



2016 Annual Report

Dear Friends . . .



**THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING
HAPPENING AT THE GORGE!**

*Check the Events tab on our website,
www.mianus.org, to stay informed on
all the lectures, walks, and volunteer
opportunities going on here.*

*The News tab will keep you up to date
on our land protection and management
issues, our community involvement, and
the achievements of the amazing students
in our educational programs.*

*The Publications tab brings you to
articles on MRG in the media, papers
published by our scientists, and our
newsletter archives.*

From ephemeral wildflowers to 400-year-old hemlock trees in the forest, Mianus River Gorge strives to preserve, protect and promote appreciation of the natural heritage of the Mianus River Watershed through land acquisition and conservation, scientific research and public education throughout the region. With land acquisition at the heart of our mission, Mianus River Gorge added 4.87 acres of spectacular wetlands and rock outcroppings to the Preserve in 2016. MRG now protects over two miles of Havemeyer Stream, from its source to where it empties into the Bargh Reservoir at Havemeyer Falls.

Another highlight of 2016 was “Mianus River Gorge: Photographs by William Abranowicz”, a photography exhibition, lecture, and book signing at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, CT, sponsored by Bank of America. Renown photographer Bill Abranowicz’s inspiring images introduced thousands of museum visitors to Mianus River Gorge while reaffirming love for the Gorge for so many others.

In 2016 we completed a baseline aquifer study in the headwaters of the Mianus River and an assessment of the health of and threats to major wetlands systems throughout the Mianus River Watershed. The study was generously funded by the Westchester Community Foundation. MRG also completed the collaborative Hudson to Housatonic (H2H) Conservation Initiative that engaged landowners to help protect streams, drinking water reservoirs, and plant and wildlife habitat. The H2H partners agreed to continue their work as a Regional Conservation Partnership, now known as H2HRCP, with MRG Executive Director Rod Christie serving on the steering committee.

Mianus River Gorge’s highly acclaimed Research and Education program continued to mentor high school, undergraduate, and graduate students throughout the year. This year, some of the hands-on ecology research experience focused on the living laboratory that is our new native plant nursery. Many wildflowers and herbaceous plant species that were common in the Gorge 30 years ago are now very rare. Successful restoration of these species within the Gorge could potentially be replicated in the local landscape and on private properties.

MRG staff shared their knowledge and expertise in talks and on walks throughout the Gorge. Participants learned about the ecology of eastern coyotes; the Preserve’s resident Eastern Screech, Great Horned, and Barred Owls; hidden habitats of the southern Preserve; and the water resources in the watershed, especially the Mianus River, from “Source to Sound”.

Finally, the Land Trust Accreditation Commission, a program promoting public trust and ensuring permanence in the conservation of American lands, announced that Mianus River Gorge was one of 12 land trusts across the United States to achieve renewed accreditation. As such, Mianus River Gorge is stronger and better able to serve our community.

Thank you for contributing your time and resources to Mianus River Gorge. Please visit our web site, www.mianus.org, for updates, news, and the calendar of events. We are truly grateful for your support and look forward to welcoming you to the Preserve.

Sincerely,

Timothy Evnin, Chairman

Roderick G. Christie, Executive Director



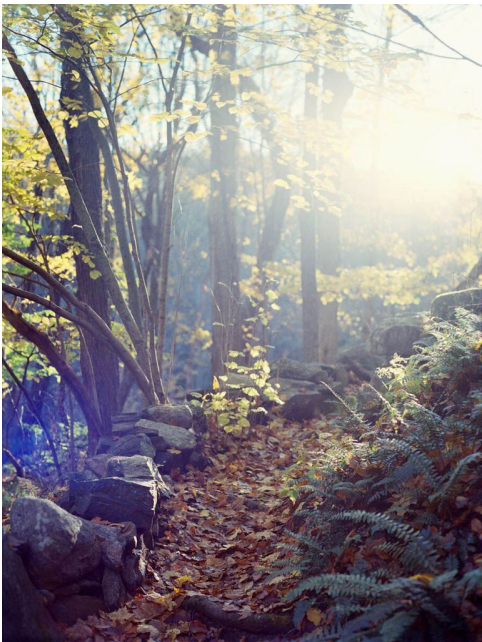
Building Strong Relationships in the Community

Lectures and Presentations

The William Abranowicz photography exhibition and related events at the Bruce Museum in Greenwich, CT, sponsored by Bank of America, were a tremendous success. “Mianus River Gorge: Photographs by William Abranowicz” commenced Friday evening, March 11, 2016, with a pre-opening celebration in the Bantle Gallery. Those in attendance were treated to a special preview of the exquisite photographs, many in large format, of the Mianus River Gorge taken over the course of a full year.

Mr. Abranowicz’s lecture and book signing event on Sunday, March 13, 2016, was standing-room only. Mr. Abranowicz shared his inspirations, thought process, and the challenges he faced in photographing the Gorge. His images projected on the screen were awe-inspiring and captured the natural movement and changes that occur in nature from one moment to the next.

MRG’s Chris Nagy, Ph.D., gave a talk on wildlife populations in our region, and how they have changed over the past 100 years. With the extirpation of wolves in the Northeast U.S., coyotes have largely taken on the role of top predator where they occur. Dr. Nagy talked about his work with the Gotham Coyote Project that studies the ecology, population growth, and range expansion of eastern coyotes (*Canis latrans*) in New York City.



Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks

A team of intrepid volunteers from Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks braved the heat and humidity in mid-July to spend their day at Mianus River Gorge. Following an introduction by MRG Executive Director Rod Christie, the nearly 20 volunteers set off with Preserve Manager Budd Veverka to begin a major trail stewardship project. MRG staff and our summer interns helped direct volunteers in the project to rebuild retaining walls, steps, and borders along the trail system.

Goldman Sachs Community TeamWorks Volunteers

Public Programs

Mianus River Gorge held several well-received public programs including the annual Wildflower Walk, the Source to Sound Watershed Tour, a bird walk with Bedford Audubon Society, and two tours of the Preserve lands led by Rod Christie that allowed over 80 people to see areas of the Preserve not normally open to the public.

Chris Nagy also held two night-time owl walks in the Preserve, again giving participants an exclusive perspective of the Preserve and the sights and sounds only seen and heard in the dark.



Conserving Land and Protecting our Watershed



Critical Corridor Protected

Thanks to the generous cooperation of neighbors Alexandra Kotur and Jonathan Becker, the Mianus River Gorge has added 4.87 acres of spectacular wetlands and rock outcroppings to the Preserve. Not only does the parcel protect critical wetlands associated with Havemeyer Stream (the stream that meanders through the Preserve and ends up at Havemeyer Falls), but it con-

nects a block of over 45 acres of MRG lands south of St. Mary's Church Road to those in the main Preserve across the road. With this acquisition, MRG now protects over two miles of Havemeyer Stream from its source to where it empties into the Bargh Reservoir at Havemeyer Falls.

MRG also has several other land protection projects in the works including an ongoing effort to preserve MRG's #1 priority property bordering the Mianus River Gorge Preserve.



*MRG adds 4.87 acres
to the Preserve*





Conservation Easements

We continued to pursue conservation easements and explore possible acquisitions of properties deemed critical to protect within the watershed. We are working on two new easements in the Piping Brook Corridor.



Hudson to
Housatonic

Hudson to Housatonic Regional Conservation Partnership (H2HRCP)

MRG and partnering local and regional conservation organizations completed a two-year grant that focused on educating and engaging landowners in an effort to protect streams, reservoirs, and preserve habitats throughout the region.

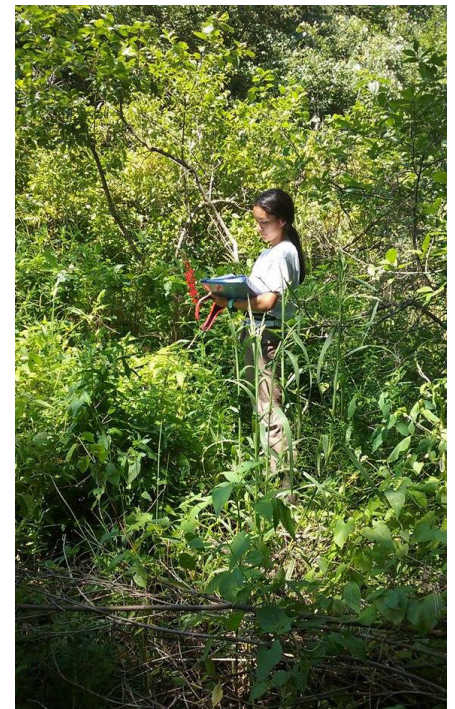
The group agreed to continue its work in the form of a Regional Conservation Partnership, with MRG's Executive Director Rod Christie on the Steering Committee. H2HRCP (h2hrpc.org) is composed of over 40 organizations that are protecting land throughout the region from the Hudson to the Housatonic. H2HRCP works with landowners on land protection and stewardship and is the first RCP to create a parcel-level land conservation model working toward landscape-scale conservation.

Accredited Land Trust

The Land Trust Accreditation Commission, a program promoting public trust and ensuring permanence in the conservation of American lands, announced that Mianus River Gorge was one of 12 land trusts across the United States to achieve renewed accreditation in 2016. "Land trust accreditation is a mark of distinction, showing that a land trust meets high standards for land conservation."

Source to Sound Initiative

Mianus River Gorge completed the first phase of its Source to Sound Initiative in 2016, and applied for and received a renewal grant from the Westchester Community Foundation to continue. MRG scientists evaluated the health of the headwater's aquifer, inventoried the upper watershed's wetlands, and identified current and potential threats to their functionality. MRG will continue its work in the lower watershed and embark on a major wetland restoration project in 2017.



MRG inventories the upper watershed's wetlands



*Research Assistantship Program (RAP)
graduate student Emily Stephan*

Research Updates

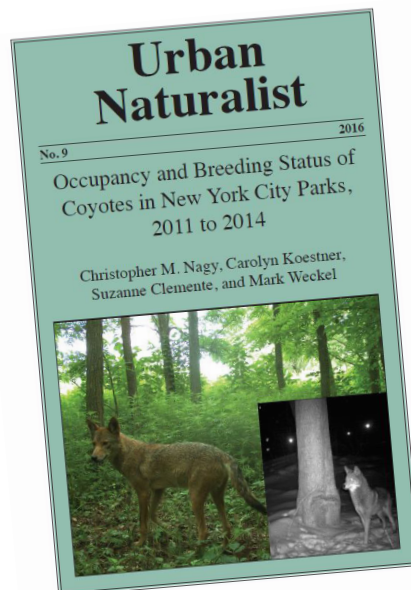
Since its founding, MRG has prioritized research in applied ecology and conservation biology. In 2016, we supported three Ph.D. students in our Research Assistantship Program (RAP), a 3-year grant program that funds a graduate student's dissertation research. Our staff and RAP students mentored 15 high-school researchers in our Wildlife Technician Program (WTP) and four undergraduate interns over the summer. We continue to be impressed with the quality of the students, their attentive contributions to our ongoing projects, and their dedication to their own work that we unreservedly support.

While research studies concerning coyotes and watershed health and functionality continued, MRG also embarked on a major wildflower and herbaceous plant restoration project in 2016. Native Species Triage: Invasive Species Control & Herbaceous Community Restoration aims to protect biodiversity through a multi-pronged approach that controls invasive species, restores and reintroduces native species that were once common in the Gorge, and creates a seed-source protection system. MRG expanded its deer enclosure system to further protect sources of native plant seed and built a native species nursery at our headquarters. The Land Trust Alliance, Rusticus Garden Club, Almstead Mulch, and Boy Scout Troop 154 all supported the project.

Two New Papers Published in Urban Naturalist

MRG Director of Research and Land Management Chris Nagy, Ph.D., American Museum of Natural History's Mark Weckel, Ph.D., high school student Carolyn Koestner, and graduate student Suzanne Clemente published "Occupancy and Breeding Status of Coyotes in New York City Parks", 2011 to 2014 in *Urban Naturalist*.

RAP alumna Rachel Bricklin and WTP high school student Ellen Thomas co-authored "Foraging Birds during Migratory Stopovers in the New York Metropolitan Area: Associations with Native and Non-native Plants", also in *Urban Naturalist*, No. 11 (2016).





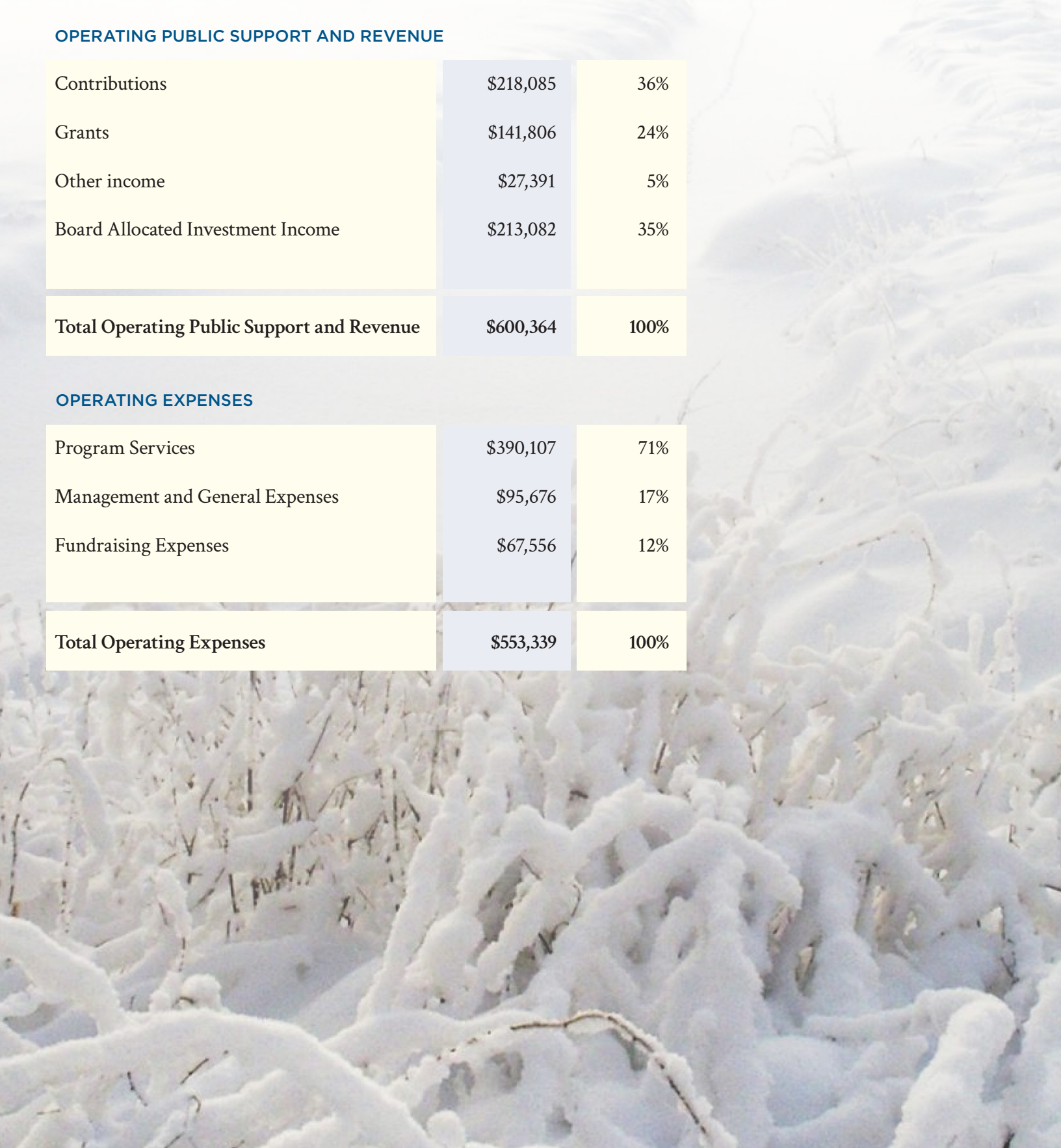
2016 Financial Summary

OPERATING PUBLIC SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Contributions	\$218,085	36%
Grants	\$141,806	24%
Other income	\$27,391	5%
Board Allocated Investment Income	\$213,082	35%
Total Operating Public Support and Revenue	\$600,364	100%

OPERATING EXPENSES

Program Services	\$390,107	71%
Management and General Expenses	\$95,676	17%
Fundraising Expenses	\$67,556	12%
Total Operating Expenses	\$553,339	100%



Annual Giving 2016



Annual Giving is comprised of generous support to our annual fund and special projects here at Mianus River Gorge, Inc.

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Your donation to Mianus River Gorge helps us fulfill our mission to preserve, protect and promote appreciation of the natural heritage of the Mianus River watershed through land acquisition and conservation, scientific research and public education throughout the region.

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Thank you!

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