

WaterWatch

THE NORTH AND SOUTH RIVERS WATERSHED ASSOCIATION
Protecting our Waters Since 1970



Michael and Susan Wolfe at their dock on the North River.

Leaving a Legacy to Protect Our Rivers

Michael and Susan Wolfe have lived in their home on the North River for 45 years. It is truly a special spot, 25 acres of tall white pine woods, meadow, salt marsh and riverfront with unparalleled views of the North River valley.

When asked about their legacy, the Wolfes shared how, over the years, they felt a growing commitment to protect their special place for future generations. The land and the tidal river resonate with them; they saw how circumstances can lead to land being developed even if it wasn't what the owners intended. "We knew we wanted to preserve it, but the journey was complicated as we started with one plan, and then continued with others."

Today, the conservation values of their property are protected by a permanent conservation restriction and by gifting their property to the North and South Rivers Watershed Association in their will. The Wolfes said "Our priorities were to

preclude subdivision of the land and to protect the views from the river. We want it to be a place where people can enjoy the meditative quality and peacefulness we have enjoyed over the years. However, it's especially important to preserve it in a way that is respectful of its neighbors, and we think the NSRWA is a good steward to make that happen."

Living on the river was barely a dream in their early days. Susan's first serious encounter with the North River was when her mother, as chair of Scituate's Conservation Commission and an active member of the Izaak Walton League, helped arrange for Supreme Court Justice William Douglas to tour the North River to gain visibility and support to clean up the river. Susan introduced Michael to the river after they met in college in the early '60s. Raised in Queens, NY, Michael spent a summer in Scituate filled with clamming, swimming at the Spit, and renting boats at Mary's Landing: he

was hooked! A few years after their marriage, they spent a year in a rustic cabin on a Colorado mountain and developed a taste for living close to nature. Once they settled in Hingham, Susan "began counting our pennies" and asking "Michael, how much money would we need to live on the North River?" "I kept doing the math," she said.

That dream became reality after they toured a home for sale on Patriots Day, 1978. The woods, the smell of sun on damp fallen pine needles, the river access, and the views were gorgeous, peaceful, restorative... exactly what they wanted and right at the edge of what they could afford.

They each have their favorite spots on the property, one on the river bank and the other on their deck with birdsongs and river valley views. "There's a serenity and peacefulness that recharges soul and spirit. We have had the gift of being stewards of this land for our lifetimes, and we can carry that forward with our gift to the NSRWA."

NORTH AND SOUTH RIVERS WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

Our purpose is to Protect Our Waters.

We believe that an educated and engaged citizenry will result in healthy rivers and watersheds, thus Educate + Engage = Healthy Rivers.

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NSRWA

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Letter from the President

As the days of summer come to a close and we watch our children and grandchildren return to school, I was glad to see so many of you exploring our watershed and participating in our many summer activities. Many of you volunteered in support of citizen science, many of you took on the walks of the Explore South Shore Challenge, and others simply paddled the surreal waters of the North and South Rivers.

As you open this newsletter, you will see it's all about 'Legacy.' There are so many ways that we can 'leave' a legacy. Still, more importantly, there are so many reasons that legacies are critical to the long-term viability of an organization like the NSRWA. But two of the stories in this newsletter edition are bittersweet. Our longstanding board member and past Executive Director, Deb Lenahan, has decided to hang up her paddle and explore her next challenge. In addition, our longstanding staff ecologist, Dr. Sara Grady, has decided it's time for her to explore the next chapter in her storied career.

As I reflected on what they both have meant to the NSRWA, the one word that continues to come to me is 'curious.'

Deb would sit in meetings with me, and I could always count on her to ask the one question that others didn't. It wasn't used trivially; she seemed always to be more 'curious' about the topic we were exploring. In all cases, it made me a better board member because I then began to see her deep dedication and understanding of the NSRWA, and it gave me a complete view of what direction we should be going.

When I think about Sara in her role as staff ecologist, it is all about being curious and wanting to know what the impact of X is on Y. She has touched so many of you working side by side monitoring water quality or counting horseshoe crabs or monitoring salt marsh erosion. But more



importantly, she has helped make our children and grandchildren curious about how our watershed works and why its health is so vital to all of us.

These outstanding team members are leaving us all more curious and asking more questions before we walk into the room with all the answers. I think they have made us better volunteers, citizen scientists, river paddlers, watershed explorers, and protectors of our rivers.

So, as I look to our future, I am encouraged by the youth programming that we continue to grow each year and helping those participants become more curious. As we continue to explore our river restoration efforts, many of you are asking the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th questions about why, how, and how you might become more involved. I close with the question, "Are you curious enough to ask the next question and, along the way, discover what legacy you will leave?"



Rick Mayfield, NSRWA President



Visit us online at nsrwa.org and connect with us on Facebook (nsrwa) and Instagram (north andsouthrivers)

Deb Lenahan: Leading a Purposeful Life

While each of our members and volunteers makes a difference in our organization, some people go above and

beyond and leave a lasting legacy, Deb Lenahan is one of those people. Deb has worn almost every hat in the NSRWA in the 33 years she has been involved! She began by volunteering in



1990 for the river clean up day and later taking water quality samples. In 1992, she was hired to coordinate a fundraising campaign that was successful in reopening the shellfish beds, and in 1994 she became the second Executive Director of the NSRWA for a 2 year stint. While Executive Director, she led efforts to establish the Indian Head River Trails on the Hanover side, organized volunteer herring counts and fish ladder maintenance, upgraded a stormwater treat-

ment system to reduce pollution to the North River and advocated successfully for the shellfish beds to be reopened in the North River. After stepping down as Executive Director she became a board

member in 1997 and later a GIS consultant providing mapping and analysis of the parcels along the North River. This effort. dubbed "Protecting What Matters", led to over 200 acres along



the North River being conserved! This fall Deb is stepping down from our board after serving for the last 26 years.

It's hard to imagine devoting 33 years of your life to a cause, but when asked

why she did, she said there were three things that really mattered to her, and that she received in return by being part of this organization. The first is the incredible community of people she met, many became lifelong friends. Second, because of her longevity with the organization, she has witnessed the NSRWA's incredible growth and success from an all volunteer effort to a professional organization with 5 full time and 6 part time staff! And third was her commitment to education; both her own and others, about the wonders of our waters and why they are worthy of our protection.

It is just like Deb to say that while she is stepping down from the Board she is not stepping out of the organization. She will continue to provide her support on our Advisory Council and in other ways. Thank you Deb for all of your years of commitment and support to this organization and to our watershed. Deb is truly leading a life with purpose to protect what she loves and definitely having fun along the way!

Sara Spreads Her Wings and Heads to Mass Audubon

I first learned about the NSRWA in the early summer of 1998, having just finished my first year at Brown majoring in aquatic biology. I was sitting on the couch at our summer house in Marshfield, near the beach I regularly explored and where I decided to be a marine biologist at age 7, reading the Riverwatch results in the newspaper. If there was a place doing that kind of work so close by, it might be a place where I could both offer my (limited at the time) expertise and also learn more about environmental work that was happening just around the corner. I called and ended up working on the South River Initiative with Jason Burtner, now South Shore Regional Coordinator for Coastal Zone Management, and Steve Ivas, the director of the NSRWA at the time. I was awarded Volunteer of the Year! I had no idea it was the start of a 25-year career with the NSRWA (with a little gap in there to get a doctorate.)

The NSRWA and the estuaries of the North and South Rivers became a touchstone for me and my interest in salt marsh ecology. I studied these marshes for my undergraduate thesis, establishing research transects in the fall of 2000. I remember driving up from Providence to spend peaceful days here, a welcome respite from my classes. After spending a few years in Woods Hole at the Marine Biological Laboratory studying horseshoe crab population

ecology (but still doing some salt marsh work here and there) and looking for work in my field, I called the NSRWA to see if anyone knew of a job - not necessarily with the NSRWA.



However, that's how it turned out. I started in April 2005 as the Watershed Ecologist and MassBays South Shore Regional Coordinator. My first task was to write a grant proposal for removing the Tack Factory Dam, which was taken down 7 years later, and the second of three dams on the Third Herring Brook to be taken down.

In the last few months, I've been preparing to start the next phase of my career, working still in salt marshes, but this time at MassAudubon. As I've been slowly saying goodbye, I have been told and started to realize the impact that I've had. I have created a "science department" that has expanded from just water quality monitoring during the summer to a half-dozen citizen science programs encompassing everything from river herring to eelgrass to, yes, salt marshes. I have had hundreds of volunteers work with me, some of whom have remained dedicated to their favorite projects for over a decade. I have mentored 37 interns, helping them discover their passion or, just as importantly, discover that fieldwork and ecology were not what they wanted to do in life. I've worked with countless students. I've been able to work with so many federal, state, local, and non-profit partners. Perhaps most symbolically, those transects I started in 2000 and monitored again in 2014 were reexamined this summer. Some of that data will feed into work I will be doing at MassAudubon and support a pending grant that might come to the NSRWA.

If people supposedly retire in their mid-60s, I'm only halfway through my post-graduate career. I can't fathom what legacy I might be able to leave in the future, but I can only hope it's as impactful as this first half has been.

Honoring Our 2023 Volunteers of the Year

2023 Citizen Science Volunteer of the Year

The 2023 Citizen Science Volunteer of the Year Award for 2023 goes to Ralph Perrotto and his students from Scituate High School, who conducted salt marsh vegetation surveys this summer. Mr. Perrotto and his students are part of a larger NOAA grant to the Cohasset Center for Student Coastal Research to assist schools in providing "Meaningful Watershed Educational Experiences" or "MWEE"s. Students from multiple towns are working throughout the northern half of the South Shore on projects focusing on topics like water quality and habitat.



2023 Barbara Pearson Award Winner - TurnAround Films - Cary and Yari Wolinsky

In 2020, the NSRWA hired Trillium Studios to make a film to honor the organization's 50th Anniversary. Trillium Studios is owned by Cary Wolinsky and his son Yari, of Norwell. Cary had been a long time member of the NSRWA and had an illustrious career



Cary and Yari interviewing Gary Christenson, the mayor of Malden for the film Karen and the River. Photo by David Mussina.

as a National Geographic photographer. Not only did they create a stunning film about the watershed, but after learning about the challenges our watershed faced, particularly in a changing climate, they embarked upon a journey to share those stories with more people. Cary and Yari's innate curiosity and creative storytelling drove them to create TurnAround Films to share innovative solutions to climate change through a series of short films. Thus far, these films have focused on stormwater pollution, drought, heat impacts, trash and microplastics in our waters and some of the innovative solutions watershed organizations and others are implementing locally to combat them. We are so inspired by the work of TurnAround Films and grateful for their efforts to have a true ripple effect in educating and influencing others to think globally and act locally.

2023 Volunteers of the Year - Shellfishing Advocates

In late 2020, 606 acres of shellfish beds were suddenly closed to recreational harvest due to a change in federal regulations that prohibited shellfishing within an area around a wastewater treatment plant discharge. These blanket regulations meant that the Scituate treatment plant's discharge was guilty of pollution until proven otherwise and we needed to show that the discharge was clean.



Brad White, left and David Dauphinee, right.

Enter David Dauphinee and Brad White, two longtime NSRWA members, whose passion for shellfishing drove them to take action, leading the charge to demand that the state conduct the studies needed to reopen our shellfish beds for recreational use. Their volunteer advocacy led to 60% of the shellfish beds being reopened in January of 2023, and allowed people to shellfish, accessing their natural heritage.

In David's words "It's more than the basket of steamers. It's deeper. It's deeper in our community, our coastal community. I'm a 50-year waterman, my dad was a lobsterman before me, my brother's a lobsterman," said Dauphinee. "Harvesting shellfish for our own consumption is part of the fabric of our community."

Doing Well by Doing Good: Giving Tax Saving Strategies

There are some popular strategies today for giving with an eye toward reducing taxes. Tax laws provide many incentives to give to charitable causes to make a difference locally with your donation to your favorite charity, such as the NSRWA, and to leave a legacy for the future. Since everyone's situation is different, seek professional assistance from your tax and/or legal advisors. Call us at 781-659-8168 x102 to talk about your wishes and plans. In case you need it, NSRWA's tax ID is 23-7181992.

Qualified Charitable Distributions from your IRA

If you are at the age where you must take Required Minimum Distributions (RMD's) from your IRA, a common tax reduction strategy is to direct a portion - or all - of your RMD directly to your favorite charity, such as the NSRWA. You may transfer up to \$100,000 a year from your IRA to a qualified charity such as the NSRWA. These distributions are made directly to a charitable institution from the IRA custodian and are called Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCD's). An

RMD is the minimum amount you must take out. The money comes directly from the IRA to the charity and therefore is not included in taxable income.

Donor Advised Funds

A Donor Advised Fund (DAF) grants you a charitable deduction for the amount donated into the fund, for the tax year donated. Most fund managers, such as Fidelity, Schwab, Vanguard and others, have programs to accept these

See Strategies, Continued on Page 7



A Summer to Remember

From the beginning of 2023 to date, we have educated more than 5,700 youth through NSRWA's environmental education programs. We reached the majority of students through our WaterSmart and Youth CAT programs. We brought more than 1,400 youth outdoors through special programs, such as Estuary Explorers, and after-school, school-break, and our very popular Summer Outdoor Adventures.

The NSRWA has become a popular choice for outdoor youth adventure programs in the summer over the past few years. Beginning in 2019 we offered 4 weeks of programs and had a little over 40 youth enrolled in those adventure programs. This past summer, we offered 9 weeks of summer adventure programs for youth (that's more than double!), and expanded them to include new and exciting options and activities. This resulted in more than double the enrollment, and we

engaged 100 youth in these adventures!

The expansion of the summer adventures program was possible thanks to our new NSRWA van, which allowed us to bring youth to and from the program locations. We are grateful to all the donors who made this purchase possible! The 2023 Ford Transit allowed us to safely transport youth and all the activity equipment to fun locations around the watershed, and even tow kayaks! This enabled us to meet folks at central locations that were closer and more easily accessible, which was especially helpful for those families with less flexible schedules. This increased mobility allowed the NSRWA to reach more youth, meet new families, and run programs at more diverse locations.

2023 was a great year for NSRWA's summer programs. But this is just the start. We look forward to where we will go, and who we will see next year!



Get Outdoors with the NSRWA

- Fall into Nature Guided Walk Series - Sunday, October 29, 10-11:30am, Hobomock Trails
- Fall into Nature Guided Walk Series - Sunday, November 12, 10-11:30am, Forge Pond Park
- Fall into Nature Guided Walk Series - Sunday, November 19, 10-11:30am, Couch Beach
- Winter Solstice Walk Thursday, December 21, 4-5:30pm
- Holiday Adventures Youth Outdoor Program - Wednesday-Friday, Dec. 27-29. From 9-11:30am. Visit Norwell Recreation for registration.
- New Year's Day Walk Monday Jan. 1, 2024 from 1-3:00pm Location TBD. Visit NSRWA.org/ events page for details.

Youth Climate Action Toolkit Reaches New Heights

This year, more than 1,500 youth have used NSRWA's Youth Climate Action Toolkit, or Youth CAT for short, to learn about their water and local ecosystems, and to deepen their understanding of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics).

We partnered with 56 teachers and engaged 42 parent volunteers, too. Climate change is one of the most important challenges of our time. Youth CAT empowers young people to take action for climate resilience in their communities by helping students become more aware of local environmental issues, the science behind those issues, and by giving them opportunities to take action locally. This program is made possible thanks to gen-



Students of Derby Academy in Hingham jumping over an obstacle that's part of FISH School's Herring Simulation obstacle course. Each obstacle is meant to replicate, in a fun way, some of the many challenges the herring face as they make their way up our local waterways. This particular obstacle simulates a dam.

erous support from Battelle.

Youth CAT has two modules: 1.) F.I.S.H. School, an interactive and citizen science

program on river herring; and 2.) Grow Native, a fun and engaging program about water conservation, pollinators, and native plant species. NSRWA.org has become a place for educators to find lessons, course materials, and instructor support. Youth CAT makes these programs more readily available for teachers and their students with a newly designed web page (launching this fall) with meaningful hands-on science and environmental education opportunities. As more educators implement NSRWA's Youth CAT in their classrooms, we will be able to reach more students, hopefully leading to more positive impacts on our environment and local communities!



Leaving a Legacy of Reconnected Rivers

Prior to European colonization, the rivers in our area ran freely from source to shore. Anadromous fish including American shad, river herring, and Eastern native brook trout had full access to both their freshwater spawning grounds and their oceanic home. Catadromous fish such as the American eel made the journey in reverse, living in freshwater and using the ocean to spawn. Fish were so plentiful that the Native Americans who lived here called this area "Mattakeeset," meaning "place of many fish."

As Europeans colonized New England, they brought along new industrial technologies. Rivers were dammed to power mills, and roads were built for improved transit. Everywhere a road crossed a river, a bridge or culvert needed to be installed. For four centuries, the new Americans carried on the legacy of development, and migratory fish populations dwindled as they could



lan Coletti holding the stadia rod in front of the culvert to measure water depth.

no longer make their annual journeys up and down the rivers.

Today, we often think of obsolete

dams as major impediments to fish passage, but culverts can be equally problematic. Right now, there are over 400 culverts just in the North and South Rivers watersheds alone! The majority of these are undersized and outdated, and pose challenges for fish and other wildlife passage. Additionally, undersized culverts and culverts in disrepair pose a significant flood hazard, particularly in our changing climate.

In 2023, NSRWA began assessing the culverts in the Indian Head and North River watersheds. If you live in these areas, you may have seen our field team walking around in orange vests, carrying surveying equipment. We are in the process of locating potential restoration projects, in efforts to reconnect rivers, restore fish passage, and mitigate the effects of climate-driven flooding on local towns. We are working to change our legacy from one of river modification to one of river restoration!

Reconnecting Our Rivers Through Dam Removals

Indian Head River Restoration

This project is focused on the restoration of the Indian Head River via removal of the Ludden's Ford Dam (Hanover and Pembroke) and the State St Dam (Hanover and Hanson). These are the first two dams up from the ocean and the industries these dams were built to support have been abandoned for close to 100 years.

The consulting team hired to assist with this project has been collecting data and running models that will determine the potential for removing these dams. The resulting feasibility study will answer the following questions:

- · What will it cost?
- What will it look like after the dams are removed?
- How will dam removal impact water levels?
- How much sediment is behind each dam and how can we safely remove it?

These projects will likely be complicated by the recent announcement that the cleanup at the Fireworks Site upstream will be stalled due to a lack of funding. EPA and MassDEP have proposed listing this site on the Superfund National Priorities List. Stay informed

Proposed Timeline of NSRWA River Restoration Projects			
	2023	2024	2025
Indian Head River Restoration - 3 miles of river restored			
Ludden's Ford Dam	Feasiblity and Design	Feasibility and Design	Final Design and Permitting/Fundraising
Cross St Dam	Feasiblity and Design	Feasibility and Design	Final Design and Permitting/Fundraising
South River Restoration - 7.25 miles of miles restored			
Veterans Memorial Park Dam	Final Design and Permitting/Fundraising	Construction	Construction
Chandler Pond Dam	Feasibility and Design/Education	Final Design and Permitting/Fundraising	Final Design and Permitting/Fundraising
Temple St Dam	Final Design and Permitting/Fundraising	Construction	Construction
Third Herring Brook Restoration - 55 acres of pond re-connected to the brook			
Fish Passage to Jacobs Pond	Final Design and Permitting	Fundraising	Construction

through our website, e-News and new social media campaign #LetOurRiversFlow.

South River Restoration

The South River Restoration Project includes the removal of three dams along the South River: Veterans Memorial Park (Marshfield), Chandler Pond (Marshfield), and Temple Street (Duxbury). These projects are in different stages but we are seeing progress at all three sites.

This is an exciting project because annual river herring counts at Veterans Memorial Park have shown that the fish ladder is inefficient at passing sea-run fish present in the river. Just this spring, citizen scientists recorded approximately 700 river herring below the fish ladder but only 4 in the pool above it. Removing all three dams will allow fish to move above this first impediment and continue over 7 miles upstream to find more suitable habitat.

Climate Conversations Leads to Action

In 2022, the NSRWA and the United Unitarians of the First Parish Church of Norwell formed a partnership that led to several fun and engaging programs, outdoor activities, and even the creation and construction of a very beautiful rain garden!

The NSRWA provided several events that included visiting three of our local ecosystems, understanding their importance to our communities, learning the struggles they face, and what we can do to help. The NSRWA also led a discussion about reducing our climate footprint, as well as a multi-day seed sowing, spring planting, and rain garden construction event. The partici-

pants were able to cold stratify native plant seeds at home over the winter, jump start their growing in the spring, and then plant them in the new rain garden on First Parish grounds. Members of the church, especially youth, grew the plants, designed the garden, conducted percolation tests, dug the soil, and planted the plants.

This rain garden will now take in runoff from the road and allow it to naturally sink into the soil, thus helping remove pollution carried across the road, reduce flooding, and provide habitat for local native pollinators. A big win for nature and the community!



Families at First Parish of Norwell helped design, plant, and care for their newly constructed rain garden, which will help clean polluted stormwater runoff from the road and return it into groundwater resources. The garden is planted with native plants that require little attention all while supporting our local pollinators.

Strategies

Continued from Page 4

donations. As the donor, you may request grants be paid to the recipient of your choice, such as the NSRWA, in one year or over time. For example, a couple could donate \$20,000 into their DAF this year, and instruct half to be distributed this year and half next year. The charity recipient receives the funds over two years, and the donors pay less in taxes.

"Bunching" Gifts, or Timing Your Gift to Every Other Year

The "standard deduction" is \$13,850 for singles and \$27,700 for married filing jointly (for 2023). If your deductions are below these thresholds, you don't enjoy the same tax advantages as when they exceed these limits. "Bunching" your giving into alternate years is a common strategy to address these new thresholds. Assume a married couple budgets \$10,000 for gifts to charity each year, and they have \$15,000 in other qualifying deductions.

"I recently sold my business, and donating to the NSRWA makes sense. It reduces my tax burden and helps the environment around me. It's a win-win!"

~ Anonymous donor

A \$10,000 gift to charity gains no additional tax benefit, as all these deductions total \$25,000, short of the standard deduction limit. Bunching two years



Bald eagle at the Norwell cranberry bog by Jon Bond.

of giving (\$20,000) into one tax year takes deductions up to \$35,000, more than the 'standard' resulting in added tax advantages.

Selling a Large Investment, Such as Real Estate, a Business, or a Long-held Stock

If you sell a substantial asset with significant gains and are in a higher than average tax bracket, the federal tax on long term capital gains will be 20%, the Medicare surtax can add another 3.8%, and Massachusetts will get 5%, totaling a 28.8% tax. Consider donating a portion of that gain to your Donor Advised

Fund. For example, for a capital gain of \$300,000, the tax would be \$86,400. Alternatively, a \$100,000 contribution to your Donor Advised Fund would save around \$28,000 in taxes. And you can disburse that over several years.

Gifts of Appreciated Securities (Generally Stocks or Mutual Funds)

Suppose you own stock in a company that has increased in value from \$1,000 to \$5,000 over the years. If you give the appreciated stock to your favorite charity, such as the NSRWA, you get a tax deduction for the full amount, or \$5,000. If you sell the stock first, you'd have less than \$4,000 left after Federal, Medicare surtax, and MA capital gains tax.

Charitable Remainder Trusts

If you're reviewing your estate, be sure to ask your attorney about Charitable Remainder Trusts. These trusts are irrevocable, meaning you don't get to take the money back once funded, but they also provide income during your lifetime, capital gains tax savings, and a benefit to your favorite charity after you pass away. If you have a philanthropic urge but want income for the rest of your life, these are worth a closer look.

There are other estate tax strategies that allow you to leave a legacy behind for a cause that is meaningful to you. Check with your tax and/or legal advisors for details on executing the best for you.



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Save the Date for the New Year's Day Walk

January 1, 2024 1:00-3:00pm

More information on the location to come. Check our Events web page for details.







Join or Renew Today and Get a Free Membership to Gift to a Friend!

Membership Special Runs Now thru October 30.

Annual Meeting and Member Appreciation Picnic



Photo by Lisa A. Irwin.

Members Only Event Sunday, Nov. 5

Save the date, and check your email for the details. Not a member? Join today at nsrwa.org to attend.

WaterWatch Lecture Series

Wednesdays, January 10 -February 28, 2024 at 7:00pm



Join the NSRWA and Mass Audubon South Shore Sanctuaries for a series of live and Zoom lectures.