of participating partners. The letter urged the decision makers involved in the negotiations to recognize the importance this structure has in preserving the quality of life and tourism economy of *Down Jersey* as well as New Jersey and to set differences aside to better prioritize the prompt reopening of this cultural asset. The letter was sent to Maurice River Township Historical Society, Maurice River Township Committee, Cumberland County Board of Commissioners, NJDEP Commissioner and Fish & Wildlife, US Congressman Van Drew, Governor Murphy, State Senator Testa, State Assemblyman McClellan, State Representative Simonsen, and US Senator Booker.

September 26-27: Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed Forum. CUMR Executive Director, Program Manager, and Program Coordinator attended the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed's Forum in Bethlehem, PA. This symposium offers many training and networking opportunities to staff. Employees walk away with more knowledge on how to grow CUMR's protection of the Wild and Scenic Maurice River's Outstanding Resource Values by gleaning from partners' experiences throughout the greater watershed. To build working relationships, gain insight on funding resources, and share conservation perspectives as they pertain to protecting the ORVs of the Wild and Scenic Maurice River.

Wild and Scenic Coalition - CU Maurice River has attended Coalition's meetings and follows their mailings; these have been helpful in connecting our team with available resources and updating us on current activity within the program.

Delaware Bayshore Council – CU Maurice River has been functioning as the interim SJBC representative on the Bayshore Council.

Association of New Jersey Environmental Educators – Programming staff continues to interact with this association benefiting from the community's knowledge, skills, and resources.

CU also continues to serve on the *Aquaculture Stakeholder Committee* for the State and Federal conservation measures that involve the oyster harvest and its impacts on shorebirds. This is specific to the federally endangered red knot and its migration on the Delaware Bayshore.

April - September – Cumberland County Tourism Advisory Council. In March 2024 CUMR Executive Director accepted a seat on the Cumberland County Tourism Advisory Council. She hopes to assist in building ecotourism in the region while ensuring that use is responsible and sustainable.

OUTDOOR EDUCATION FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES

Connie Jost Scholarship - Longtime Scholarship Coordinator Tricia Dufford has stepped down from her role in

leading this program. CUMR is forever grateful for Tricia's volunteerism and dedication over the years. WheatonArts' Pam Weichmann has agreed to see that this scholarship continues, while Tricia remains on the review committee. Pam has also secured new review committee members, who bring a variety of talent, creativity, and artistic skill sets. The first applicants have already submitted for the 2024 award. During this period, the applicants' work and supporting deliverables were reviewed. The winner was selected.

Outdoor Classrooms and Partners in Education

08.20.24: The Galettos, Elevate. The 19th annual summer enrichment Elevate program with families from the Word of Life Christian Worship Center in Vineland was held for a full day of nature themed activities on the Maurice River. This program aims to bring more children and families to experience the Wild and Scenic Maurice River through boat trips, painting inspired by the river landscape, and learning about local wildlife through birding, touring a pollinator garden, and seining activities. CUMR is grateful for the families who attended, for Brenda Bundy and Priscilla McCoy for coordinating, to the Millville Fire Dept. and Millville Fire EMS, and for all of the CUMR Volunteers who helped make this event safe and educational.

08.07.24-08.29.24. Nature Journaling. In this year of Nature Journaling, school aged children were introduced to the following topics: Plant anatomy and how to use microscopes at Wheaton gardens and nature trail, birds and how to use binoculars at the Maurice River Bluffs, insects/macroinvertebrates and how to use dipnets at Parvin State Park, and landscapes and habitats at Peek Preserve. On studio days, local landscape artist, retired elementary art teacher, and CU Volunteer Linda Robinson taught students how to draw and observe specific features of nature. The program was filled with 15 participants. On the outdoor excursion days, various parents joined us on the trail – even joining in on the nature journaling at times.

09.23.24: Maurice River Bluffs Walk with Girl Scout Troop. CU Volunteers Greg & Stacey Staman joined CU's Program Manager in leading a girl scout troop for a nature walk at the Maurice River Bluffs. The group ventured down the Orange Trail to the bird blind and observed a bald eagle on the osprey platform eating its prey. This was quite an exhilarating experience for many Scouts!

Family-Friendly Friday

05.24.24 – Union Road, Family-Friendly Friday: Frog Slog. Despite a healthy sign up of twenty folks, only one family took part in the Frog Slog this year. The group observed, heard, and caught a variety of frogs including leopard frogs, bull frogs, Pine Barrens tree frogs, and northern gray tree frogs. In addition, we also caught and observed a ribbon snake, salamanders, and a variety of macro invertebrates. There were 6 people in attendance.

06.21.24 – Good Sports Gun Club, Family-Friendly Friday: Outdoorsman's Night. Multiple families came together to learn outdoor skills. The first skill presented was knot-tying by CU Volunteer Youth Awardee Vera Rossini. The families broke into groups and participated in learning fishing skills with the Robbins family, archery with Julio Poventud and Julia Wiberg, and wilderness first aid with Ron and Annalisa Franceschini. The night ended with a discussion on fire safety. There were 27 people in attendance.

07.19.24 – Learnings Mill, Family-Friendly Friday: Creek Critters. Families gathered to get wet and dirty and to explore Learnings Mill. Families got into the stream with dipnets and buckets and pulled out specimens. The CU Program Coordinator worked to identify the biota that was found and relate their natural history to stream health. The group found dragonfly nymphs, damselflies, fish, and crawfish. There were 15 participants.

08.23.24 – Belleplain State Forest, Family-Friendly Friday: Astronomy Party. Families were invited to join CUMR at Belleplain State Forest for a night of astronomy. Crafts, activities, and a guest speaker from the South Jersey Astronomy Club were on the docket for the evening. Unfortunately, poor weather conditions kept most folks away. – 7 in attendance

09.20.24 - Postponed until October: Family-Friendly Friday: Map and Compass Night. Leader conflict.

Outdoor Education in Local Schools

04.22.24 – Maurice River Township School, Earth Day Celebration. CU's Program Coordinator Julia visited two second grade classes and taught them about horseshoe crabs and migrating shorebirds. The classes had the opportunity to create a craft horseshoe crab to take home and to play a game to better understand keystone species.

06.03.24-East Point, Maurice River Bluffs Preserve, Maurice River Township School Field Trip. Two MRT 3rd grade

classes took part in a nature walk at the Bluffs Preserve and in RTF at East Point Lighthouse. The students were also given a tour of the lighthouse by Nancy Patterson. 180 crabs were flipped/rescued. There were 10 volunteers, 48 students, parents, teachers, and 1 staff member in attendance.

06.05.24- East Point, Maurice River Bluffs Preserve, St. Mary's School Field Trip. One St. Mary's 3rd grade class took part in a nature walk at the Bluffs Preserve and in RTF at East Point Lighthouse. The students were also given a tour of the lighthouse by Nancy Patterson. 257 crabs were flipped/rescued. There were 8 volunteers, 42 students, parents, teachers, and 2 staff in attendance.

07.11 & 16. 24- Millville Child Family Center. As part of Millville Child Family Center's summer programing, CUMR visited several classes and discussed all things birds! In the classroom, we dove into the world of birds—learning about different species, calls and songs, diets, and nests. The students also had a chance to be creative, as they made and decorated their own binoculars with their teachers. Then, we took our new skills and binoculars to the garden at WheatonArts. Observing birds in their natural habitat was a wonderful opportunity for the students to get outdoors, experience nature, and see wildlife up close. There were 50 students and teachers participating each day.

OPERATIONS AND OFFICE SUPPORT

Personnel

09.16.24: Outreach and Special Events Coordinator – CU Maurice River has been looking to complete its staff by filling this position. After applying and interviewing, Cynthia Hornblower joined CUMR's ranks. Her responsibilities will encompass outreach to the broader community, education at local community eco-centered events, training members to be ambassadors for CUMR's mission of river conservation and engaging the watershed residents with our stewardship opportunities.

April – September: CUMR's Retired Office Manager Doreen Homan continued training the new Administrative Staff; however, as training progresses her hours decrease. She is currently working to train with the Outreach and Special Events Coordinator when needed for a total of five hours per week.

April – September: During this period, CUMR's new Administrative Assistant Gregory Kears completed initial training on daily and monthly operational responsibilities. He is now working independently of his trainer and is becoming familiar with the timing and tasks associated with annually reoccurring matters. Currently, he is assuming new charges. He is working closely with the Executive Director to increase his working knowledge of NPS Cooperative Agreement workings and reporting.

June – August: Cumberland County Internship Program provided CUMR with a summer apprentice. This project offers youths of the area an opportunity to explore the diversity of job opportunities within Cumberland County. Through this initiative, CUMR hired Annalisa Franceschini who compiled, normalized, and digitized historic data from CUMR's wildlife and flora management projects.

Training

Association of New Jersey Environmental Educators - CU's Program Manager and Coordinator continue to take advantage of ANJEE's training and networking opportunities.

River Management Society's Wild and Scenic Speaker Series – As part of her position's training process, CUMR's new Membership and Special Events Coordinator has accessed these webinars to learn more about the history and functioning of the National Park Service's Wild and Scenic Program.

ADMINISTRATIVE WORK

National Park Service - Administrative reporting to the National Park Service is an aspect of our functioning beyond the actual carrying-out of the contracted deliverables. Staff continue to work with NPS River Manager to implement reporting procedures

Office

Administrative staff works to maintain an efficient, welcoming, and safe workspace for the whole CUMR team. They also

manage organizational documentation, supply inventory, service contracting, and purchasing.

September: 2025 Calendar of Events - Executive Director and Administrative Assistant began to set dates for CUMR's 2025 calendar of events and volunteer opportunities. Programming staff has been designing the stewardship and education offerings.

April – September: CU Staff worked on tallying participation and volunteer data for end of the year reporting and volunteer recognition.

April – September: CU Executive Director and Board Member Gary Moellers continue to work on the development of an employee handbook for the organization.

September: Noticing that there is a global need for increased cyber- and communication security, CUMR has been researching and making inquiries for service estimates. These protections were put into place at the beginning of October.

Board of Trustees

June – In preparation for the Annual Business and Membership Meeting in November, the CUMR Board of Trustees invited Maurice River Township Mayor Ken Whildin and (Ret.) Director, Construction & Renovation at Thomas Jefferson University Hospitals Susan Milner to join the Board. After they agreed to serve, the Administrative Assistant prepared and mailed proxies to the Active Member List.

Volunteer, Participation, and Financial Tracking - The programming and administrative staff continue to track many aspects of CUMR activities, including but not limited to NPS billing, volunteer hours, participation/attendance, volunteer recruitment, bookkeeping, corporate support, birth, deaths, illnesses - all the details that make CUMR a community.

Social Media – CU Maurice River's Facebook page is more active than ever. Visitors can view videos, see pictures from outings, read volunteer stories, and much more. By following CUMR and liking our posts, you not only stay better connected but you also help us get more information out to more people in the community.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN CONSERVATION, APPRECIATION, AND STEWARDSHIP

Past Programming:

04.02.24 – Tuesday on the Fly: Cedar Rose Vineyards Tour. A group of CU Maurice River members experienced an extensive tour of Cedar Rose Vineyards led by owner Dustin Tarpine. The owner explained how the Maurice River Watershed's high ground water quality of the Kirkwood-Cohansey Aquifer combined with soil characteristics have made for perfect growing conditions for grapes. The attendees learned about New Jersey's rich wine growing history and the immigrants who began it. The group was able to view the vineyards, walk through the barrel room, observe how the machinery works, and learn about the process of wine making. There were 18 people in attendance

04.06.24 - CU Maurice River Office, Plant Morphology Class & Walk - The Program Manager led a class in Plant Morphology, the study of the external structure of plants native to the watershed for 12 participants. After the presentation, attendees walked along the Maurice River to collect plants brought back to the office. The group learned how to use a dichotomous key and practiced keying out plants with Newcomb's Wildflower Guide.

04.18.24 - Levoy Theatre, CU Film Series: The Industry and Art of Glass — This was a CU Film Series double feature. In the first film, Shattered, the attendees learned how the abundance of lumber, sand, and navigable waters in the Maurice River Watershed and Down Jersey Region lent to the development of South Jersey's glass industry. The film chronicles the founding, growth, and demise of the largest family-owned producer of glassware in the world, Wheaton Industries. The Millville Rose was invented within the Maurice River Watershed. The second film, Paul J. Stankard: Flower & Flame, explores the story of world-renowned glass artist and southern New Jersey local Paul Stankard who through his art married the smallest of earthly wonders with his devotion to the creative vision and process to encapsulate a whole natural world of inspiration in a paperweight.

Following the first film there was a Q&A with Bill Horin, Art C Executive Director, and a Flower & Flame speaker panel with artist Paul J. Stankard, Director Dan Collins (Dan Collins Media), Executive Producer David Graeber (Graeber Art Glass), and Phil Surdam, Vice President of Chemglass Life Sciences. 109 People were in attendance.

- 04.20.24 CU Saturday: Down Jersey Cemeteries and Churches. The CUMR group embarked on a journey through local historical churches and cemeteries during April's CU Saturday. At each stop special speakers and community members including Chris Mohan, Reverend Ken Larter, Joe Ross, Lisa Garrison, Jim Bergmann, and Jay Reed illuminated chapters in our local heritage. From the serene Siloam Cemetery to the captivating Old Broad Street Presbyterian Church, every location resonated with stories of the past, showcasing the profound influence of the Maurice River on our shared history. This event serves as a reminder of our roots and the significance of preserving our cultural history for generations to come. There were 29 participants.
- 04.27.24 Peek Preserve, 4th Saturday Walk. CU Naturalists Tony Klock and Mary Watkins led the group on the first 4th Saturday Walk of 2024 on the Wild and Scenic Maurice River at the Peek Preserve. Highlights of the walk included spotting a pine warbler, a yellow-throated warbler, and several lady slippers in bloom. There were 18 people in attendance.
- 05.01.24 Mauricetown Historical Society, What It's Like to Be a Warbler Class. A group gathered to learn about warblers from CU Naturalist Bert Hixon. The group went out to Mauricetown Preserve prior to the class and observed various species of tanagers and warblers. Then Bert led the class in a presentation on warblers, migration, and prepared them for the outing that was hosted the following week. There were 17 participants for this event.
- 05.07.24 Tuesday on the Fly: Cassaday Farm Tour. Cody Cassaday of Cassady Farms hosted and provided a tour of his agricultural stewardship practices along with NJ Audubon's Alyssa Bright. This outing showcased the best management and conservation projects completed and in progress on the farm. With the help of NJ Audubon, the farm owner has been able to create riparian buffers, utilize cover crops, and significantly decrease the need for fertilizing and tilling. There were 12 people in attendance.
- 05.08.24 Belleplain State Forest, Spring Migration Walk. The group caravaned through Belleplain State Forest with CU Naturalist Bert Hixon and avid birder Ruth Bergstrom in search of spring migrants. The highlight of the day was spotting summer tanagers and an indigo bunting. There were 10 participants.
- 05.08.24 The Cumberland County Improvement Authority, Membership Meeting and Presentation
 CU Executive Director summarized business and office ongoings to the membership, and an overview of past and upcoming events and projects was provided. The membership was also introduced to the Shorebird Intern Project and invited to volunteer. Then Emmy Casper, Wildlife Biologist with Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ presented on the American oystercatcher project on the Delaware Bay. There were 21 people in attendance
- 05.11.24: CU Maurice River Office, Flowering Plant Families Class & Walk. Participants learned about 14 of the most common flowering plant families in New Jersey and then took a walk through Waltman Park to put their newly gained knowledge to work. There were 6 participants.
- 05.18.24 CU's Big Day. Dawn Song Walk Many warblers were heard at Hansey Creek Road, even with the drizzly weather hikers caught glimpses of many including bay–breasted warbler and yellow warbler. There were also splendid views of a male orchard oriole to be had. Because of the rainy weather, the paddle was canceled but the bird walk was extended. The group also visited the Maple Ave. impoundments where eagles on a nest were spotted, Turkey Point where the group delighted in finding many barn swallows feeding, and finally to Fortescue to view shorebirds. In the afternoon, the CUMR community gathered at a private property along the Wild and Scenic Maurice River to celebrate a year of environmental stewardship and volunteers who go above and beyond. The International Shorebird Scientist Team was also in attendance and provided updates on the red knot and other shorebird species' status. This year CU Maurice River gave special recognition to nine volunteers. Ah Why Knot Award Winners of 2025 were Roger Asselta, Cindi Berry, Steve and Michele Borek, Linda Finch, Bill Garwood, Stultz Taylor, Mary Watkins, and Greg Staman. Meghan Martin received the Executive Award and Sue Milner received the Presidential Award. 125 in attendance.
- 05.30.24 East Point, What It's Like to Be a Shorebird Class. For the third installment of What It's Like to Be a Bird the focus was placed on shorebirds. The group gathered at East Point Lighthouse to learn from our speaker for the evening, CU Naturalist Mary Watkins. Mary discussed this group of birds as a whole and then focused on several local species the group would be likely to spot in our area this time of year. There were 9 participants.
- 06.01.24 East Point, Shorebird Walk. The group met first at the East Point beaches and observed semi-palmated sanderlings and a red knot. Then they traveled to Heislerville and observed skimmers. The last stop was at Fortescue

- 06.20.24: The Bayshore Center at Bivalve, CU Social: Birds of May with Larry Niles. The short documentary film by Jared Flesher called Birds of May was shown in partnership with the Bayshore Center at Bivalve. This film explores the environmental impact of oyster hatcheries on red knots in Delaware Bay. The film features shorebird scientists Dr. Larry Niles and Dr. Joanna Burger as they conduct an aquaculture impact study to determine how the red knots' feeding behavior is affected by aquaculture operations in the intertidal zone. After the film, Dr. Larry Niles discussed his take on the impact of oyster hatcheries and overall threats to horseshoe crabs and what people can do to get involved with the Horseshoe Crab Recovery Coalition.
- 06.22.24 Peek Preserve, 4th Saturday Walk. CU Naturalists Tony Klock and Mary Watkins led this 4th Saturday Walk where the group spotted turtles, pine warblers, and enjoyed the songs of vireos and waterthrush. There were 9 people in attendance.
- 06.29.24: Pat Sutton's Garden Tour. Pat Sutton led two sold out tours of her backyard gardens. Her husband and (Ret.) environmental consultant and ornithologist joined us. Together they identified flora and fauna species and interpreted their life cycles and need for spaces with native plants. Due to the drought-like conditions there were few plants flowering. Pat informed us and keyed attendees on to her backyard water meter. The Wildlife Gardener Native Nursery also opened to accommodate tour members in purchasing native plants. Some attendees went to Goshen Gardens to purchase natives. There were 43 participants involved in two tours.
- 07.02.24 Moore's Meadow, Tuesday on the Fly: NJ Blueberry Farming. The group spent the day exploring the rich history and beauty of Moore's Meadow Blueberry & Cranberry Farm LLC, a seventh-generation owned farm located in the "Gateway to the Pines". Samuel Moore, the farm's proud owner, led the tour sharing fascinating insights into farming practices and the farm's heritage. Retired Pinelands Historian Alicia Bjornson shared her knowledge of Elizabeth Coleman White's pivotal role in blueberry cultivation in New Jersey as we ventured through the farm. Learning about local figures like Elizabeth Coleman White enriches our understanding of our community's agricultural roots. To cap off the day, the group couldn't resist indulging in some locally made delights from DiDonato Family Fun Center. The group enjoyed homemade blueberry ice cream crafted from the very field they explored earlies. There were 22 people in attendance.
- 07.10.24- Cumberland County Improvement Authority, Membership Meeting and Presentation
 CU Executive Director provided a business summary to the membership and broader community. Special educational emphasis was placed on the current happenings in zoning and planning that could negatively impact the outstanding resource values of the Wild and Scenic Maurice River. Staff provided an update on past and upcoming events and projects with the group. Afterward, Larissa Smith of Conserve Wildlife Foundation of NJ presented on the Eastern Tiger Salamander Project in Southern New Jersey. There were 29 people in attendance.
- 08.17.24: Explore Flora on Cumberland Pond Paddle. CUMR led a two-hour paddle on Cumberland Pond and Wild and Scenic Manumuskin River until the rain thwarted the rest of the outing. Thirteen participants learned 21 plants. USDA National Plant Database Team Lead, and watershed native Gerry Moore met the group at the end to ID a few additional aquatic plants that were collected.
- 08.19.24 Moonlight Paddle. It was canceled due to inclement weather conditions.
- 08.14-17 Purple Martin Spectacular. Once again, CUMR set off with four full boats to view the staging of the purple martins on the Wild and Scenic Maurice River. The birds were roosting in the meadow just southeast of the Mauricetown Causeway. Due to variable weather conditions during the early season and high summer temperatures, it was estimated that the number of birds was not as high as in previous years; however, the spectacle was still awe inspiring and the Maurice River sunsets vivid. We hope for more advantageous conditions next year. A special thank you to Captain Mike, Captain Dave, and their crew's hospitality onboard the Bonanza II. 272 guests onboard over four nights.
- 08.22.24: Riverfront Renaissance Center for the Arts, CU Film Series. A double feature of documentary films was shown: Run Wild Run Free (2018), which tells the story of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 and its legacy, and Down Jersey (1997), which explores the portions of Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties that constitute the Delsea Region of the New Jersey Coastal Heritage Trail Route. After the films we held a panel and Q&A with Paul Kenney, River Manager for the Partnership Wild & Scenic Rivers Program with the National Park Service and Jane Morton Galetto, Board President of CU Maurice River. Paul addressed the creation and importance of the partnership Wild and Scenic Rivers program and Jane discussed the Maurice River designation story and how the Maurice River was incorporated into the Wild and Scenic Rivers Program. There were 30 participants.

09.03.24- Cape Shore Laboratory and NJ Aquaculture Center Tuesday on the Fly: Aquaculture. The tour started at The New Jersey Aquaculture Innovation Center, where Hatchery Manager Sean Towers provided an insightful tour of their operations. Following that, the group explored Cape Shore labs and the oyster farm with Operations Manager Sam Ratcliff. Participants enjoyed a hands-on experience, walking out to the oyster beds during low tide and examining larval oysters under a microscope. The group delved into the fascinating world of algae, oysters, and scallops, and learned about both the restoration and commercial aspects of oystering. There were 18 attendees.

09.11.24 – Membership Meeting and Presentation

For the September membership meeting, CU Executive Director led the attendees through the agenda. A special announcement was made that CUMR was able to sign the contract with Restore America's Estuaries for the Restoring the Wild and Scenic Manumuskin River's Pristine Wetland Habitat Project. Then Rowan University professor Dr. Dan Duran presented on insect biodiversity in Southern New Jersey. There were 22 people in attendance.

09.21.24 – Nature Journaling. Cancelled.

STAYING CONNECTED AND ENGAGED

Calendar - Remember to check our calendar online at www.cumauriceriver.org for any changes or updates to events and volunteer opportunities.

Social Media – CU Maurice River's Facebook page is more active than ever! You can view videos, see pictures from outings, read volunteer stories, and so much more. By following CUMR and liking our posts, you not only stay better connected but you also help us get more information to more people in the community.

Address Changes - Please keep us posted about any changes in your email or mailing address. Our communications contain a helpful stream of reminders and updates that you won't want to miss.

Membership and Renewals - Please help us by ensuring that your membership is up-to-date and/or inviting a friend to join. Membership is set at \$20 for individuals and \$30 for families, although our average annual donation is approximately \$75. Mail your check to PO Box 474, Millville, NJ 08332 or join online at www.cumauriceriver.org. If you are interested in learning more about the monthly-giving program, please reach out to CitizensUnited@CUMauriceRiver.org, (856) 300-5331.

A special thanks to all those who give the equally important gift of your time.

We could not do this without you!

CU on the River!

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