

The Greenways Connector

Connecting the Wachusett Community with Trails and Greenways

November 2012

Over the Ware River!

The Mass Central Rail Trail expanded 1.4 miles westward in 2012, including a Ware River crossing. Picking up where Greenways left off in 2011, the rail trail continues from Coldbrook Road in Oakham to the Route 122 rest stop along the Ware River in Barre.

Construction includes a new 98-foot heavy-duty bridge over the Ware River. The new trail section uses two former rail road routes which parallel the Ware River and a connecting service road between them. Greenways, in partnership with the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) and Massachusetts Water Resources Authority (MWRA), chose the route.

First the trail crosses Coldbrook Road in Oakham and travels west about 0.5 miles on the Mass Central line. Then the trail turns north to follow a service road for about 0.2 miles to connect to a second former railway, the Boston and Albany. The trail advances another 0.5 miles in Barre along the Boston and Albany next to the Ware River before ramping down to a bridge over the Ware River and continuing 0.2 miles alongside Route 122 to a rest stop.

Greenways is fortunate to have the services of two knowledgeable contractors who are dedicated to developing a durable trail for generations to enjoy.

R. J. McDonald of Barre constructed the challenging section of rail trail from Coldbrook Road to the Ware River. Transferring to the second rail route eliminated the need to construct an extra bridge on the Mass Central line over a large 1938 hurricane wash-out. However, the connecting service road sloped steeply down to the B&A tracks, reaching grades as high as 14%. The incline needed to be tamed to a more accessible 5% via some substantial earth moving. The result is a serpentine path along the access road. R. D. Salvadore Excavating of Barre will install the bridge and extend the trail west along Route 122 to the rest stop. Greenways will replace an existing five-foot wide bridge built by



area snowmobile users with a 10-foot wide span. The new heavy-duty bridge will be shared by snowmobile users for access to their interstate trail, Route 71, and by MWRA and DCR maintenance vehicles to access to the area without a lengthy detour.

Other professionals donated their services. Engineers Bruce Pennino of Holden and Rob Johnson of Paxton contributed trail and bridge design. Surveyor, Ken Strom of Holden contributed many hours and guidance to checking slopes and setting grades. And surveyor, Doug Andrysick of Princeton provided some some donated hours of surveying. Greenways is grateful for their commitment to our communities.

See page 5 for a map.

Grateful for Your Gifts

Constructing and maintaining the Mass Central Rail Trail and keeping Wachusett Greenways on track depends on generous supporters. The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) has been a steadfast partner in developing the Mass Central Rail Trail, participating in the Rail Trail Task Force and offering guidance and encouragement. The DCR provides Recreational Trails Grants and DCR Partnership Matching Grants. The DCR Watershed staff led by Bill Pula and Dave Small in the Ware Watershed and John Scannell in the Wachusett Watershed provide instrumental leadership for the development of each new trail section. The DCR Greenways and Trails Program leaders Amanda Lewis and Paul Jahnige continue to champion the rail trail through the Recreational Trails Program grants which DCR has provided since 1995!



These pivotal DCR grants require our matching enthusiastic volunteer work AND funds. Every donation you give is needed and valued as we continue to build our 30 mile section of the statewide trail. Wachusett Greenways invites members and friends to contribute for rail trail construction when you renew your membership each year and to give an additional annual gift for building the rail trail. Generally members renew in early spring and make an annual gift at year's end, but each gift is welcome at any time. Greenways does record memberships and will count any duplicate membership for the following year. If you aren't sure whether your membership is current, please check your mailing label to see the most recent membership year printed there.

Wachusett Greenways Newsletter

The Greenways Connector

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For regular news updates, visit our
website at
www.wachusettgreenways.org.

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Maps and Guide, Oh My!

Through a labor of love and meticulous attention to detail, the long-awaited Wachusett Greenways guide and a beautiful set of Mass Central Rail Trail maps are now available.

The Wachusett Greenways Guide is free to all current Wachusett Greenways members. Additional copies may be purchased at \$3 each. The Greenways Guide to open spaces and trails in the region was developed by a committee chaired by Director Steve Dubrule. The Trustees of Reservations provided mapping support by Vin Antul. Greater Worcester Community Foundation supported the guide production with a grant.

The Mass Central Rail Trail maps were developed by Jill Phelps Kern, a professional cartographer, and donated to Wachusett Greenways. The map is designed in eight sections with an overview map of the trail from Sterling through Barre. The Mass Central Rail Trail maps are going to press, and will be on-line at www.wachusettgreenways.org or may be purchased from Wachusett Greenways for \$3 per set.

WPI's Alpha Phi Omega Rocks



WPI members of the Alpha Phi Omega service fraternity outdid themselves for Wachusett Greenways this fall. One group helped volunteers David Ryan and Mike Peckar (who manned the chain saws) clear the trail in Oakdale. According to Dave, "they kept pace with us for the whole time, and they were extremely helpful and energetic." The WPI students also learned some local history of the mill area from Mike, who provided details about its past.

Another group of WPI's Alpha Phi Omega students arrived at the Springdale Mill celebration. This coed group assisted with face painting, built fairy houses, and generally added to the festivities. WPI APO students have helped WG for years, and we are so grateful to them.

Bancroft Students Are True Trail Enthusiasts

First-time Wachusett Greenways volunteers 5th Grade Bancroft School students arrived for a full day at the trail in October. They learned about invasive plants, the rail road, and the 19th Century woolen mill in their midst, while helping to clean up the Mass Central Rail Trail in West Boylston and Holden. The weather was perfect for a brisk walk to the mill site and picnic lunch. Accompanied by their teachers Lisa Kunhardt and Betsy Rocha, they brought positive energy and creative thinking to their tasks, while being immersed in the history of the Springdale Mill.

The Bancroft 5th grade students expressed appreciation to their Greenways volunteer team leaders: "Thank you for a fun time full of happiness." "I had a great time at Wachusett Greenways. I learned so much about invasive species. I loved spending the whole time outside and learning about the mill. We saw so many things and heard so many things, like the river, leaves crunching, and even Scott with the chain saw. I was very happy knowing that I was helping the community. My favorite part was the loppers. Hope to come back soon!" "I liked digging out the trench with a shovel and a hoe." "I hope I get to do it with you again in



middle school." "Thank you ever so much for helping me use the saw." "I loved that we had to walk 3 miles just to get lunch. The next time I go there I'm gonna stop at all the reminders of the mill. It is amazing that you guys keep adding on to the trail." "I had lots of fun. I became a much better weeder on the trip."

For more than a decade, energetic middle-school students from the Bancroft School have shown up three times each year to help clear and clean up trails. Through the school's service program, these helpers enjoy an afternoon of trail improvement in November, in March and in April. Wachusett Greenways is delighted to welcome each Bancroft student.

Communities Unite in Oakham Parade

Our mission to connect communities through trails and greenways was in evidence at Oakham's 250th Anniversary Parade over the Columbus Day weekend. Beth Hunt and Lydia Barter carried the MCRT banner while Christy Barnes carried the WG banner. Wes Barter pulled the MCRT logo steam engine model float with his shiny red pickup truck. As Greenways members marched along the parade route they were greeted with many words of appreciation for marching in the parade and for bringing the trail to Oakham.



Welcome Center Taking Steps to Put Out the Mat

Work on the Wachusett Greenways Welcome Center on 21 Miles Road, Rutland is progressing, both inside and outdoors, thanks to leaders Chuck Belanger and Christy Barnes along with volunteer Harold Boucher. Over the summer and fall volunteers cleared brush from the yard and began clearing for the rail trail connection.

Volunteers with professional expertise and donors are also key



participants in the development of the Welcome Center. Dan Ferguson, architect from Princeton, planned the accessible interior and the ramp design. Ken Strom provided surveying. Bruce Pennino and Hank Ouellette also did preliminary surveying. Kevin Quinn is contributing to the design of the Rail Trail connection. Doug Hagman of Hagman Landscaping in Rutland has continued to donate mowing and leaf removal all year! And Brian and Paula Stidsen of Sentry Oil donated a tank of oil just in time for some cold winter days. Neighbors Roland Veaudry and Dave Camarra continue to provide snowplowing, and clearing the driveway with amazing speed after every storm.

Outside the Welcome Center, Christy Barnes is developing a rain garden to divert water from the gutters. This garden will be a shallow area 10 x 15 feet planted with ferns and perennials that can handle periodic flooding and drought.

Interior work completed includes the new accessible bathroom, halls and doorways. New windows are being installed. Painting is nearly complete. Exterior painting or new siding will be needed next summer.

A big thank you to all who are helping to prepare the Welcome Center!

Vertex Volunteers Return for Annual Day of Service

On a very rainy autumn day twenty volunteers from Vertex Pharmaceuticals of Cambridge came back for third year to work alongside Greenways members. They performed some amazing feats on the Sterling section of the Mass Central Rail Trail. The



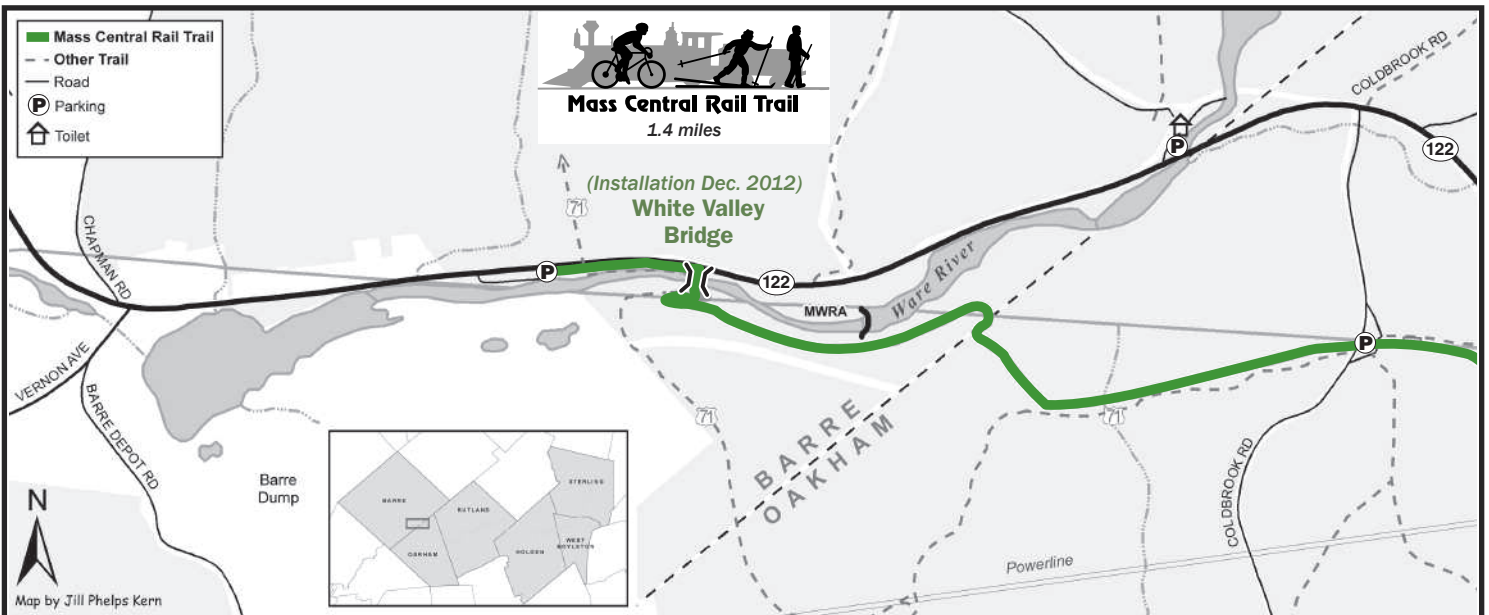
crew took on heavy jobs, such as clearing rocks from the channel under the bridge, reinforcing eroding banks, and creating stepways near West Lake Washacum and the Quag.

With help from the Sterling DPW, they lifted granite slab benches, placing them on granite legs and carefully installed a new bench dedicated in memory of Wachusett Greenways' former director Mark Forkey. A team of six lifted a 600 pound steel bench, carrying it up the bank to place on Ed Yaglou's truck for welding repair of a leg damaged in the 2008 storm. Other Vertex volunteers lopped brush intruding on the trail and cleared more storm damaged trees along the trail.

Greenways volunteers Ed Yaglou, John Rives, Gary Tuthill, S. Jane Arntz, and Colleen Abrams worked alongside Brian Boucher and his Vertex team. John Rives brought along his mowing machine and completed the shoulder mowing. Sterling volunteer Margaret Lock brought delicious home-baked treats and served lunch to the crew as they took protection from the rain under the tent.

Springdale Mill Celebration

The Springdale Mill Celebration was held at its traditional place on the last Saturday in September. The weather threatened a bit, but the rain held off, perhaps chased away by Chas Paddock and friends with their spirited music. Those who ventured the mile and a half to the old woolen mill site found a warm welcome. They enjoyed delicious cookies baked by Oakdale Rehabilitation Center, crisp apples from Clearview Nursery, and other fragrant treats. Fairy houses and face painting were offered by WPI APO students along with a mill treasure hunt by DCR educator, Jim Lafley.



Shirts Make Patrollers Official

Wachusett Greenways recognized patrollers for being a loyal and observant cadre of volunteers by presenting them with their official patroller shirts in October. Patrollers and their families were invited to share the hospitality of a hearty meal and good fellowship as they attended either the breakfast or supper hosted by Greenways directors and volunteers.

Several patrollers talked about the duties involved in keeping a watchful eye on their portion of the Mass Central Rail Trail or White Oak Trail. Everett Reynolds, a Miles Road resident and railroad enthusiast, stated that his proximity to the Rutland section of the rail trail allowed him to readily see what needed to be done. Jim Potter, from Barre, said he signed on to patrol because he enjoys using the trail so much, and wants to help out. Jim got a 'head start' on the new section of the rail trail from Coldbrook Road as he helped with seeding and raking the new construction areas. Don Inglis noted that he takes special pride in being a good trail steward because he expects to see Cal Coolidge ride along at any moment [*Editor's note: President Calvin Coolidge often rode the Mass Central train from Northampton when he was Governor of Massachusetts.*]



Soon after the Patroller gatherings, the next challenge arrived when Hurricane Sandy made its appearance. The Patrollers quickly reported in, one after another. They checked the trail, removed any fallen branches, reported the few downed trees, and reassured a middle school group using the trail that all was well.

Got Volunteers? YES!

Volunteers carried out many maintenance projects recently. Just take a look at some of our amazing hard-working volunteers...and sign up to join in the fun. Whether you like lopping, planting, sawing, seeding, raking or prefer mailings, photography, writing or greeting, you are welcome! Check our website or make a call to learn more about where you can help.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS: Please call to register and join us!

December 8 – Saturday – 1-3:30 p.m.
Walk Eagle Lake Wildlife Sanctuary.

This late fall/early winter walk will still have the crunch of fallen leaves. But we'll hear winter's little birds and see next year's buds as we take in the lovely scenery around the edge of Eagle Lake and through a hardwood forest. Contact Christy Barnes (bertinbarnes@verizon.net), 508-755-6321 to sign up.

December 15 – Saturday – 1-3:00 p.m.
Walk the New Braintree Rail Trail.

Join Doug Frost to explore the rail trail west of the Greenways section (East Quabbin Rail Trail). We'll cross the mighty Ware River over an old trestle bridge. We'll also be on the lookout for the phantom mountain lion! Contact Doug, 413-477-6847 (dfrost@frostmanufacturing.com), or Christy Barnes, 508-755-6321 (bertinbarnes@verizon.net) to sign up for this 4 mile (roundtrip) hike.

January 1, 2013 – Tuesday – 10 a.m.
New Year's Day Walk or Cross Country Ski in Hardwick/New Braintree.

Walk or cross country ski the East Quabbin Land Trust's section of the MCRT in Hardwick and New Braintree. We'll trek from the New Braintree Station to Creamery Road and back, and then have lunch at the Clover Farm Stand in Hardwick. Contact Ed Yaglou (egyaglou@verizon.net), 978-355-2539 to sign up.



Holden Days, a festive event, is always a great place to meet old friends and welcome newcomers.

January 27 – Sunday – 7-8:30 p.m.
Full Moon Ski/Snowshoe/Hike on the Rail Trail.

In the silence of the night we'll listen for owls and other night time sounds as animals look for prey or try to stay warm. Perhaps some gentle falling snow will add to the quietness. We'll start our hike from Miles Road then warm up afterward with a cup of hot chocolate at the Welcome Center. Contact Robin Peters to sign up dancingstonefarm@aol.com, 508-886-6541.

February 10 – Sunday – 12:30-3:30 p.m.
Brown Hill Winter Wildlife Snowshoe or Walk at Mass Audubon's Wachusett Meadow.

Brown Hill is a shrubby barren 1312-foot Monadnock hill, sister to nearby Little Wachusett and Wachusett Mountain, with a grand view of the sanctuary and surrounding landscape. We'll walk the Brown Hill loop and summit trails, including the secluded and seldom used north side of the hill, where moose often winter. Snowshoe hare and bobcat frequent the hill and summit providing great tracking opportunities. Join one of the best naturalists around on this moderate hike with Joe Choiniere. Warm up afterward in the Crocker House with a cup of hot chocolate. Contact Joe to sign up. jchoiniere@massaudubon.org, 978-464-2717.

February 24 – Sunday – 1-3 p.m.
Winter Biking at Rutland State Park and the Prison Camp.

Lydia and Wes Barter will lead this winter ride. We will start out from the parking lot at the entrance of the park and proceed down the hill to Prison Camp Road, and ride to the old Prison Camp. A visit to the old hospital cellar and remaining two structures and cellars will be included. The ride will be between 8 and 10 miles, with stops to investigate the prison camp remains. Helmets and warm gear required. We will cancel if there is ice or temps below 35 degrees. Call with questions and to register, 508-867-8941.

Check wachusettgreenways.org for new listings.

Everyone Counts

Periodically Greenways offers hospitality at the rail trail and counts the trail visitors from dawn to dusk. On October 27, with the temps in the 60s and a day of mixed fog, sun and clouds unfolding, Greenways volunteers greeted trail users in West Boylston from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. On this day 297 visitors enjoyed the rail trail. They came from West Boylston, Holden, Worcester, Shrewsbury and 22 other Massachusetts towns. Visitors from afar included Oklahoma, Virginia, New Jersey, New York and Brazil.

Many trail visitors welcomed the opportunity to pick up a free map of the Mass Central Rail Trail and to learn of other sections to visit. Some walkers and cyclists shared trail tales, while others asked for information about the trail or thanked the volunteers for this good work. Greenways offered colorful t-shirts and hats for sale as a great way to spread the word and remember another delightful day on the trail.



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