Wachusett Greenways Annual Report 2017

**Connecting our Communities**

**W**achusett Greenways (WG) is grateful to all who help connect the community with trails and greenways. The Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) is a treasured resource for health, recreation and transportation. Year round neighors and visitors benefit from the MCRT between Sterling and Barre. Wachusett Greenways and partners including eight Towns have completed and continue to maintain nearly 20 miles of the central 30 miles of the MCRT. The Commonwealth and others are constructing new sections of the MCRT along the 104-mile corridor to the east and west of us between Northampton and Boston.

**20th Birthday of the MCRT!**

On October 1, 2017, WG hosted the 20th birthday party of the MCRT in West Boylston where the first section of the trail was dedicated in October 1997. The birthday party featured more than twenty birthday cakes baked by friends. Twenty representatives from an amazing cast of partners and supporters over the last 20+ years helped cut the ribbon to commemorate the beginning of this wonderful community trail. The annual Springdale Mill Celebration followed the birthday dedication.

**23 Years of Partnerships Growing Stronger**

In 2017, every Select Board member of each of eight towns voted to support Town contributions to WG to assist with annual operating expenses. Six of the eight towns committed modest operating fund support in FY 18, and the remaining two towns will seek support in FY 19. WG Towns include Barre, Holden, Paxton, Princeton, Rutland, Sterling, Oakham and West Boylston.

Major partners are the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), eight central Massachusetts Towns, the Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife, Mass Office of Travel and Tourism, each legislator, many local foundations and businesses. Each WG member, donor and volunteer is also central to continued success.

**MCRT Construction and Restoration**

Restorations and improvements accomplished this year through a DCR Recreational Trails Program grant with WG match included:

1. Restore the embankment at the Parker Brook bridge east of the Route 122 crossing in Oakham. A large beaver dam under the bridge, heavy rain and a partial breach of the dam caused serious erosion. This project repaired the embankment and improved the stability of the bridge abutment.
2. Expand the parking lot at Muddy Pond outlet, Route 122, Oakham. WG expanded the parking lot from three cars to hold eight cars including one handicapped space and improve visibility.
3. Restore two culverts and embankments and add one step way in Rutland near Watson Lane. One repair included using large stone to stabilize the embankment. The second culvert require repair and rebuilding the headwalls. The contractor restored the surface with gravel and stone dust.
4. Complete one corner of the asphalt paving at the River Street, Holden parking lot.
5. Restore the parking lot at Sterling center. This improvement included regrading the entry drive and parking to improve drainage, and installing and compactor rolling additional gravel with a top coat of asphalt grindings.
6. Remove hazardous trees and branches overhanging the Charnock cut in Rutland with a professional tree company.
7. Purchase materials to complete MCRT restorations including gravel, stone dust, rip rap and plastic culvert pipe.
8. Purchase thirteen new granite benches for the MCRT between Barre and Sterling. These benches are a durable trail amenity, which visitors and donors appreciate.
9. WG developed new signs for trail entrances and for street direction along the Barre to Sterling MCRT corridor. The new signs improve the visibility and recognition of the MCRT.

**Looking ahead to 2018**. WG will complete additional MCRT restorations in Rutland and Sterling in 2018. The design for the new MCRT connection at the Route 140/ Beaman Street causeway in West Boylston is scheduled. Construction funds are committed for the trail approaches at each end of the causeway for 2018.

**MCRT Stewardship**

Partners stepped up to help maintain the MCRT. West Boylston Light Department pruned high dead branches on stately oaks. A community service crew scheduled by Sheriff Lew Evangelidis, the West Boylston Fire Department, West Boylston DPW, Nal’s Paint and WG volunteers all helped prepare for the MCRT 20th birthday party in West Boylston. They provided paint and supplies, painted the ‘train car’ fire training station, repaired the bulletin board, removed invasives and refurbished entry landscaping.

Sterling DPW conducted extensive shoulder mowing and WG volunteers removed invasive saplings in Sterling. West Boylston DPW scheduled regular shoulder mowing. Holden DPW mowed the trail. Several towns and the DCR plowed parking lots. Rutland assisted in removing three hazard trees.

WG trail patrollers kept their rounds, checking for downed branches, removing parking lot litter, checking portable toilets, assisting with tree removals, and mowing. These steadfast volunteers deserve our thanks.

Other WG volunteers and visiting community groups painted picnic tables, removed hundreds of dead trees, and cleaned ditches…many ditches. WG also installed new benches and added new portable restrooms with increased service.

**Members and Volunteers Count**

**G**reenways grew to 932 donors in 2017 including 98 new members. 474 generous donors contributed to Wachusett Greenways’ MCRT Construction Fund.  A total of nearly 2780friends have contributed to WG, and some have been loyal members since 1997. More than 200 volunteers of all ages help each year.

**Reaching Out**

WG volunteers attended the Massachusetts Annual Trails Conference, UMass Med School’s Earthday Celebration and Holden Days. Greenways directors continued to share our experience with others working on rail trails around the Commonwealth. Greenways held hospitality days and trail counts on the rail trail.

**21 Miles Road Welcome Center**

One volunteer installed railings on the accessible ramp at 21 Miles Road, Rutland. Another completed surveying for the MCRT connection as we prepare to open the building in 2017. Greenways’ vegetable garden produced a bountiful crop shared by volunteers and visitors. Landscaper Doug Hagman continued to donate mowing and leaf removal. Neighbor Everett Reynolds and others continue with snow removal. Sentry Oil makes generous oil contributions.

**Outdoor Events**

**WG** offered year round outdoor events on trails throughout the region. Volunteers led walks, bicycling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, canoeing or other outdoor adventure.

**A warm welcome for volunteers, members and supporters**!

You are invited to contribute at [www.wachusettgreenways.org](http://www.wachusettgreenways.org/). Wachusett Greenways, P.O. Box 121, Holden 01520. Members receive the *Wachusett Greenways* guide, which includes a map for the regions’ trails and greenways. Volunteers welcome.

Wachusett Greenways Board of Directors:

Colleen Abrams, Chair Troy Milliken, Treasurer

Christy Barnes Michael Peckar, Secretary

Stephen Chanis (Retired 5/17 Jeff Keay)