

# NEW TAUNTON RIVER CAMPAIGN BEGINS

*The Taunton River watershed is the last great frontier for conservation in eastern Massachusetts. The second largest watershed in the Commonwealth, the area includes large swaths of unprotected high quality wildlife habitat and still unbroken stretches of agricultural land.*

THE TAUNTON RIVER itself is the longest coastal river in New England without a dam or obstruction over its entire length. Mile after mile of riverfront remains in a natural or agricultural condition, with hardly a home or other building to sully the illusion of being somewhere far more remote.

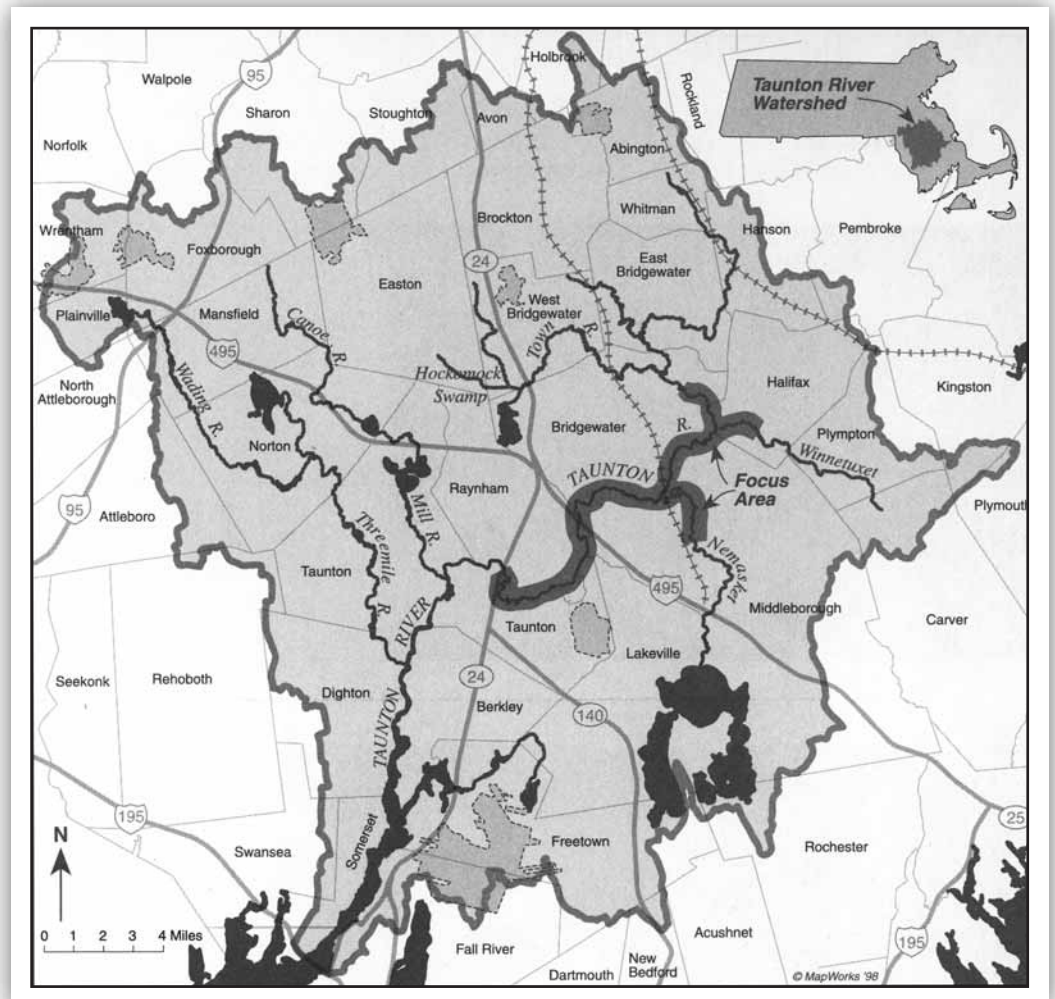
NEARLY INVISIBLE FROM most roads, with a limited residential constituency, and flowing through a region of “land rich/cash poor” property owners, the Taunton River region has challenged a generation of conservationists and river advocates. Few towns in the watershed have passed the Community Preservation Act, no major staffed sanctuaries or reservations are located along the river or its major tributaries, environmental education offerings are limited, and support for local open space initiatives has been difficult to achieve in all but two or three of the thirty plus towns in the watershed.

NOW A CONFLUENCE of two critical forces has created a new and potentially positive future for the river and the watershed: the completion of a Taunton River Wild and Scenic Study and the instigation of a Taunton River Campaign by the Sheehan Family Foundation.

THE TAUNTON RIVER Wild and Scenic Study, a four year effort led by the National Park Service, with support from Congressmen Frank, McGovern, and Lynch, and Southeastern Regional Planning and Economic Development District (SRPEDD), involved the ten core communities fronting the river, from Halifax and Bridgewater at the headwaters to Fall River and Somerset on Mt. Hope and Narragansett Bays. The

Wildlands Trust had an official seat at the table right from the start, in the person of Scott MacFaden, acknowledging our previous successful partnership efforts along the river as part of the Taunton River Stewardship Program. State Senator Marc Pacheco also played a leading role in focusing attention on the river.

THE WILD AND SCENIC STUDY found that the river area is home to



154 bird species and an incredible 45 fish species, from nesting bald eagles to the globally-rare Atlantic sturgeon and the largest alewife run in the Commonwealth. Over 350 plant species are found, including three globally-rare species. At least two rare habitat types were identified: freshwater and brackish tidal marshes. The river was used by Native Americans for thousands of years and the shores harbor one of the most significant Paleoindian archeological sites in New England. Our nation's industrial revolution and maritime history were played out along the river, with the city of Taunton surprisingly being one of the great home ports for four, five, and six-masted schooners.

THE STUDY, endorsed earlier this year by all of the communities along the river, generated an unprecedented level of citizen interest in the river and its resources. Legislation has been introduced in Washington by Rep. Frank and Sen. Kennedy to officially designate the river as a National Wild and Scenic River. All of the communities have joined forces to form the Taunton River Stewardship Council.

BUT AS ALL OF US KNOW: good intentions, plans, and studies alone do not necessarily lead to actions on the ground. And that is where the Taunton River Campaign begins.

THE TAUNTON RIVER Campaign was conceived by Meg Sheehan of the Sheehan Family Foundation and based on her years of interest in the river, direct experience in several complex land and water conservation projects, and dialogue with many of the citizens, officials, and non-profit

groups involved. According to Meg, "We have recently seen many positive developments emerging for the Taunton River system. This provides a great impetus for all of us to step up and make a difference."

THIS FALL THE FOUNDATION made a major financial commitment to the Taunton watershed and brought together a steering committee to lead a campaign comprised of the Taunton River Watershed Alliance, The Nature Conservancy, Save the Bay, SRPEDD, and the Wildlands Trust. Also participating in the campaign are Mass Audubon, Trustees of Reservations, Trust for Public Land, and the Manomet Center for Conservation Sciences. Meg says that "We continue to face many challenges to protect natural resources in the region. Working together these groups can enhance their effectiveness." The campaign is designed to generate results: land protected, water quality and quantity enhanced, better municipal planning and zoning, building the local base of support, and passage of the Wild and Scenic designation in Congress.

THE NEW TAUNTON RIVER Campaign gives us hope that some of the special places in the heartland of Southeastern Massachusetts will finally gain proper attention and protection. The work will not be easy, but your Trust has never shied away from challenge. We are so grateful to the Sheehan Family Foundation for stepping up to the plate. We look forward to working with our partners, municipalities, and citizens to protect natural resources and to generate a positive environmental and recreational future for the people of the region. 🍀

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## IN MEMORY OF

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### Phyllis Buck

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Leona Asker, Plymouth  
Order of the Eastern Star, Manomet  
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Sinclair Manufacturing Company,  
Charley, MA  
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Ritchie Park Elementary School,  
Rockville, MD  
Lawrence Wheelock  
Carol N. Perlmutter

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## IN HONOR OF

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Kathleen & Robert Carr  
*on the occasion of their anniversary*  
Gilbert & Phyllis Burns

Alice Potter Hoyt  
*on the occasion of her birthday*  
Cliff & Roma Hoyt

Noreen Wenger  
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