

2018-19

ANNUAL  
REPORT

C E L E B R A T I N G 2 0 Y E A R S



GILLS CREEK  
WATERSHED  
ASSOCIATION



## GILLS CREEK WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

### OUR VISION:

A vibrant, restored Gills Creek that is protected, valued, and enjoyed by its watershed communities.

### OUR MISSION:

The Gills Creek Watershed Association works to restore Gills Creek, educate the communities within its watershed, and advocate for the protection and preservation of the Creek's resources, beauty, and environmental sustainability.

The Gills Creek Watershed is among the largest impaired urban watersheds in South Carolina. The watershed's headwaters start above Sesquicentennial State Park and flow into the Congaree River just above Congaree Swamp National Park. Along the way, its 70 miles of streams and lakes and 47,000 acres of land affect citizens in Columbia, Forest Acres, Arcadia Lakes, Richland County, and the US Army's Fort Jackson. Gills Creek

Watershed Association is dedicated to restoring the watershed through education, grass roots action, public and private partnerships, remediation projects, and well managed development. The goal is to return the watershed to a living resource providing recreational opportunities, habitat for native wildlife and plants, and a national model for watershed planning and management.

## ON THIS 20TH ANNIVERSARY, THE GCWA THANKS YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

Although much of Gills Creek is hidden from us as we go about our everyday lives in the Columbia area, it is striking to realize that this flowing water is the main reason we live at this place. The first settlers in the late 1700s made their homes near water, and centuries of agricultural use, community development, and a nearby military base have obscured most of the creek, while still impacting it in many ways. Now, on the 20th anniversary of the Gills Creek Watershed Association, it is a time to reflect not only on our own history, but on the responsibility we have to Gills Creek and its beauty and integrity.

Over the past 20 years, the GCWA has been through several phases of growth and realization of our mission. It began as a small group of citizens who wanted to reverse declines in water quality, and this led to the development of a realistic vision of how sections of Gills Creek could be restored. But then paths to progress can be abruptly interrupted by events that reveal deeper, more complicated needs. That was the nature of the flood of 2015. Then the community rallied, citizens and governments went to work, and the GCWA shaped a broader vision and even greater ambition to restore, educate, and advocate for Gills Creek.

As we look ahead, we will continue to identify critical areas for creek restoration, and develop plans and secure funding for improvements. And as we take stock, we realize that impairment will only increase if we don't change practices and take precautions. So the fundamental element of our renewed mission continues to be our partnerships and community relationships that foster collective stewardship of this extraordinary resource – Gills Creek.

We are extraordinarily grateful to have YOU as a partner in this mission. This is truly a community challenge, and we are ever thankful for all that you do to support Gills Creek. Now we look forward to continuing this rewarding work together for the next 20 years, and beyond.

*Madilyn Fletcher, Ph.D.*

Madilyn Fletcher, Ph.D.  
Board President



## C O O R D I N A T O R ' S L E T T E R

In the short period of time that I have been a member of the Gills Creek Watershed Association team, I have come to realize just how special the members of our organization are. Your dedication and drive have built the Association and continue to bolster an excitement inside of me for what the future holds. I cannot thank you enough for your support as I have adjusted to this position and I know that, with your continued assistance, the next year in the life of the Gills Creek Watershed Association will reach a level of success of which we have never seen.



Many of our projects on the ground have really started to take shape over the past year. After many months of planning and discussion, groundbreaking on the stream remediation project along Crowson Road is set to begin in early 2020. This project has been in the works for a while and will give the community a true vision of what a group of individuals driven to protect the environment can do. I firmly believe that this project will become a cornerstone of our technical capacities and will serve as a beacon to those in the community who may be interested in participating in such efforts.

Additionally, with a recent grant from the Richland County Conservation Commission, the GCWA Watershed Management Plan is in the process of receiving an update that will allow us to target specific remediation projects. This update will provide a current perspective of watershed concerns and will allow members of local watershed communities to have a voice in what they feel would benefit from the actions of the Association. Likewise, this updated plan will also provide us the necessary documentation to continue to apply for funding these projects through the Department of Health and Environmental Control, giving us the financial backing to make a true difference in the community.

With a background in instruction, outreach to school groups has become a point of emphasis in my coordinator duties. Local outreach to community schools has been extremely successful in recruiting a new and eager group of young people that are excited to learn more about the Watershed and contribute to the mission of our Association. These efforts range from water quality sampling along the creek as part of the Adopt-A-Stream program to advocating for environmental causes on the 2018 Conservation Coalition Lobbying Day. I look forward to continuing to foster these relationships with local schools and aim to add many more schools to these efforts in the future.

Recent efforts in the creation of the Community Member category have also provided a united voice for many small, local businesses within the Watershed. In the short time since the implementation of this new membership category, we have garnered a number of new partnerships that are excited to be involved in the Association and will continue to promote our organization within the community. I look forward to continuing to add new partners and to organizing a united community of citizens and businesses that truly care about the water that flows through our fine city.

I would like to end with a very sincere and heartfelt THANK YOU for welcoming me into this role with Gills Creek Watershed Association and I cannot express how ecstatic I am for the future. This is truly an exciting time to be a part of what is being done with this organization and I am confident that the next year will be a true breakout period for Gills Creek. I look forward to working closely with you all in the future and continuing to wholeheartedly pursue the vision and mission of Gills Creek Watershed Association.

*Eric E. Goff, Ph.D.*



Let's Celebrate

20  
Years

JOIN US FOR OUR ANNUAL MEETING  
AT ST. MARTIN'S IN THE FIELD

November 7th, 2019

5:30 - 8:00 PM

MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR A  
SPECIAL ROARING 20'S WINE FOR WATER  
FEBRUARY 20TH AT SENATE'S END

# CELEBRATING TWENTY YEARS OF WATERSHED MOMENTS

## 1999-2006



*Citizens Bringing Life to an Idea*

- In the mid- to late-90s, a group of citizens came together to address declines in the lake systems east of Columbia, and they formalized their association as a non-profit organization in 1999.
- GCWA's goals were to create a strong and dedicated membership base, implement stream and lake restoration projects, and advocate for policy changes to improve water quality.



## 2007-2010



*Organizational Growth and  
Mission Development Surge*

- **2009** – The first coordinator position was established, and Jessica Artz was hired.
- **2009** – The first Watershed Management Plan was created to serve as a comprehensive guide for addressing water quality problems.
- **2009** – Community Task Force and a community outreach activity program were established.
- **2010** – The Strategic Plan was created and approved.
- **2010** – GCWA worked with Richland County on the Cary Lake Water Quality Improvement Project to remove sedimentation and address litter accumulation after decades of deterioration.



# 2011-2015



## Restoration Projects Bring Results

- **2012** – Middle Watershed Master Plan created the vision and laid the groundwork for the current Crowson Road Restoration Project and potential Greenway development through the Richland County Penny Tax Program.
- **2014** – A three-year project with Richland County and DHEC funding — the Owens Field Park Best Management Practices and Education Project — resulted in reduction of the degrading impacts of stormwater runoff in a highly used City of Columbia recreational park.
- **2014 – 2015** – GCWA worked with Richland County Stormwater and the Airport Commission on restoration of a site along Little Jackson Creek — a mitigation opportunity that arose from burying a portion of Devils Ditch at Hamilton-Owens Airport.
- **2014 – 2015** – Environmental Education Kiosks, funded by RCCC, were established at sites in Sesquicentennial State Park and the Cross Hill Market in Columbia to help answer the continual community questions “What is a watershed?” and “Why is it important?”

# 2015



## The Power of Water: the Extreme Flood Event

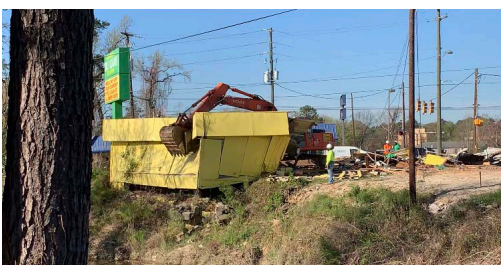
- **2015** – GCWA vigilantly provided accurate information and worked with other community flood responders during and after the dangerous and extensive flood of 2015.
- **2015** – GCWA participated in Richland County’s Blue Ribbon Commission, which was tasked with identifying flood recovery projects, ranging from floodplain buyouts to infrastructure improvements and stream restoration projects.
- **2015** – GCWA increased advocacy for strict enforcement of floodplain development ordinances, and wherever possible the preservation of floodplain and creek restoration.

# 2016



## The Pace Continues: Advancing Knowledge and Restoring the Watershed

- **2016** – GCWA began a volunteer-based water monitoring program, Adopt-A-Stream.
- **2016** – The EPA Fish Study in collaboration with the University of South Carolina at Aiken was completed. Mercury levels were measured in fish sampled from common fishing locations along the creek, and results were shared with the public through outreach materials and public meetings.
- **2017-2018** – GCWA, with support from Palmetto Pride, installed trash cans at litter hotspots to help reduce refuse entering Little Jackson Creek near Decker Boulevard.
- **2017 Ongoing** – GCWA’s largest project to date is the stream restoration project on Gills Creek of an 850-ft section along Crowson Road. This will recontour and stabilize the stream banks, replant the banks with attractive, native vegetation, and improve water quality in the Creek.





## READY FOR THE NEXT TWENTY YEARS

The GCWA has reached the point that we can better appreciate the contradictions inherent in Gills Creek. On one hand, we are much more aware of the ways in which water quality and wildlife have become degraded. Land development, insufficient understanding of natural environmental processes, and human carelessness have all played their part. On the other hand, the beauty and function of Gills Creek have become more visible — through awareness programs, restoration projects, and community engagement. These steps forward were only made possible through the interest and action of community members. And the GCWA expresses our sincere thanks for such essential support.

So now we realize that an immense amount of work lies ahead, and we are working to answer these questions: Where is it possible to have the most impact, and what are the Watershed's most urgent needs? To the first question, we now know better how to identify and analyze the degrading impacts on the Watershed and correct them. We have the experience of collaboration among community groups, local governments, schools, and concerned citizens — and the power that they collectively bring to hard challenges. To the second, we also now have some clear targets for improvement — ranging from additional stream restoration projects to floodplain preservation to creation of beautiful and enriching experiences alongside a vibrant, healthy Gills Creek.

Such aspirations are possible through community dedication, hard work, and a collective appreciation of the wonderful resource that is in our care. We eagerly look forward to our next 20 years of partnership and community service.



# MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE PAST YEAR



## Crowson Road Restoration Project

Design work began on the three-year project to continue rebuilding and revitalizing the impacted areas of Gills Creek between Fort Jackson Boulevard and Devine Street. The work is supported by South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (SC DHEC) through the nonpoint source pollution 319 grant program, the City of Columbia, a grant from the Richland County Conservation Commission, and the Community Development Block Grant program. As of June 30, 2019, we have received the 70% development plans from the contracted environmental engineering firm, and GCWA plans to begin construction on this property in the spring of 2020.

## Watershed Management Plan Update

Plans to update the 2009 GCWA Watershed Management Plan are well underway. Funds were secured from the Richland County Conservation

Commission, and plans put in place to secure a contractor for the work. This update is important to incorporate watershed changes brought about by the flood of 2015 and other development and use activities over the past 10 years. The updated plan is also necessary to meet new regulation requirements from DHEC to receive future 319 grant funds.

## Greenway Planning

GCWA is continuing efforts to promote the development of Gills Creek Greenway Section A by working with constituents of both Richland County and the City of Columbia. With the restructuring of the Penny Development Team, we have been involved in numerous meetings to assure the future success of a greenway section along South Beltline Boulevard. While a construction start date has not been set on this project, votes on amendments to the funding and to the details of the construction plans are expected to occur in the winter of 2019-2020.

## Adopt-A-Stream Outreach

GCWA has teamed with Heathwood Hall Episcopal School to expand Adopt-A-Stream efforts throughout the watershed. HHES students have received training and will begin sampling along Gills Creek at the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year. We have also received a grant from Dominion Energy to fund the purchase of additional testing kits that will be used to expand sampling sites to include additional areas in the watershed.

## Formation of a Lake HOA Coalition

GCWA has paired with Homeowner Association (HOA) presidents representing each of the major lakes in the watershed in order to educate and inform each other on lake concerns and possible solutions. GCWA, in partnership with Clemson University Extension, scheduled a pond workshop in the early fall of 2019 to further discuss issues with buildup of weeds and possible solutions to sedimentation issues in the lake systems. Lake HOA members in this coalition currently represent Spring Valley, Cary Lake, Forest Lake, Lake Katherine, Upper Rocky Ford, Lower Rocky Ford, Spring Lake, and Gregg Park.

## Environmental Law Clinic

GCWA has also paired with the University of South Carolina Law School to participate in their Environmental Law Clinic. In this program, upper level law students are assigned a project to investigate the legalities of local environmental concerns. In the past year, law students addressed local brownfields located in the Gills Creek Watershed area that may be possible targets for future projects. We will continue this partnership and focus on a new watershed topic in FY 2019-2020.

## Website Update

GCWA designed and released a new association website platform in FY 2018-2019. This website has a new, modern look, and has greatly improved navigation over the previous design. It can be viewed at [gillscreekwatershed.org](http://gillscreekwatershed.org).

## Demolition of Flood Properties Along Crowson Road

GCWA advocated for the removal of buildings destroyed by the 2015 flood event along Gills Creek. Beginning March 18, 2019, C.L. Construction, along with the City of Columbia, demolished these buildings, effectively removing these reminders of the destruction of 2015.



## A LOOK TO THE FUTURE Water Quality Monitoring Program

GCWA has allocated funding in the FY 2019-2020 budget to be used for the enhanced implementation of the Adopt-A-Stream water quality monitoring program. This program is currently composed of GCWA volunteers and local community groups that monitor possible pollutants in Gills Creek. With the help of a recent grant from Dominion Energy, we will be purchasing additional sampling kits that will

expand the program to include additional school groups and sampling sites.

### **Crowson Road Restoration Project**

The design phase of the stream enhancement 319 project along Crowson Road will be completed in the Fall of 2019, with construction on this project being estimated to begin in the spring of 2020. We are optimistic about the completion of this project in late summer to early fall 2020 and look forward to celebrating its completion.



### **Stream Cleanup and Debris Removal**

In FY 2019-2020, we will work with the City of Columbia to remove litter and debris from Gills Creek from Forest Drive to Rosewood Drive. The City of Columbia recently annexed a small section of the creek belonging to the City of Forest Acres and has recently started the bidding process for contractors willing to complete this project. Once clean-up begins, we will work with the City of Columbia to assure proper cleanup of the creek area.

### **Community**

In FY 2019-2020, we will continue to expand communications with the HOAs of local neighborhoods in the watershed. We understand

that communication between us and neighborhood HOAs will be pivotal in understanding community concerns and mounting a concerted offense to solve watershed issues.

### **Gills Creek Greenway Section A**

GCWA will continue to advocate for the construction of Gills Creek Greenway Section A under sustainable, eco-friendly trail standards. To date, this project has completed the design stage and has been delayed due to reorganization in the Penny Development project. We will continue to work with City and County officials to obtain the best possible result for this greenway.



### **Identification of New Restoration Projects**

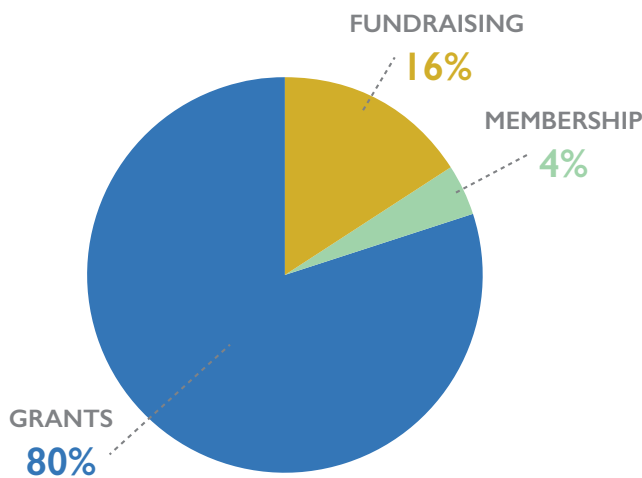
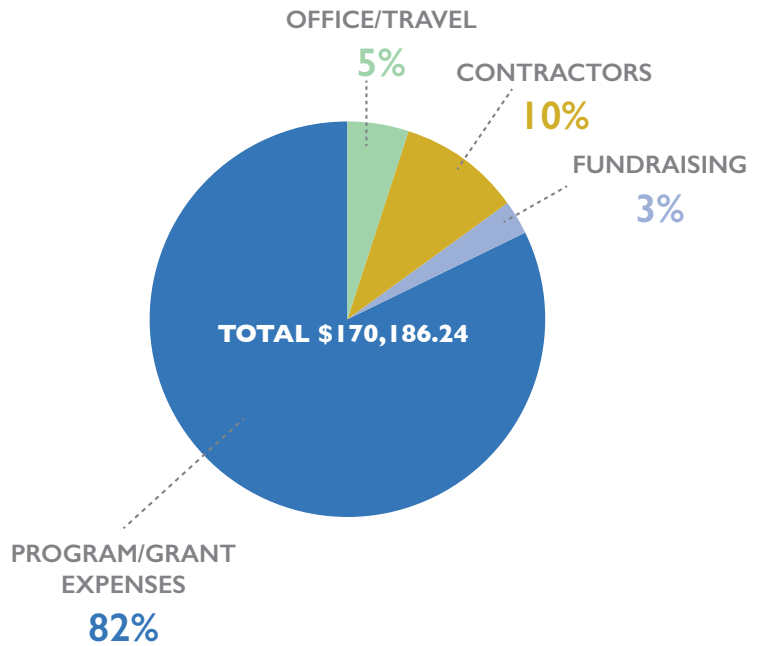
With the construction phase of the Crowson Road 319 project set to begin in FY 2019-2020, we are actively looking to identify new potential restoration projects within the watershed. This will be facilitated through completion of the updated Watershed Management Plan and with the help of partners from the University of South Carolina. We will look to establish a prioritized list of viable future projects in the watershed and will begin planning the next stages of project implementation.

# FINANCIALS

Total income for the past fiscal year was \$178,545. The largest source was government grants, specifically directed towards Gills Creek enhancement and education efforts. Fundraising from events, sponsors, and donors was the second largest source. Total expenses for the past fiscal year were \$170,186. The largest item was Program and Grant expenses, which include restricted funds from grants and some additional nonrestricted funds used for program and project activities. The second largest expenditure was part-time contract assistance.

## Gills Creek Watershed Association Expenses Fiscal Year 2018-2019

\$170,186.24



## Gills Creek Watershed Association Revenue Fiscal Year 2018-2019

\$178,545.26

Hamilton, McKinney & Moss, Certified Public Accountants, conducted an audit of the Association for the fiscal year ended in July 30, 2018. Financial documents are available to be viewed by request.

## **D O N O R S**

### **Creek Stewards (\$1,000 +)**

**Forest Acres Rotary Club  
Valerie Marcil and Henry Nechemias  
Scott Peace  
Edens**

### **Creek Partners (\$500 +)**

<b>Sam and Liz Agee</b>	<b>Daniel H. Johnson</b>
<b>Cameron Charitable Trust</b>	<b>Bill Owen</b>
<b>Mary and Scott Elliott</b>	<b>Judy and Thad Timmons</b>
<b>Madilyn Fletcher</b>	<b>Ann Yancey and Michael Tkacik</b>
<b>Trish Jerman and Mark Tompkins</b>	<b>Kimly-Horn &amp; Associates</b>

### **Creek Neighbors**

<b>Mary Pat Baldauf</b>	<b>Susan James</b>	<b>Hank Sizemore</b>
<b>William Buchanan</b>	<b>Betsy Kaemmerlen</b>	<b>Bill Stangler</b>
<b>Les Case</b>	<b>Sandra Kelly</b>	<b>Nance Stone-Collum</b>
<b>Michael Criss</b>	<b>Joseph C. Long</b>	<b>Kerry Stubbs</b>
<b>Kathy and Roe David</b>	<b>Sybil C McCook</b>	<b>Kathy and Peter Swanson</b>
<b>Terry and Karen Floyd</b>	<b>Linda Murphey</b>	<b>Kevin and Emily Tinch</b>
<b>Nelson Galimba</b>	<b>Morganelli's Party Store</b>	<b>Nancy Varner-Curry</b>
<b>John Glenn</b>	<b>Jay Pulliam</b>	<b>Gail and Maci Wojtowicz</b>
<b>Marjorie and Jim Hightower</b>	<b>Rob Robertson</b>	<b>Jane B. White</b>
<b>Richard Irwin and Jamie Hendrick</b>	<b>Mark and Jane Salley</b>	

## **OUR THANKS TO OUR FUNDERS AND PARTNERS!**

Our projects and special programs could not have happened without funding and partnership support over the past 20 years from the following:

- **Richland County Stormwater Management, Richland County Conservation Commission**
- **Richland County Soil and Water Conservation District**
- **City of Columbia**
- **SC Department of Health and Environment Control**
- **Environmental Protection Agency**
- **Palmetto Pride**
- **American Rivers**
- **Dominion**
- **River Network**
- **University of South Carolina**
- **Cary Lake Homeowners Association**
- **AT&T Foundation**
- **SCE&G**

A sincere thank you to all of those who make the achievements of GCWA possible! To ALL of our volunteers, sponsors, donors and members — we deeply appreciate your time, support and donations.

### Board of Directors

<b>Madilyn Fletcher, Ph.D.</b> President and Treasurer	<b>Ann Cameron</b> Stewardship Committee Chair	<b>Sally Huguley, Ph.D.</b>	<b>Judy Timmons</b>
<b>Trish Jerman</b> Vice President and Secretary	<b>Lyle Darnell</b>	<b>D. Michael Kelly, Esq.</b>	<b>Elections</b> Committee Chair
<b>Valerie Marcil</b> Immediate Past President	<b>Bryant Davis</b>	<b>Tom Kohlsaat</b> Technical Committee Chair	<b>Rob Robertson</b>
	<b>Scott Elliott, Esq.</b>	<b>Darren Luksik</b>	<b>Ann Yancey</b> Education Committee Chair
	<b>John Hart</b>	<b>Mary McIntosh</b>	

### Organizational Members

<b>Bay Blossom Garden Club</b>	<b>Lake Katherine</b>
<b>Crape Myrtle Garden Club</b>	<b>Palmetto Garden Club</b>
<b>Gregg Park</b>	<b>Spring Valley HOA</b>
<b>Little Lake Katherine</b>	

### Staff

**Eric Goff, Ph.D, Coordinator**  
**Mary Virginia Tynan, Outreach Coordinator**  
**Esther Evans, Bookkeeper**

### S P O N S O R S



## M E M B E R S

Alice Adams	Madilyn Fletcher	Tom Kohlsaas	Mark and Julie Riffle
Sam and Liz Agee	Terry Floyd	Samuel J. Kopack, Jr.	Ted Riley
Tara Allden	James Ford	Carol and John Kososki	Rob Robertson
Carroll Allen	Lisa Fouche	Janie Kronk	Mark and Deborah Robertson
Jessica Artz	Benjamin and Jo Franklin	Rebecca and Dale Krueger	Royal Roseberry
Margaret-Ann Ashburn	David Fuente	Pam and Gary Lackey	Andrew Saleeby
Robert Askins	Staci Gaffos	Marvin Lare	Mark and Jane Salley
John and Agnes Asman	Christina Galardi	Rebecca G. Leach	Chuck Salley
Rhodes Bailey	Nelson Galimba	Jean and Kirby Leitner	Katheryn Sheppard
Mary Pat Baldauf	Bay Blossom Garden Club	C. Joseph Long	Ellen Skidmore
Chris Barnes	Craig and Denisa Garner	Joe Long	Kathy and Emerson Smith
Martha and Sterling Beckman	Bernie Gaudi	Mark and Angie Lowery	Hal Stallworth
Violet and Michael Beets	Gwen Geidel	Teresa MacGillivray	Alice Steinke
Jan Blach	Bart Gilbert	Jim Manning	Dale Stigamier
Debbie Bloom	Joel Gillespie	Valerie Marcil and Henry	Braden Stoneburner
Annette Boette	John Glenn	Nechemias	Nancy Stone-Collum
Carol Boggs	Barbara and Buford Goff	Thomas McCartha	Gunars and Virginia Strazdins
Robert Boney	Eric Goff and Family	Sybil C. McCook	LA and Hank Sully
Bobby Bower	CheChe and Charlie Goldman	George and Judith McCoy	Kathy and Peter Swanson
James Boylston	Pam Greenlaw	Mary McIntosh	Jane and Bill Thesing
Mary Beth Branham	Will Haltiwanger	John McKenzie	Ed and Polly Tilden
William Brennan and Family	Donna Harper	Erin and Bill McKinney	Judy and Thad Timmons
Stacey Brennan	John Hart	Yancey McLeod	Kevin and Emily Tinch
Jerry Bright	Kate Hartley	RM Mejia	Brie Turner-McGrievy
Sally Sue Brown	James Hendrick	Hayes Mizell	John and Mary Virginia Tynan
James Bulak	Jane Henry	John Mood	Mark Van Popering
Gary and Noemi Cadle	Janet Heuer	Amy Moore	Donald Vargo
Andy and Ann Cameron	Natalie Hevener Kaufman	Noel and Linda Morphis	Nancy Varner-Curry
Margaret Carey	Nancy Higgins	Marla Morris	Carl Voges
Les Case	Jim and Marjorie Hightower	Joann Morton	Lucille Walters
Ernest Childs, Jr.	Martha and John Hudgens	Jack and Patsy Myers	Richard Watkins
John Clark	Carolyn Hudson	Dave Nelson	Joan Watterson
Leslie Cotter	Tessa Davis and Jon Huggett	Holly Norman	Robert Weyeneth
Margaret Crawley	Deborah Hughes	Natalie O'Bradovich	Jane B. White
Warren Darby	Mark and Sally Huguley	Jim Olsen	Barbara and Bobby Williams
Kathy and Roe David	Mary Stuart Hunter	Nell Orscheln	Dee Dee Williams
Rick and Paula Davis	Jim Hutto	Anne Palyok	Marlene Wilson
JoAnne Day	Karen Jackson	Scott Peace	Rick Woodley
John Mark Dean	Derek Jakes	Greg Pearce	Ed Wrightson
Pat DeCoursey	Susan James	Frederick Perry	Joanne Wuori
Leigh DeForth	Trish Jerman	Lyn Phillips	Ann Yancey and Michael Tkacik
Kirstin Dow	Gerrit Jobsis	Marc and Ann Posner	Andrew Yasinsac
Howard Duvall	Emily and David Jones	Jenny Pournelle	James Young
Caroline M. Eastman	Betsy Kaemmerlen	Nena Powell Rice	James Zeigler
Mary and Scott Elliott	Eugene Kaplan	Susan Prinz	
Kirkman Finlay	Lewis Kirk	Jean Prothro	
Hilda Flamholtz	Donald Klos	Catherine V. Reed	

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[gillscreekwatershed.org](http://gillscreekwatershed.org)