

# The Greenways Connector

Connecting the Wachusett Community with Trails and Greenways

July 2012

## Partnership Celebration on the Mass Central Rail Trail

Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation and Wachusett Greenways hosted a celebration of partnerships for the Mass Central Rail Trail on June 2. The rain took a break as trail enthusiasts gathered at the rail trail in Rutland to thank the special partners who are helping to create this treasured cross-state trail. The ceremony was held at the intersection of the MCRT and the Midstate Trail in Rutland State Park.

DCR Commissioner Edward Lambert announced a new Partnership Matching Grant of \$100,000 to Wachusett Greenways for the



*Partners' Ribbon Cutting: John Scannell, Bruce Pennino, Dave Small, Art Frost, Colleen Abrams, Senator Stephen Brewer, Sheriff Lew Evangelidis, Holden Selectman Mark Ferguson, Representative Kim Ferguson, Jonathan Yeo, Ken Strom, DCR Commissioner Ed Lambert, Ted Robbins, Mike Misslin, Rutland Selectman Joe Becker, Ed Yaglou, Princeton Selectman Edith Morgan, Rutland Selectman Mike Pantos.*

in Barre where a new 100-foot bridge will be installed in 2012.

Commissioner Lambert welcomed all trail partners and offered the continued strong commitment of the DCR to partnerships to build and steward the Mass Central Rail and other Massachusetts parks and trails. Commissioner Lambert lauded the DCR's new agreement with the MA Department of Health to get people outdoors to build good health and to enjoy nature. Rutland Selectmen Mike Pantos and Joe Becker greeted the visitors to Rutland. Mike noted Rutland's enthusiasm

for the trail and thanked Rutland DPW Director Gary Kellaher for assisting the project. Senator Stephen Brewer spoke of his delight with the trail and the major benefits for bringing young

*Continued on page 2*



*Enthusiastic Greenways partners celebrate rain or shine!*

2012 trail construction. Wachusett Greenways and the Department of Conservation and Recreation and many partners have already completed 16 miles of the Mass Central Rail Trail including eight bridges and two tunnels between Sterling Center and Oakham. The Pommogussett Tunnel at Route 56 in Rutland center is the most recent landmark project. Next up is 1.2 miles of trail extension from Coldbrook Road, Oakham to the Ware River crossing,

## Rail Trail Construction Steams West Into Barre

The Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT) is being extended 1.2 miles from its current terminus at Coldbrook Road, Oakham to the Ware River in Barre. According to Ed Yaglou, MCRT Task Force chair, the trail will follow the old Mass Central railbed for about a half-mile before heading down to the Ware River. From there, the trail will follow the old Boston & Albany route which parallels the Ware River to the river crossing at Route 122 in Barre.



*From left: Ryan Goodwin and Bruce McDonald of R. J. McDonald and Ed Yaglou*

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## Grants Raise Hope for Rail Trail and Welcome Center

Wachusett Greenways is grateful for the continued support of the Commonwealth and local foundations. This year's projects include completing the Pommogussett Tunnel and Trail Campaign by making the Welcome Center accessible and new major construction on the Mass Central Rail Trail in Oakham and Barre including the Ware River bridge.

The Pommogussett Tunnel and Trail Project is advancing with the support of Stoddard Charitable Trust and the Fletcher Foundation. The tunnel is complete and now Greenways is working to make the Welcome Center accessible and construct the trail connection at Miles Road. In June these two foundations made awards to help complete the \$600,000 campaign. Now we must raise just \$60,000 in gifts from Greenways members and donors.

The Fletcher Foundation announced a \$5,000 grant and the Trustees declared: "We are well aware of the tremendous efforts expended in establishing the rail trail." The Stoddard Charitable Trust awarded a \$20,000 grant. Stoddard Charitable Trust Chairman Warner Fletcher noted that the Trustees are impressed with the work the Greenways team has done to make the rail trail a "vibrant reality." He closed with encouragement: "We hope and trust that you will be successful in raising the remaining \$60,000 still needed to complete this project and that all the work will be completed."

New construction extending the Mass Central Rail Trail between Coldbrook Road, Oakham and the Ware River crossing in Barre is also underway in 2012. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation has provided a Recreational Trails Grant of \$50,000 and a Partnership Matching Program Grant of \$100,000. Greenways has also applied for a 2012 Recreational Trails Grant to complete the challenging trail sections in Oakham and Barre. Gifts from Greenways members and donors are needed to provide the needed match.

## Partnership Celebration on the Mass Central Rail Trail

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*Tunnel tour: Colleen Abrams, DCR's Bruce Pennino, John Scannell, Jonathan Yeo and David Small, MHD District 3 Arthur Frost, Michael Pantos, Ed Yaglou, Ted Robbins.*

people outdoors to enjoy trails, hunting and fishing. Representative Kim Ferguson cheered the trail as a place her son first enjoyed from a stroller. Representative Ferguson lifted up the Commonwealth as the fourth smallest state, but being the ninth largest in State Parks. Senator Harriette Chandler and Representative Ann Gobi sent word of their admiration for the trail and for the many partners who are making it happen. Arthur Frost, Mass Department of Transportation, described DOT's support for the rail trail and explained how they developed the rail trail crossing warnings at Route 122. Wachusett Greenways President Colleen Abrams closed with words of gratitude and recognition to every partner and the 2400 members and donors who have helped build and maintain this trail since 1995.

## Mark Forkey Memorial

Mark Forkey was an extraordinary booster for Wachusett Greenways serving as a trail maintainer and an enthusiastic supporter for many years. On December 11, 2011, Mark died after a courageous battle with cancer. Mark's friends and family have rallied to contribute funds for a memorial bench on the Mass Central Rail Trail in Sterling. Mark touched the people he met with his warmth and kindness. We are grateful for the time shared with Mark, and we look forward to seeing his bench alongside the trail.



*Wachusett Greenways Newsletter*

### The Greenways Connector

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## The Central Mass: From Rail to Trail

You may be walking along the rail trail one day, looking to the left if you are heading west, when you see what looks like a standing pole, chopped rather than chewed off, so it is not a beaver casualty. These truncated poles are remnants of the telegraph signal lines for the Central Mass. Railroad, on whose roadbed you are now walking. The photo shows the Rutland Depot, with its water tower on the left, and its signal pole on the right. The crossbars were studded with those heavy glass insulation caps you often seen in flea markets now, which were wrapped around with copper wire. The busier the telegraph (and later the telephone) traffic, the more circuits needed. As you can see, the Rutland Depot, with its multi-tiered pole, carried a lot of signals! An interpretive sign now marks the spot where the water tower stood. At some point, in abandoning the tracks, the telegraph poles, with their valuable copper wires, were cut down, leaving the stumps we can see if we look a bit off the path.

You see other reminders of the past along the rail trail, such as a mile marker, announcing B54 on one side and N50 on the other to show how many miles are left to reach Boston or Northampton on the 104 mile rail line. In other places original bridge abutments



*Sterling Quag Bridge, with original abutments below*

are visible. In Sterling, for example, the modern Wachusett Greenways bridge over the Quag and West Washacum Pond is next to the original bridge supports.

The Central Mass. Railroad was almost never a profitable one. It had been proposed by railroad promoters in 1869 who dreamed of connecting Boston not only to the western part of the state (104 miles of track), but eventually to the Hudson River, the Erie Canal and the markets of the Western territories.

After 12 years of planning and laying track, only 48 miles were completed for the first run of the Massachusetts Central Railroad in 1881. Its owners were in constant debt, and operation was suspended for over two years. By 1885, with its name changed to the Central Mass. Railroad, the trains were again running, reaching Muschopauge, Rutland by 1886 and eventually Northampton. Plagued by revolving ownership, a decline in ridership, accidents, and in particular damage from the 1938 hurricane, the Central



*Old Rutland Depot with telegraph pole on right*

Mass discontinued service between Oakdale and Rutland in 1938. By 1941, tracks were removed from Oakdale to Barre. By 1975, only 45 disconnected miles of track survived. By 2006, any tracks remaining were covered by brush and trees. In 1995 Wachusett Greenways began transforming the central 30 miles to the Mass Central Rail Trail.

If you are interested in reading more about the Central Mass. Railroad, see *The Central Mass.*, published by Marker Press, second edition in 2008 by The Boston and Maine Railroad Historical Society, Inc.

## Trail Patrollers in Rutland Create a Welcoming Site

One Patroller Team stewards a special section of the rail trail. This summer they regularly stop by to water and care for their own unique flower plot near the old Rutland Depot. They also perform regular maintenance including raking and weeding near the Depot, along the trail and through the Pommogussett Tunnel.



*Jere Bradley, Carol Moore, Rachel Bradley, Vivianne Ouellette. (Not pictured: photographer Hank Ouellette and Karen Komenda.)*

When asked what the group especially liked about their patrolling duties, they all declared that they liked working together as a group. Their answer again testifies to the many friendships that have taken root through Wachusett Greenways activities.



## Welcome Center Progressing

The Welcome Center is being transformed from a small, well-crafted home, to a cheerful Welcome Center and office right next to the rail trail in Rutland. Chuck Belanger and Christy Barnes head up the volunteer efforts to plan the new Center. Chuck extended his appreciation to volunteers who have donated their labor to help maintain and renovate property. "People have helped with everything from mowing the lawn, to plowing the driveway," said Chuck. Neighbors Roland Veaudry, Dave Camarra and Doug Hagman have given outstanding support. "We are literally tidying-up the place from top to bottom," says Christy.

Mark Elbag of Rutland was contracted to complete the renovations to make the property handicapped-accessible. When the center opens to the public, visitors can take a rest and learn more about the trail and the ongoing work of extending and maintaining it. "We'll eventually be looking to recruit volunteers to staff the welcome desk," said Christy. "But there's still a lot of planning to do."

Chuck (cgbelanger@msn.com) and Christy (bertinbarnes@verizon.net) have developed a wish list and they'd love to hear from you to offer your help with funds or services.



### Welcome Center Wish List

- A handicapped accessible ramp
- Ten energy efficient double hung windows
- Supplies for construction or purchase of shelves for the cellar for secure dry storage
- A new bulkhead external door
- Material for projects such as shelving for the closet in the Welcome Room, wainscoting material for the kitchen, a new countertop for the kitchen, hardware for the cabinets, etc. A secure locking mechanism for the Welcome Room door
- Basic household items such as: cleaning material, paper towels, toilet tissue, etc.
- Outfit the new handicapped bathroom with items such as a mirror, soap and paper dispenser, etc.

## Polishing Plans for Springdale Mill

The Springdale Mill committee met to make this summer's stewardship plans for the interpretive site and to plan the September 29 Springdale Celebration at the mill site between the Quinapoxet River and the MCRT with music, fun and food for all. To volunteer to help, contact Ruth Spaulding at 508-829-4869.



*Springdale Mill Committee making plans*



## Cheers for the New Bridge for the Midstate Trail

Ribbon-cutting for the new footbridge was held on June 2. Volunteers from Princeton and the Midstate Trail Committee of the Appalachian Mountain Club joined forces to build a 50-foot footbridge over the Ware River that will allow a re-route of the Midstate Trail. The Four

Corners Conservation Area and adjacent lands owned by the Princeton Land Trust and DCR now provide an important link in a regional network of open spaces and trails, connecting the Wachusett Mountain State Reservation with the Ware River Watershed lands. Mass Audubon's 1,200-acre Wachusett Meadow Wildlife Sanctuary abuts this area as well.

The Midstate Trail, a rustic footpath, runs for 95 miles from the New Hampshire border to the Rhode Island line. Check out the beautiful new bridge and take a walk and a paddle! Directions are on Wachusett Greenways' web site.



Midstate Trail bridge dedication

## Staying In Touch

The Greenways Mailing team keeps you up-to-date by sending you the news of Wachusett Greenways, your trail organization. Thank you to all who have responded with your donations and memberships in 2012. For the 451 who've joined this year, your new Greenways Guide and maps will soon be in your mailboxes. If you haven't sent your membership yet, please take a moment to do it now.



S. Jane Arntz



Doreen Amaral

## Rail Trail Construction Steams West Into Barre

Continued from page 1

Bruce Pennino, Greenways' dedicated volunteer civil engineer, has designed a substantial bridge to replace the existing structure, which is used by hikers and snowmobilers. The new 10-foot-wide, 100-foot-long bridge will serve multiple users.

"It will give us access for trail work. Snowmobilers, cyclists and foot travelers will use it. And heavy MWRA vehicles will be able to get to the south side of the Ware more easily, saving those workers a long, circuitous route to reach that area," Ed Yaglou says.

This spring, lumberer Chris Pirner, of Hubbardston, removed trees, making way for grading and constructing the trail by R. J. McDonald Company, of Barre. Wachusett Greenways expects to complete the trail and new bridge installation in 2012.





## Scouts, boys and girls are valued Greenways partners



Holden Cub Scout Pack 146 helped clear the trail in West Boylston and Holden following the big October storm and this spring they enjoyed an exuberant trail trek where they admired their own good work.



West Boylston Brownie Troops 11089 and 30975 helped remove invasive garlic mustard along the rail trail.



Paxton Boy Scouts helped clear the trail in Oakham.

## Looking and Listening More Closely

Most of us walk or cycle for exercise and the exhilaration of being outdoors. When we choose a slower pace we're often rewarded with a different delight – a glimpse of wildlife, a patch of lady slippers or blueberries, a bank of wild azalea, the variety of mosses, mushrooms, ferns, an old stone foundation.

Many of the ponds near the Central Mass Rail Trail show beaver activity. You can see beaver lodges around the trails near Muddy Pond, and dams near Thayer Pond, in Rutland. There is a report of ruffed grouse, which nested near 21 Miles Road, the WG Welcome Center, and a Baltimore Oriole has been heard, but not seen.

Bird song fills the air. Pileated woodpeckers live at the Eagle Lake Wildlife Sanctuary, as do fishers, river otters, barred owls. Sitting on a bench by a pond, you will likely see the stately blue heron. Be sure to look down, maybe you will see footprints or droppings that will tell a story of animal movement and diet – where do the deer lie down, who ate whom?

Check out these mystery photos. Whose eggs are these? Where in Holden is this tree and what kind is it? What is this flower, found in unusually

large clusters this spring near Muddy Pond, Rutland? What have YOU seen on Wachusett area trails? We'd love to hear your discoveries. Please answer the questions by replying to [colleen.abrams@verizon.net](mailto:colleen.abrams@verizon.net) or 'Contact Us' at [www.wachusettgreenways.org](http://www.wachusettgreenways.org), and your name may be drawn to receive your choice of a Greenways t-shirt or hat.

Take advantage of the many walks being offered this season by Wachusett Greenways volunteers. Check out the events in this newsletter or check Wachusett Greenways' on-line.





## CALENDAR OF EVENTS: Please join us!

**July 28, 2012 – Saturday – 8:30 AM-Noon**  
**Tatnuck Brook to Lynde Brook and More**

**Shared event with Greater Worcester Land Trust**

The Greater Worcester Land Trust (GWLT) is 24 years old, 1800 acres, well over 500 volts./yr. and includes seven towns. GWLT is a small non-profit organization created to protect and maintain land for preservation of wildlife so that current and future generations can enjoy the well-being our wilderness provides.

Colin Novick, leader extraordinaire and Executive Director of GWLT, will lead us from the headwaters of Tatnuck Brook in Worcester, up and over to the headwaters of Lynde Brook in Leicester, passing through Holden and Paxton. This is an easy to moderate, 3.5 mile hike with varied grades and a consistent uphill aspect for the first half of the distance. Bring field guides, binoculars, insect repellent, sunscreen, water and a snack (and/or lunch). Wear good walking shoes. Please join the group for a social lunch after the hike. Contact Mary Caulway, [mary@gwlt.org](mailto:mary@gwlt.org) or 508-795-3838 to sign up.

**August at Patrill Hollow Preserve – Date and Time TBD**

The East Qabbin Land Trust (EQLT) works to foster the sustainable use of our natural and historic resources through conservation and stewardship of farmlands, woodlands. EQLT began in 1994 because of concern for the loss of farmland and wildlife habitat to unplanned sprawl in and around Hardwick. Since 1998, EQLT has expanded its protection efforts to Barre, Petersham, New Braintree and other nearby towns. The Land Trust has been able to protect over 3,200 acres through working partnerships!

Explore a loop trail around EQLT's latest land acquisition, and look for late summer nature clues. Crickets will be chirping and grasshoppers buzzing, providing food for larger animals. Bring water and insect repellent. Contact Cynthia Henshaw [chenshaw@eqtl.org](mailto:chenshaw@eqtl.org) to sign up.

**August 2 – Thursday – 10 AM-Noon**  
**Late Summer Flowers on the Rail Trail**

We will look for the showy Cardinal Flower in some of the swampy areas created by beaver dams, as well as other late summer flowers along the way. Join Ansley Siter and Christy Barnes for a look at our native flora of the season along the rail trail in Rutland. Bring water, insect repellent and your favorite wildflower field guide, and binoculars. Contact Christy Barnes: [bertinbarnes@verizon.net](mailto:bertinbarnes@verizon.net) or 508-755-6321 to sign up.

**August 4 – Saturday – 10:00 AM – Noon**  
**Bike the Mass Central Rail Trail in Rutland and Oakham**

Join Ed Tarquinio on a leisurely ride through the Pommogussett Tunnel to Coldbrook Road in Oakham. Eight miles takes you up a slight incline and past ponds and over bridges and through Rutland State Park. Bring water and a snack. Contact Ed to sign up: [etarquinio089@gmail.com](mailto:etarquinio089@gmail.com), 508-886-6427

**August 7, 14, 21, 28 and September 4, 11, 18, 25**  
**Tuesdays – 9:30 AM – 11 AM**

**Weekly Walks with Rutland COA**

Walkers meet at the Rutland Community Center on Glenwood Road at 9:30 AM. Car pool to a trail parking lot, then walk 1/2 hour in on the trail, and return the 1/2 hour back to the cars. All levels of walkers can walk at their own pace, and end up back at the cars at the same time. The goal is to walk weekly until the fall and to hit most every parking lot along the Mass Central Rail Trail. Please sign up at the COA office (508-886-7945) or contact Natalie Maynard [nataliemaynard@verizon.net](mailto:nataliemaynard@verizon.net) or 508-886-8913.

**August 14 – Tuesday – 10 AM**  
**Ride the Blackstone River Bikeway in RI**

Join Chris Nichols on a bike ride along the Blackstone River from Woonsockett to Central Falls, Rhode Island. Bring your lunch, water, helmet and your bike, of course! Contact Chris to sign up: [christinichols37@msn.com](mailto:christinichols37@msn.com), 978-464-2328.

**September 5 – Wednesday – 10 AM to noon**  
**Ride the Rutland/Oakham Stretch of the MCRT**

Join Christy Barnes on a bike ride from Glenwood Road. Bring water and a snack or lunch to get you through this 15 mile roundtrip stretch of beautiful scenery. Contact Christy Barnes: [bertinbarnes@verizon.net](mailto:bertinbarnes@verizon.net), 508-755-6321 to sign up.

**September 22 – 10 AM – 11:30 AM**  
**Walk the Ferrie-Calkins Woodland**

Join us for a fall tour of this brand new Rutland Conservancy property with its small network of trails. The woodland is home to owls, hawks, reptiles, fishers, and several species of woodland wildflowers. Participation is limited to 10 people. Please call the Conservancy at 508-886-7114 or email [rlc@rutlandland.org](mailto:rlc@rutlandland.org), or Christy Barnes 508-755-6321, [bertinbarnes@verizon.net](mailto:bertinbarnes@verizon.net) to sign up.

**September 29 – 11 AM – 2 PM**  
**Annual Springdale Mill Celebration**

Enjoy tours, music and more at this festive gathering at the woolen mill interpretive site on the Mass Central Rail Trail. Enter the trail from West Boylston or Holden.

### Seven Hills Clean-Up

Seven Hills Wheelmen conducted an Earth Day clean-up near the Mass Central Rail Trail and Trout Brook Reservation along Manning Street. Kathy Kime filled her hybrid car with the results which she delivered to the Wachusett Watershed Regional Recycle Center.



## Students Boost Energy for Trail Care

Wonderful volunteers have worked steadily to care for the Mass Central Rail Trail, and the White Oak Trail especially since the October 2011 wet snowstorm that took down hundreds of trees and thousands of branches. The special surprise this year was an outpouring of support from Wachusett Regional High School National Honor Society and Mountaineer volunteers. These ambitious youth infused new enthusiasm as they joined long-time Greenways volunteers to clear the trail from the big storm and polish trail sections for the Partnership Celebration on June 2 led by by DCR Commissioner Edward Lambert.



*Return Service Requested*

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