



**GILLS CREEK
WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
2016-2017 ANNUAL REPORT**

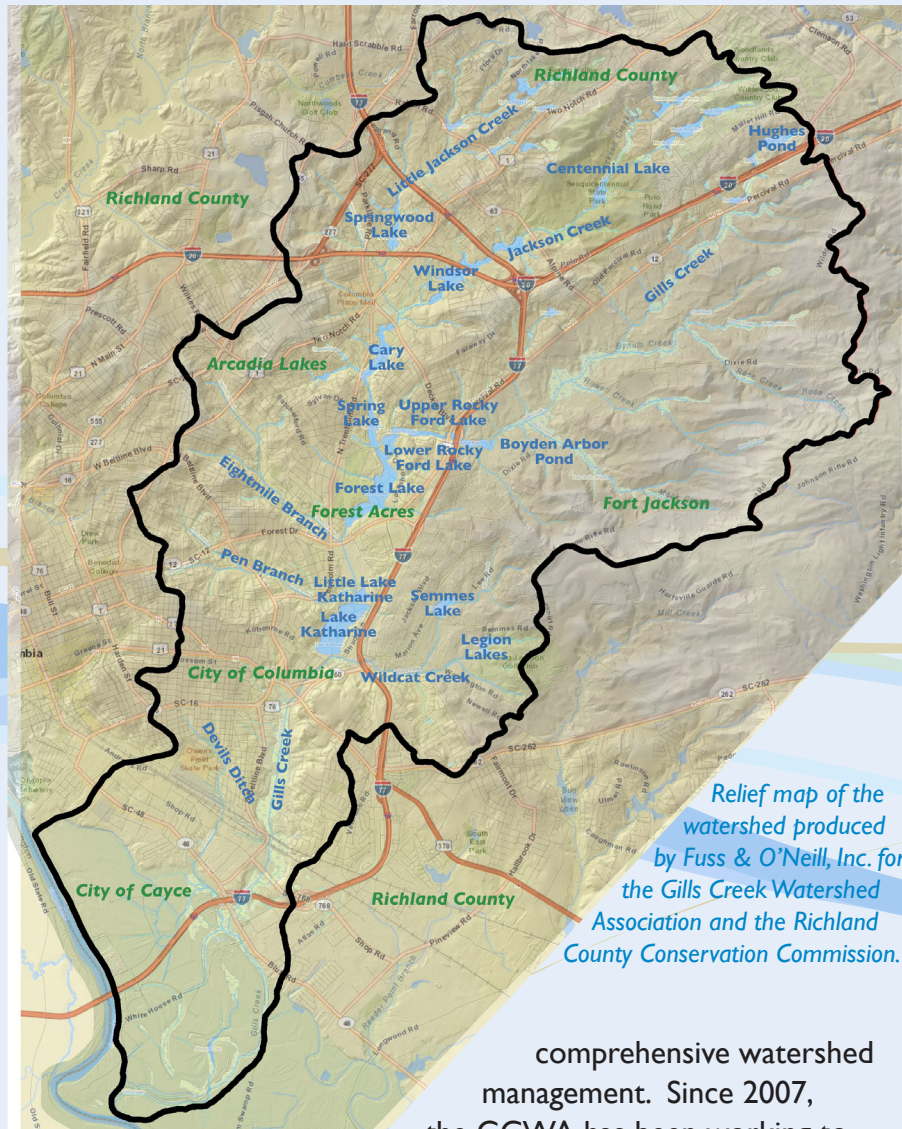
THE GILLS CREEK WATERSHED ANNUAL REPORT FOR FISCAL YEAR JULY 1, 2016 TO JUNE 30, 2017

The area of the Gills Creek Watershed is 76 square miles. It contains approximately 70 miles of streams, over 47,000 acres of land, and over 100 impoundments totaling 944 acres. The primary named tributaries of the watershed from east to west are Gills Creek, Jackson Creek and Little Jackson Creek. All three tributaries are impounded multiple times to create over a dozen lakes from Centennial Lake to Lake Katharine.

Downstream of Lake Katharine, Gills Creek flows freely through a variety of residential, agricultural, and commercial land uses until its confluence with the Congaree River south of I-77.

Over 140,000 people reside in the Watershed which stretches across the Town of Arcadia Lakes, City of Forest Acres, the City of Columbia, Fort Jackson, the City of Cayce, and unincorporated Richland County. Each of these jurisdictions has their own land use policies, including plans for growth, zoning regulations, development standards, and sediment and erosion control regulations. A primary goal of the GCWA is to bring together the different jurisdictions in the watershed to restore and protect the watershed through implementation of the management plan, coordinated stormwater regulations, and cooperative restoration projects.

The GCWA was originally formed in the late 1990's by a group of citizens that noticed a decline in water quality in the Lake Katharine area. GCWA incorporated as a 501c3 organization in late 1999. In 2006, Richland County conducted public outreach meetings in response to pressure from DHEC to do something about the poor water quality in the watershed. With the support of Richland County, in 2006-07 the GCWA re-formed with a major focus on



Relief map of the watershed produced by Fuss & O'Neill, Inc. for the Gills Creek Watershed Association and the Richland County Conservation Commission.

comprehensive watershed management. Since 2007, the GCWA has been working to improve our organizational structure, create a strong and dedicated membership base, implement stream and lake restoration projects, and advocate for policy changes to improve water quality. The Gills Creek Watershed Association Strategic Plan was completed July 2007 and updated in 2015. The Gills Creek Watershed Management Plan was completed in May 2009. Both those documents and others are available on our web site. Since that time, we have been working to implement those plans, and to engage citizens, government, organizations, and businesses in the watershed on how to best protect, restore and manage the watershed to make it an asset to the community.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



The past year was an exciting one for Gills Creek Watershed Association as we saw many years of hard work begin to come to fruition through the approval of grant funding in June to restore one of the most impaired sections of the Gills Creek. We hope this project will be a model of our mission to restore and protect our watershed by uniting citizens, government, organizations, and business.

While this grant itself is significant, I mention it because it highlights our most important

work – partnering. The challenges in the Gills Creek Watershed are far bigger than any one organization or government. The changes that need to happen will come about only through partnerships with the six municipalities, state government, federal government, hundreds of businesses, thousands of residents, and other like-minded organizations.

We are grateful to those of you who believe in us and support us through membership, sponsorships, donations, grants, advocacy, technical expertise, hard work, and political goodwill.

Valerie Marcil, President

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE



Another great year down, and an even better year to come for Gills Creek! Thanks to the support of our members, donors, and grantors we were able to wrap up a major on-the-ground project at Owens Field Park last year. But that's just the start. Next year we will begin design on our largest restoration project to date, a Gills Creek stream restoration project in the heart of the watershed. Thanks to a grant from DHEC and matching funds from the City of Columbia, we will be able to

restore and revegetate over 850 linear feet of Gills Creek in the Cross Hill Neighborhood of Columbia. This project will help reduce nonpoint source pollution, improve water quality, reduce downstream flooding, and beautify the area. This is the start of many good things to come.

Restoring the Creek and our Watershed is timely, expensive work, but the drum beat goes on. Thankfully we are starting to see some results of all of our efforts. People are beginning to understand their relationship to the creek and their place in the watershed. We all have an impact - let's make sure it's a good one.

Erich Miarka

Significant accomplishments of the GCWA during the fiscal year July 1, 2016 to June 30, 2017

- Participated in 5 community events and festivals, with over 7000 people in attendance; provided educational information about the watershed, major pollutants which impact water quality, and how people can become more involved.
- Made presentations at 15 community meetings with over 860 people in attendance. These meetings included neighborhood and homeowner associations, civic groups, church groups, and conferences.
- Sent monthly e-newsletters to over 980 people. The newsletters included information about current and upcoming events, water quality education, and updates on developments and projects.
- Increased presence on social media channels including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter.
- Organized and led four Adopt-a-Highway cleanups along South Beltline near Shop and Bluff Roads in FY 2016-2017. These cleanups resulted in the collection of 112 bags of trash, using over 90 volunteer hours.
- Organized and led two stream cleanups of Gills Creek in the Cross Hill area in FY 2016-2017. These cleanups resulted in the collection of 55 bags of trash, using over 118 volunteer hours.
- Organized and led a stream cleanup on Gills Creek near Forest Drive resulting in the collection of 25 bags of trash using 100 volunteer hours.
- Was awarded a small grant from Palmetto Pride to help reduce the amount of litter entering Little Jackson Creek, a tributary of Gills Creek near Decker Boulevard.
- Increased cooperative efforts with other community watershed organizations, including Rocky Branch Watershed Alliance and Smith Branch Watershed Alliance.
- Completed nonpoint source pollution reduction and education project at Owens Field Park in partnership with Richland County and City of Columbia.
- Completed surveying and sampling project for the EPA-funded fish tissue study in Gills Creek Watershed.
- Continued training and outreach for new volunteer water quality monitoring program, Adopt-a-Stream.

Hughes Pond is a spring-fed man-made lake which is the headwaters of Gills Creek.



Special Projects

Floodplain Preservation Program

GCWA received special one-time funding to establish a floodplain preservation program. Funding will be used to develop prioritization criteria for potential properties and for actual acquisition of properties. This preservation may take place through easements, deed restrictions, or fee simple purchase.

Owens Field Park BMP and Education Project

Last year GCWA completed work on the Owens Field Park BMP and Education project. This project was funded in part through a 319 nonpoint source pollution reduction grant from DHEC awarded in 2013. Funds from this grant were used to construct two bioretention cells adjacent to Owens Field Park in the Rosewood area. These cells capture and infiltrate stormwater runoff before causing additional erosion problems and before reaching Devil's Ditch and Gills Creek. Two public field trips catering to industry professionals were held during and after the construction of the BMPs.

Greenway Planning

GCWA is continuing its Gills Creek Greenway A efforts by working with the Richland County Penny Program Development Team, County Council, City Council, and the Transportation Penny Advisory Committee. This greenway project is scheduled to move to the construction phase in 2018.

Fish Tissue Study

GCWA recently completed a study of fish in Gills Creek with a grant from the Environmental Protection Agency. GCWA and the University of South Carolina Aiken examined many species of

fish found in Gills Creek at common locations for fishing. The fish tissue was sampled for the presence of mercury, which can lead to human health issues when consumed in high numbers. GCWA produced education and outreach materials to disseminate the results of this study.

Gills Creek Stream Restoration

GCWA was recently awarded a DHEC 319 grant for a stream restoration project on Gills Creek along Crowson Road. This project will recontour and stabilize the stream banks, revegetate the area, and help improve water quality. Not only will this project help improve the health of Gills Creek but also will beautify the creek corridor in the Cross Hill area.

Additional Outreach

- The GCWA e-newsletter, The Big Splash, was very popular in FY 2016-2017. At least one e-newsletter was sent to over 980 email contacts each month.
- GCWA maintains an active Facebook account where news and pertinent information are shared with the public. Facebook posts range from upcoming volunteer opportunities to information on stormwater and water quality issues. As of June 30, 2017, the GCWA Facebook page had 1,516 followers and 1,543 likes.
- In 2016 GCWA started an Instagram account to share some of the more visually appealing aspects of Gills Creek. This social media platform, along with YouTube and Twitter, are helping spread the GCWA message to a wider audience.



Owens Field Park Ribbon Cutting



Fishermen interviews for the EPA Fish Tissue Study.



The Big Splash e-newsletter

Committee Activities

The GCWA conducts a majority of its work through committees. Current committees and chairs include the following:

- Executive Committee - Valerie Marcil, Madilyn Fletcher, Mary McIntosh, Sam Agee, Lewis Kirk, Ann Yancey, Judy Timmons
- Education Committee – Chair: Ann Yancey
- Membership Committee – Chair: Alicia de Myhrer
- Financial Stewardship Committee – Chair: Sam Agee
- Technical Committee – Chair: Lewis Kirk, Co-chair: Buddy Atkins

Education Committee

The responsibilities of the Education Committee are to reach out to interested citizens and residents to learn about their particular water quality concerns and help them to find solutions. The Education Committee also educates the general public on watershed issues, including water quality impairments, stormwater runoff, and nonpoint source pollution. The Committee meets once a month to organize and strategize for upcoming events and festivals.

Activities of the Education Committee during FY 2016-2017:

- Participated in 5 community events and festivals, with over 7000 people in attendance; provided educational information about the watershed, major

pollutants which impact water quality, and how people can become more involved.

- Made presentations at 15 community meetings with over 860 people in attendance. These meetings included neighborhood and homeowner associations, civic groups, church groups, and conferences.
- Increased presence on social media channels, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter
- The GCWA sent monthly e-newsletters to approximately 980 people. E-newsletters include information about current and upcoming events, education on stormwater, and acknowledgment of projects and/or volunteers. A newsletter has been sent each month of this fiscal year. The newsletters are on our website at gillscreekwatershed.org.
- The GCWA organized and led a variety of clean-ups focused on trash and debris removal. Eight clean-up events were led by GCWA throughout the watershed during FY 2016-2017, including lake and road cleanups (near the Creek). These volunteer efforts resulted in the removal of over 242 bags of trash and litter from Gills Creek and its tributaries.
- The GCWA Education Committee applied for and was awarded a Palmetto Pride grant to help reduce litter entering Jackson Creek in the Decker Boulevard area. GCWA installed six trash cans at

key locations and “litter hotspots” along Decker to help keep litter from entering the stream system. Additionally, GCWA hosted a large community cleanup of the area and created anti-littering signs and other outreach materials for the Decker corridor. GCWA also participated in the Decker Boulevard International Festival on May 20, 2017 with anti-littering information along with general watershed information.

Membership Committee

The responsibilities of the Membership Committee include recruiting new individual and organizational members and promoting membership renewal. The Membership Committee also organizes fundraisers and membership activities.

Activities of the Membership Committee during FY 2016-2017:

- Maintained membership base of 330 members. Organizational members include the Cary Lake Homeowner’s Association, Lake Katharine Homeowner’s Association, Little Lake Katharine Homeowner’s Association, Forest Land Company, and Spring Lake Company.
- Grew e-newsletter mailing list to 988 recipients
- Organized and held the seventh annual Wine for Water fundraiser event. This year’s Wine for Water brought in 350 attendees and raised \$9,500 for the Association. GCWA again partnered with Rocky

Branch Watershed Alliance and Smith Branch Watershed Alliance for Wine for Water to grow the fundraising potential and strengthen organizational partnerships.

- Produced a Gills Creek calendar and distributed them for free to over 100 citizens of Gills Creek Watershed. This calendar shows citizens that Gills Creek, its lakes, and tributaries have potential to be a community asset and should be treated as such.
- Organized and hosted an annual meeting and paddling event in the watershed for members
- Developed a “Watershed Wonder” award program to recognize individuals and businesses in the watershed that take steps to improve water quality.

Financial Stewardship Committee

The responsibilities of the Financial Stewardship Committee include advising the GCWA Board on financial matters, financial reporting, and seeking new and sustained sources of revenue.

Activities of the Financial Stewardship Committee during FY 2016-2017:

- Advocated for and received funding for continuation of facilitation services for GCWA
- Developed an annual budget and fundraising plan
- Continued multi-year pledge from EDENS
- Participated in Midlands Gives, a regional philanthropic effort of over 300 nonprofits.



International Festival on Decker Boulevard



Litter pickup with folks from EDENS



Bus stop litter containers on Decker Blvd



2016 Wine For Water Annual Fundraiser

- Organized an outside consultant to develop a “Resource Development Plan” for the organization. This three year plan will help guide GCWA fundraising efforts in the future.

Technical Committee

The responsibilities of the Technical Committee include reviewing and coordinating technical projects in the watershed, reviewing and responding to regulatory matters such as TMDLs, NPDES and MS4 permits, identifying potential restoration and water quality improvements, investigating citizen water quality complaints, and providing technical guidance to the Board, Executive, and Educational Committees. One valuable role of the Technical Committee is to serve as a clearinghouse for staff and project information between our partner jurisdictions.

Activities of the Technical Committee during FY 2016-2017:

- Reviewed the technical aspects of stormwater projects of Richland County and the City of Columbia including the Owens Field Taxiway Extension, Devil’s Ditch Project, the Little Jackson Creek Mitigation Project, Owens Field Park BMP and Education Project, and the City of Columbia Supplemental Environmental Projects.
- Investigated formal complaints/concerns from citizens regarding potential violations of stormwater regulations.

- Identified opportunities for stream and floodplain restoration projects in the Watershed, including along Crowson Road.

Regular Organizational Activities

Board Meetings

Board meetings are held on the second Thursday of every month for approximately two hours. During FY 2016-2017, a meeting took place each month except July 2016 and January 2017.

Executive Committee Meetings

Executive Committee meetings are held the first Thursday of every month for approximately one and a half hours. Many of the decisions of the organization take place at the Executive Committee level. In FY 2016-2017 the Executive Committee met every month except July 2016 and January 2017.

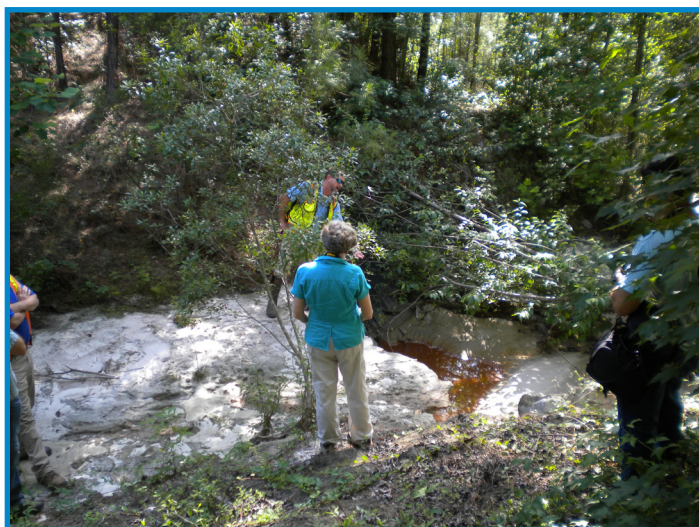
Annual Meeting

All GCWA members and interested parties were invited to the annual GCWA member’s meeting on October 2, 2016 at Sesquicentennial State Park. A presentation was given about the status of the organization, votes were taken regarding changes to the by-laws, and new board members were elected by the members in attendance. GCWA also provided kayaks so members could experience paddling on Centennial Lake at the upper end of Gills Creek Watershed.

Measurable Goals and Objectives for FY 2017-2018

- Sustained Fundraising** - The FY 2017-2018 Fundraising Plan maintains our fundraising goal of \$40,000. This is an ambitious fundraising goal with multiple funding sources. GCWA worked with a consultant to develop a new “Resource Development Plan” to aid and guide fundraising efforts. This plan will be utilized for the next three years to help grow fundraising and organizational capacity.
- Water Quality Monitoring Program** – GCWA has allocated funding in the FY 2017-2018 budget to be used for the implementation of a water quality monitoring program. This monitoring will be volunteer based in an effort to further engage the general public in watershed related issues and water quality. The data collected will also help GCWA locate potential pollutant hotspots that can be investigated by the appropriate jurisdiction. GCWA has already recruited three schools in the watershed to join the Adopt a Stream program. Next year GCWA will work to recruit three more schools in the watershed to begin the Adopt-a-Stream program.
- Gills Creek Greenway Section A** – In FY 2017-2018 this project will move into the design phase. GCWA will work with Richland County and the Penny Development Team as the project moves forward. GCWA will continue advocating for this project and will work with neighborhood groups to address their concerns regarding the project. Additionally, GCWA will coordinate with the Penny Development Team on the Gills Creek Stream Restoration Project along Crowson Road, the same section the greenway will pass through.
- Gills Creek Stream Restoration 319 Project** – In the next fiscal year GCWA will begin the Gills Creek Stream Restoration 319 Project. This project is projected to take three years until completion; however, by the end of FY 2017-2018, the project will be completely designed and the necessary permits will be secured.
- Stream Cleanup and Debris Removal** – In FY 2017-2018 GCWA will work with the City of Columbia to remove all litter and debris in Gills Creek from Lake Katharine to Bluff Road. The City of Columbia recently passed a stormwater bond and rate increase. One of the projects to be funded by the rate increase is this debris removal project, with an allocated budget of \$10 million. The City is consulting with GCWA to identify the major debris hot spots. The City will use GCWA and the Association’s volunteers to help with the smaller litter reduction portion of the project.
- Neighborhood Listening Sessions** – The Education Committee plans to attend 20 neighborhood meetings to present on watershed and water quality issues and the typical residential contribution of pollutants. GCWA presenters will request neighborhoods install pet waste stations, mark storm drains, and adopt a section of local stream or highway. GCWA will also ask for local knowledge of water resource issues (e.g. flooding, trash, erosion).
- General Watershed Tours/Events** – The Education and Membership Committees will plan and host four different watershed education events for the general public and the GCWA membership. These events include guided walks at key locations in the watershed, a kayak tour, or a lecture on a watershed related topic. These activities will help engage citizens and spread information that can improve our water quality.

If you are interested in participating in any of these activities, please contact Erich Miarka at erich.miarka@gillscreekwatershed.org or 803 727-8326.



Little Jackson Creek mitigation project site visit



2016 Annual Meeting at Sesquicentennial State Park.

2016-17 Board, Staff, Partners, Sponsors & Organizations

Board of Directors

Valerie Marcil, *President*

Madilyn Fletcher, *Vice President*

Sam Agee, *Secretary, Membership Committee Chair*

Mary McIntosh, *Treasurer*

Lewis Kirk, *Technical Committee Co-Chair*

James Atkins, *Technical Committee Co-Chair*

Ann Yancey, *Education Committee Co-Chair*

Tameria Warren, *Education Committee Co-Chair*

Emily Freeman Jones, *Immediate Past President*

Lyle Darnall

Jeffry L. Dudycha

John H. Hudgens II

D. Michael Kelly

Carol Kososki

Julie Mayson

Alicia de Myhrer

Rob Robertson

Gregory Sprouse

Judy Timmons

Staff

Erich Miarka, *Executive Director*

Advisory Board Members

Jim Manning, *Richland County Council*

Mark Huguley, *Mayor, Arcadia Lakes*

Michael Jaspers, *City of Columbia Stormwater Manager*

Synithia Williams, *Richland County Stormwater Manager*

Quinton Epps, *Richland County Conservation Commission*

Nancy Stone-Collum, *Richland County Conservation Commission*

Michael L. Hipp, P.E., *Ft Jackson*

Carol Roberts, *SCDHEC Saluda & Catawba Watershed Manager*

Elliott Powell, *Past President and Board Member Emeritus*

Karen Jackson, *Carolina Clear, Clemson University Extension Services*

Mullen Taylor, *Mullen Taylor, LLC*

Partner Organizations

Richland County

City of Columbia

City of Forest Acres

Town of Arcadia Lakes

Richland County Conservation Commission

Richland County Stormwater Consortium/Carolina Clear

Congaree Riverkeeper

Sustainable Midlands

Rocky Branch Watershed Alliance

Smith Branch Watershed Alliance

Keep the Midlands Beautiful

City of Columbia Climate Protection Action Committee

River Network

American Rivers

Organizational Members

Cary Lake Homeowners' Association (46 residents)

Lake Katharine Homeowners' Association (86 residents),

Little Lake Katharine Homeowners' Association (18 Residents)

Spring Lake Company (39 Residents)

The Gills Creek Watershed Association offers homeowners' associations and other organizations in the watershed the option to join for all their members. Organizational members join as a single entity using organizational funds. All members of the organization receive full benefits of membership in the GCWA minus membership gifts.

Hamilton, McKinney & Moss, Certified Public Accountants, conducted an audit of the Association for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2017. Financial documents are available to be viewed by request.

Sponsors (Fiscal year 2016-2017)

Champion

EDENS

Leadership

Forest Lake Property Owners Association

Sponsor

W. K. Dickson & Co., Inc.

Aetna Foundation - c/o John and Carol Kososki

Atkins Law Firm

Garner's Natural Life

Friend

The Delta Interests, LLC

Sponsorship is available at four levels: Champion (\$5000+), Leadership (\$1000), Sponsor (\$500), and Friend (\$250).

Donors (Fiscal year 2016-2017)

\$1000+

Anonymous

\$500-\$1000

Jeffry L. Dudycha

Trish Jerman and Mark Tompkins

Ann Yancey and Michael Tkacik

Mary McIntosh

Mark and Julie Mayson

Sam and Liz Agee

\$250-\$500

Carol Boggs

Judy and Thad Timmons

Fred and Alicia de Myhrer

Lewis Kirk

Valerie Marcil and Henry Nechemias

Howard E. Duvall, Jr.

Madilyn Fletcher

Dan and Cindy Tufford

Tina Robertson

William Buchanan

Andy and Ann Cameron

Cathy and Charles Cook

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LM Drucker

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Jane and Bill Thesing

Terry and Karen Floyd

Robert Bunch

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Jane B. White

John Egan

Maryanne Schuessler

Nelson Galimba

Paul and Phoebe Palmer

Robert Weyeneth

Stacey Brennan

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Katherine David

Kathy and Peter Swanson

Kevin Ryan

Martha and Sterling Beckman

Roy Harrill

Stacey Millner-Collins

Tameria Warren

Wenxy Kaczmarek

Annette Boette

Bill Stangler

Elizabeth French

Gail Lyles

Gloria Douglass

Mark Binkley

William Daves

John Hart

Anne Palyok

Chris Barnes

Elizabeth McDonald

J. Britt

Jason Craig

Kerry Stubbs

Leigh DeForth

Rob Robertson

Chris Scudder

Elliott Powell

JoAnn Turnquist

Melanie Trimble

Jonathan and Lyssa Harvey

Cornelia McGhee

Members (as of June 30, 2017)

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Andy Agee
Sam and Liz Agee
Tara Alden
Carroll Allen
Jessica Artz
Tamala Ashford
John and Agnes Asman
Melanie Baker
Chris Barnes
Sue Barnes
Keith and Laura Barron
Martha and Sterling Beckman
Mark Binkley
Jan Blach
Debbie Bloom
Annette Boette
Carol Boggs
Robert Boney
James Boylston
Mary Beth Branham
Brie Turner-McGrievy
Jerry Bright
Sally Sue Brown
Wayne Bryan
Robert Bunch
Gerrit Jobsis and Vicki Bunnell
Gary and Noemi Cadle
Andy and Ann Cameron
H. Burton Case, Jr
Les Case
John Cely
James Christian
John Clark
Cathy Cobbs
Hutch Collins
Hutch and Laura Collins
Laura Collins
Virginia Cooper
Leslie Cotter
Amanda Cox
Frank Cox
Craig (Braden) Stoneburner
Margaret Crawley
Linda Crimmins
Michael Criss
Dave Nelson and Sue Connolly-
Nelson
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Kirstin Dow
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Mary and Scott Elliott

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Guillermo Espinosa
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Grynberg-Bekier
Marcia Fair
Hilda Flamholtz
Madilyn Fletcher
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Conn Fraser
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CheChe and Charlie Goldman
Silvia Gomez
Keith Gosselin
Suzanne and Randy Grant
Pam Greenlaw
John and Rhonda Grego
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Kate Hartley
Richard Irwin and Jamie Hendrick
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Jim and Marjorie Hightower
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Derek Jakes
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David Johnson
Emily and David Jones
Betsy Kaemmerlen
Eugene Kaplan
Dr. David Whiteman and Lee Jane
Kaufman
Natalie Hevener Kaufman
Bryan and Lisa Kay
Mike Kelly
Sandra Kelly
Margaret Kherlopian
Lewis Kirk
Clifton Kitchens
Donald Klos

Tom Kohlsaet
Carol and John Kososki
Janie Kronk
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Keith McCook
Sybil C. McCook
George and Judith McCoy
Hillary McDonald
Carrie McIntosh
David McIntosh
Mary McIntosh
John McKenzie
Jim McMahan
RM Mejia
Regina Monteith
Amy Moore
Noel and Linda Morphis
Marla Morris
Joann Morton
Jack and Patsy Myers
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James Zeigler
Margaret and John Zubizarreta

The Gills Creek Watershed Association

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gillscreekwatershed.org

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