

The Greenways Connector

Connecting the Wachusett Community with Trails and Greenways

November 2014

Who's On the Trail?

Inspiring 1,000 Members to Join Wachusett Greenways in Our 20th Year

When asked what draws her and her family to the Mass Central Rail Trail in Rutland, Beth Vargas said it's the proximity to the trails from her home and the peaceful setting.

A pair of longtime Greenways members from Harvard appears at the MCRT on road bikes for a round trip ride to Hardwick. They hop between the MCRT and the road where there are gaps. They lunch at Rose 32 in Hardwick, then ride back on the rail trail taking a quick dousing from an afternoon shower. "We love this trail," they proclaim. "Thank you for finishing the stone dust on the last leg to the Ware River in Barre."

A man from Sterling notes that he walks the MCRT often. In the fall he sees snakes sometimes on the Sterling section, so he walks the West Boylston section avoiding his nemesis from childhood days in the Everglades. His wife always walked with him on the trail, but now she has Alzheimers. He says he accepted the help of a home health aide today so he could go for a walk.

"I used to run here all the time and live just around the corner. Now I've moved another town away but I still return several times a week to walk with my daughter... I love this trail!" declares a young woman pushing her daughter in a jogging stroller with her dog on leash.

On sunny days, don't be surprised to find a group of students with their teachers seated next to Thayer Pond in Rutland. The tranquil beauty provides the ideal backdrop for the poems they are composing.

One cyclist who was setting out from Miles Road to Barre observed, "Thanks to Wachusett Greenways for making it possible to travel for more than 10 miles off-road and away from busy highways."



"Yes, I am training for a marathon." a strong woman says. Then she turns back to ask, "Are you responsible for that second portable toilet? One day this summer I found it unusable, and two weeks later a second unit showed up. Did you do that? THANK YOU! I'm so grateful for this trail."

Felipe Guzman of Worcester and his family, including a two-year-old, love to walk, bike, snowshoe and sled along the trail. "The scenery is particularly interesting year-round," he says.

More photos and remarks on page 5

WG Receives Recreational Trails Grant



DCR Commissioner Jack Murray (right) announces the new Recreational Trails Grants as Directors Jeff Keay and Colleen Abrams accept the award for WG.



DCR Director of Greenways and Trails Paul Jahnige and Recreational Trails Program Coordinator Amanda Lewis look on happily.



Greenways MCRT Task Force Chair Ed Yaglou (third from left) welcomes Massachusetts Recreational Trail Advisory Board (MARTAB) members Amanda Lewis, Dick O'Brien, Dick Williamson and Larry Tucker at the MCRT White Valley bridge in Barre.

Sharing Nature Through the Eyes of a Child

My childhood was spent romping through the outdoors, exploring the wonders of nature. Growing up near a pond, surrounded by woods, I watched tadpoles turn into frogs, had chickadees eating peanut butter off my fingers, and identified the countless wildflowers that ushered in each New England springtime. I even had imaginary friends who inhabited those woods. Nature was right there near home.



This is where Wachusett Greenways comes in. We have such a wealth of resources around us! One can travel far and wide to enjoy the seashore or to climb “real” mountains, but right here in central Massachusetts, the rail trail offers unique, beautiful scenery. I especially love the Mass Central Rail Trail near Miles Road, where I can show my grandchildren turtles sunning themselves on a log, great blue herons across Thayer Pond, ferns and colorful columbines growing out of sheer, mossy rock at the Charnock Hill “cut” and tunnel. Their happy echoes as they run back and forth through the tunnel are a joy!

To watch the excitement of a four-year-old chasing a butterfly, or to read an eight-year-old’s journal entry about a Greenways-sponsored nature walk he took in Groton with his Grammy – where he spied a red-eyed vireo – keeps me young at heart.

We complain about the weather, but New England has a magical quality of constantly shifting the look, sound, smell and feel of the landscape. Watching the hawk migration atop Mount Wachusett in the fall, snowshoeing on the trails in the winter, looking for the early signs of spring at Wachusett Meadows Audubon Sanctuary or Moore State Park – this and much more fuel our spirit and keep us in the “now!”

Though I have traveled extensively at home and abroad, our local natural scenery never loses its appeal. So regardless of the season, let’s get out and enjoy the natural beauty right in our own back yard. Hint: Sharing it with others makes it twice the fun!

—Barbara Carlson, Holden

Wachusett Greenways Newsletter

The Greenways Connector

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Young Volunteers Shine!

This year Alpha Phi Omega, the national service fraternity, celebrates its 50th anniversary. The amazing young men and women of ΑΦΩ have contributed to Wachusett Greenways for more than 10 years. They work together as a harmonious team performing diverse service. From clearing debris from ditches, dragging brush and hauling rocks, to hula hooping with children and painting young faces with lovely butterflies or wild creatures at our annual Springdale Mill Celebration, they do it all with enthusiasm and grace.

Volunteers from Bancroft School of Worcester have been with Wachusett Greenways almost from the beginning of our 20-year journey. The middle school students serve three afternoons each year. They arrive full of determination to tackle any trail project. Jim Kamosky, serving in the long tradition of dedicated faculty advisors, is an indefatigable leader of the students along with parent volunteers. Three years ago Bancroft fifth-grade classes initiated a service/learning day with WG. The students and their teachers Lisa Kunhardt and Betsy Rocha bring wide-eyed curiosity and wonderful energy each year.

St. John's School in Shrewsbury is a newcomer to youth service with Greenways. Its seniors tackled challenging maintenance work with great vigor for a full day each of the past two summers. "We look forward to their arrival again next year," says Greenway volunteer Laura Beckwith. "They envision the job at hand and find creative ways to complete it as a team." Greenways directors also hope that the hard-working St. John's underclassmen and their family support teams will return for another service day during the school year.

Many thanks to each and every one of these reliable, conscientious, dedicated young volunteers!



Big Brother Ride



In September the Monsters Cycling Club of West Concord, Mass., hosted a Big Brother/Big Sister ride at the Mass Central Rail Trail with Wachusett Greenways.

Ready, Set, Go to the Springdale Mill



Perfect fall weather graced this year's Springdale Mill Celebration on the final September Saturday. DCR rangers shepherded the kids' Journey to the Mill. Anticipating their arrival, volunteers blew their "train" whistles as they welcomed the participants, led by Maggie Spaulding, who was first to cross the "finish line."

Music courtesy of the Paddock Brothers Band enlivened the atmosphere and drew some folks to try the hula-hoops, while youngsters danced to the lively tunes. ΑΦΩ members from WPI engaged youngsters in scavenger hunts, bracelet making, face painting and building fairy gardens.

Participants of all ages enjoyed a variety of delicious food donated by S & S Deli Farms, Clearview Orchards, and Oriol Health Care. Ruth Spaulding, Chair of the Springdale Mill Committee, thanked all attendees and each volunteer for their generous commitment to this yearly event.



Moving Together 2014

On October 30, the Massachusetts Department of Transportation convened its annual statewide healthy transportation conference at the Park Plaza Hotel in Boston — and Wachusett Greenways had a seat at the table. Greenways Director Christy Barnes was among the more than 400 attendees at the conference, called Moving Together 2014. Speakers Richard A. Davey, Secretary of MassDOT; Paul McMorrow of *Common Wealth Magazine*; and Beverly Scott, General Manager of the MBTA, inspired the attendees with their enthusiasm and encouragement for improved transportation opportunities for bicycling, walking and transit connections.

Trail Construction 2014 and Beyond

This fall, Greenways completed the western end of our 30-mile section of the Mass Central Rail Trail from Coldbrook Road, Oakham over the Ware River Bridge and on to the rest stop in Barre. Helped by a DCR Recreational Trails Grant and the expert work of Bob Salvadore, of RD Salvadore Excavating, a smooth stone dust surface was laid on this section in October.

Repair and upgrading of other trail sections in Rutland and Holden or Sterling are in the pipeline for 2015 and will be supported with a DCR



Recreational Trails Grant and Greenways match.

In October the DCR awarded a new Recreational Trails Grant to proceed with the design and engineering of the MCRT connector at the Route 140 causeway at Thomas Basin in West Boylston. This grant, along with two prior DCR Partnership Grants and Wachusett Greenways matching funds ranging from 20 to 50%, will enable us to begin this important and long-awaited project.

As Wachusett Greenways strives to complete its mission of 30-miles of trails, President Colleen Abrams says, "We are so grateful for our partnership with the DCR and the many supporters who keep the MCRT growing across the Commonwealth. We are in a special place to help tap the golden spike on this treasured community trail."

Who's On the Trail? *Continued from page 1*

One afternoon three young men ride up on sturdy bikes, headed for Rutland. One, a Quinsigamond Community College student, and his pals, are enjoying their esprit de corps.



A father arrives with his family in tow. They discover the sand hill. He takes his young son and daughter by the hand and they run joyfully up the hill.

Anywhere along the MCRT, in any season, you find neighbors with a myriad of reasons they enjoy their trail. We are inspired to ask: Will you be the 1,000th member to celebrate our 20th year. Will you join us in the path of caring for our neighbors?

The 1,000th Member \$1,000 Challenge

The challenge is on! Knowing that members are vital, two generous Wachusett Greenways donors have each committed to give \$1,000 *IF* we reach 1,000 members for 2014. Will you be the 1,000th member? 650 members have already joined or renewed this year. We've met each big challenge throughout our 20 years. Will you help us meet this one? Join up. Ask a friend. Give a gift membership. Remind your neighbor. Please help us meet this inspiring challenge!

Summer 2014 Events

Despite a season of somewhat uncooperative weather, Greenways-sponsored events provided a wide variety of outdoor activities for many adventurous folks. The walk at Rocky Hill Wildlife Sanctuary in Groton, MA, was especially enjoyable. Mass Audubon's Laurie Nehring led us along paths lined with wildflowers. We stopped at a large swamp, where we took time to observe six great blue heron nests. We spent at least a half hour spotting the parents coming and going, and feeding their very large offspring. What a thrill!

We ate our lunch there and listened to frogs and the herons chattering away. Rocky Hill lived up to its reputation, displaying fantastic rock formations, including a dry cave where one could camp for survival in bad weather. There was enough rock tripe to feed several people!

The Westborough butterfly walk turned up interesting species, including the Appalachian Brown butterfly, one of a few species of wetland butterflies to be found there. Elise Barry, member of the Massachusetts Butterfly Club, co-led the walk. Participant Carol Morin expressed her appreciation, "I can't stress enough how enjoyable it is to be in Elise's company – especially on a butterfly walk! She is soooo enthusiastic and knowledgeable concerning butterflies that anyone with the slightest interest will come away knowing way more than ever before and wanting to learn even more."

The wildflower walk at Sibley Farm in Spencer was very popular. Much work has been done there to clean up this abandoned horse farm, including removal of the many invasive plants. The fields are now open and filled with grass and milkweeds. The forests were cool and damp – so nice on a hot summer day! We also paddled on the lovely, glassy surface of Comet Pond, observing dragonflies and water lilies, and taking in a refreshing swim to boot!

The Mass Central Rail Trail bike ride between Rutland and Barre is always a good opportunity to meet new friends and enjoy the company of familiar ones. This summer's ride was a satisfying day for the cyclists.

—Christy Barnes, Events Coordinator



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Enthusiastic event leaders look forward to your participation!

**December 6 – Saturday – 7 p.m.
Full Moon Hike (Cold Moon)**

Along the Mass Central Rail Trail in Rutland. The evenings are crisp and clear and the sounds are equally sharp, as we observe the full moon over Thayer Pond. Join Jeff for a casual walk to the Charnock Cut and return for hot chocolate. Bring your warm clothing, flashlight and camera. Contact Jeff Keay at 508-886-6222 or jkeay23@gmail.com to register. Rain or heavy snow will postpone.

**December 17 – Wednesday – 10 a.m.-Noon
Eagle Lake Walk**

Join us at Eagle Lake in Holden. Snow or not, bring your walking stick and prepare for this classic hike over stone walls, through northern hardwood forest, and near the lake and stream to see signs of river otter and the land put to bed for winter. Bring water and a snack for this moderate walk. Contact Colleen Abrams to sign up at 508-829-3954 or colleen.abrams@verizon.net.

**January 1, 2015 – Thursday – 10 a.m.
Walk or X-Country Ski**

On New Year's Day walk or XC ski with the East Quabbin Land Trust in Hardwick/New Braintree. We'll walk/ski the recently opened section of the MCRT in Hardwick and New Braintree, setting off from the New Braintree Station and go east this year, to Wheelwright, and back. Then whoever wants to can have coffee or lunch at a local eatery. Contact Ed Yaglou at egyaglou@verizon.net or 978-355-2539 to sign up.



Check wachusettgreenways.org for new event listings.

An Eagle Returns

How did an Eagle Scout project for Wachusett Greenways connect to a design job at Honda? It's a long story but a good one.

Five years ago Cameron Horton, then a Wachusett High School senior and Troop 182 Scout, learned that occasionally visitors to the MCRT needed the Holden Fire Department to "rescue" them. Cameron decided that mile markers would help. He met with Wachusett Greenways and his Troop advisors to design his project. Next he marked the trail at 0.2-mile intervals. Cameron then researched, designed, painted and installed the markers from Oakdale to Route 31 in Holden. He worked with his scoutmaster and a local production company to produce the markers, and learned 3-D modeling for the project by working for his father.

Cameron says today that he enjoyed the process of designing and seeing the markers produced. Made of



indestructible aluminum, Cameron's markers capped a childhood spent roaming the outdoors by bike or foot. After graduation he enrolled at Purdue University to pursue a degree in aeronautical and aerospace engineering.

"Designing a part, then seeing it as a tangible product, is one of the most rewarding parts of engineering," Cameron says.

This past June, degree in hand, Cameron came home for a visit en route to his new job designing with Honda Motors in Ohio. Cameron promptly called Greenways to volunteer for trail work one last time.

Tackling a variety of tasks, Cameron spent over a week on the trail.

He clearly appreciates his time on the trails, which were a "source of comfort and relaxation," especially during his school years and, he expects, as he pursues his engineering career. We wish him well!

Behind the Scenes: Jim Berube and David Oriol

In addition to the hundreds of individuals and families from across America whose donations fund Greenways' work, many local businesses have steadfastly and creatively contributed goods and services to the cause. Two very special business owners are Jim Berube and David Oriol.

Jim owns Jed's Hardware and Garden Center on Main Street in Holden, and Bay State Hardware on West Boylston St., Worcester. "The rail trail is a fantastic asset for the Wachusett Region," Jim says. "It enables people of all ages and physical abilities to get out and enjoy our great outdoors. I couldn't be more pleased to support Wachusett Greenways."

For many years Jim has donated shrubs and perennials for rail trail entrance beautification. He supported a Greenways auction in 2005 with a gift of a major landscape design. Recently he donated a Rose of Sharon, which volunteers Rachel and Jere Bradley planted at the anticipated Greenways Welcome Center in Rutland. He also took time to draw out design ideas for a ramp into the Center, and donated a display case for the facility. He has donated dozens of gloves for trail volunteers of all ages.

"We really enjoy walking the trail when we can find the time, and I dream of having a bench on the trail some day," he adds. Jim's enthusiasm and generosity are legendary.



Longtime and generous Greenways supporters Jim Berube (L) and David Oriol

David is Chief Operating Officer/Vice President of Oriol Health Care, which operates the Oakdale Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center in West Boylston. David has been an enthusiastic rail trail user since the first section in West Boylston was opened.

In his youth, long before Greenways built the rail trail, David and his brother, Bob, fished along the Quinapoxet River with their dad and explored what was then an abandoned, overgrown rail bed. "We didn't know then where the old rail line went.

Greenways has created a terrific resource accessible for the entire community," he says. For many years, David and his son, who is autistic, have cycled on the rail trail regularly. "Louis learned to ride on the trail, a safe, traffic-free, beautiful place to spend time with your kids and help them get the physical exercise they need."

Besides David and Oriol Health Care's generous financial support, his unique gift has come in the form of many hundreds of cookies from the kitchen of Oakdale Rehab. These treats are a favorite refreshment at the Springdale Mill Celebration year after year. David is always quick to offer his support.

Greenways is deeply grateful to Jim and David, and to the many other business leaders who support our shared mission.

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