



Eagle Scout builds split rail fence

Thomas Street entrance in West Boylston. Harry used his strong skill in carpentry and planning to fund raise, purchase and install the fence and build a team.

Charnock and Pommogussett Tunnel Murals

Artist Margaret McCandless created the murals with administrative support from Christy Barnes and with painting by several volunteers. The MCRT Charnock Tunnel Mural is standing beautiful and the Pommogussett Tunnel Mural is now underway in Rutland. Margaret and volunteers will continue in 2024 to paint the new and beautiful vision of nature surrounding the MCRT along Moulton Pond.



Pommogussett Tunnel Mural

These WG mural projects have received support from grants from Rutland, Paxton and Holden Cultural Councils, local agencies, which are supported by the Mass Cultural Council, a state agency. EJ's Painting contributed primer painting.

Welcome Testimonies

Hear the words of trail users and donors:

- Thank you for ALL you do to build and maintain this extraordinary and treasured natural resource!!
- Thanks for the Mass Central Rail Trail. So many people enjoy it.



Mailing party

- We are very fortunate to have such a resource close by. We look forward to our trips on foot or bikes to this special place. Thank you for all your hard work. It is appreciated!!
- Some nice trails here in PA. (Not like the MCRT however—yours is best!!)
- Keep up the great work you are already doing!
- We love the Rail Trail. Thank you for pointing us to join the other day!

WG Annual Meeting

On June 8, 2023, WG held the annual meeting at Trout Brook Reservation, Holden, with a festive outdoor picnic and review of progress. Participants included new volunteers and longtime supporters. All are welcome to our annual gathering planned for June 12, 2024 at Trout Brook Reservation.

Each WG Friend Is Welcome in our 29th Year

WG donors and volunteers are dedicated! We are so grateful to everyone who gives to sustain the treasured Mass Central Rail Trail.

Thank you to every one of this year's 847 donors from 124 towns in 20 states. Forty of these are new members, and many others are long-time steadfast donors. For 2024 our goal is to exceed 1000 donors. Basic membership from \$5 to \$40 is the foundation for annual operating expenses. Three special Mass Central Rail Trail Funds also sustain us: 1) The MCRT Construction Fund helps build new trail sections to reach the 30-mile goal. 2) The Dr. Edward P. Yaglou MCRT Maintenance Fund supports large restoration projects. 3) The MCRT Stewardship Endowment Fund is a permanent fund, and the growth from it will help us to hire our first employee. Wachusett Greenways is grateful to 562 of our donors who also contributed to the MCRT Funds in 2023.



Time to clean the signs and benches

Volunteers are the essence of Wachusett Greenways. You are invited to step in for trail clearing, patrolling, hospitality, communications and more. Call Colleen Abrams at 508-479-2123 or contact us at wachusettgreenways.org

Contribute by mail at Wachusett Greenways, P.O. Box 121, Holden 01520. Or give at www.wachusettgreenways.org

WG Board of Directors: Colleen Abrams, *Chair*; Troy Milliken, *Treasurer*; Mike Peckar, *Secretary*, Stephen Chanis, Christopher Ryan, Christy Barnes (retired 6/23).



2023 Annual Report

Mass Central Rail Trail Construction

During 2023, Wachusett Greenways put the final touches on two new miles of the Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) in Holden between Mill Street and Princeton Street and on the new bridge in Sterling at West Washacum Lake. Grants from MassTrails and donations by WG members assisted in the construction.

Construction is progressing well on the new accessible route between Manning Street and Wachusett Street (Route 31) at Mill Street in Holden. This project expands the trail from 1.1 miles to 2.3 miles. A 2023 MassTrails grant supports this two-year project and Wachusett Greenways provides matching funds. When this project is complete in 2024, the nine-mile accessible section from Thomas St., West Boylston to Princeton St., Holden will be gap-free.

In 2024, Wachusett Greenways will forge ahead with more MCRT construction on a determined course to complete the central 30 miles of the MCRT. Support from our partners: MassTrails, DCR Division



Top coat for new section of trail at Mill Street, Holden



Trail team ready to mow

of Watershed Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife, eight Wachusett/Ware towns, regional foundations, businesses and amazing members, donors and volunteers is central to continued success.

Our Towns

Eight central Massachusetts towns partner with Wachusett Greenways for the annual operating funds to steward the MCRT. Vibrant collaboration with Barre, Holden, Oakham, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling and West Boylston is a key element in caring for our community trail.

Special thanks to towns who participated in maintenance this year. Key examples of partnering for stewardship in 2023 include shoulder mowing, leaf removal, major culvert repair, ditch clearing and project planning. Thank you to West Boylston, Rutland, Sterling and Holden DPWs, who shared the load.

Crossing the Commonwealth

MassTrails granted their largest support for Wachusett Greenways' regional MCRT construction from Manning to Wachusett St., Holden. Completion and stewardship of the MCRT as a 104 mile shared use path remains a key Commonwealth goal. WG

attended the award ceremony where MassTrails directors encouraged trail builders to keep connecting our communities. WG directors also attended the Golden Spike conference organized by the Norwottock Network to help connect builders of the MCRT and other Commonwealth share use paths.

Amazing Volunteers

Each volunteer in 2023 lovingly maintained our rail trail and welcomed trail users and WG supporters. Volunteers mowed, cleared branches, raked and blew leaves, removed dead trees, fixed lawnmowers, cleared and trucked tarps of leaves and ditch



Kaplan Bridge Cleaning



Teaming up with WPI APO

cleanings, helped service portapotties, removed litter, sent outreach messages, thanked donors, wrote grants and managed trail construction and restoration. Volunteers included groups such as WPI APO service fraternity and individuals of all ages who worked tirelessly to care for the rail trail along this 30-mile line. THANK YOU to each volunteer.

Two Stellar Eagle Scouts Help the MCRT Shine

Two Troop 182 Eagle candidates from Holden selected Wachusett Greenways as the beneficiary for their Eagle projects. Their skills and high standards of service will benefit the community for years to come.

Aiden Golden's project provided native plantings including trees, grasses and flowers for the new MCRT section in Holden from Mill Street to Princeton Street and provided a picnic table on the River Street section. His project included research, planting, prolonged watering, fund raising, painting and team building.

Harrison (Harry) Pierce installed new split rail fence at the Charlotte Kaplan Bridge over the Quinapoxet River in Holden and restored the split rail fence at the