Wachusett Greenways Annual Report 2018

**Connecting our Communities**

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

**24 Years of Partnerships**

Seven of the eight towns contributed to WG operating fund support in FY 19, and the eighth town will seek support in FY 20. 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. Every WG member, donor and volunteer is also a key partner, from whom a gift in any amount counts for membership.

**MCRT Construction and Restoration**

Restorations and improvements accomplished in 2018 through DCR Recreational Trails Program grants with WG match included:

1. Phase II to complete the restoration of the Wachusett Street section of the MCRT in Rutland.
2. Phase I to restore and upgrade the West Boylston section of the MCRT from Thomas Street to I-190.
3. Phase I of construction of the Pleasant Street section of the MCRT in West Boylston between Route 140/Beaman Street and Prescott Street.

**Moving forward in 2019**. WG will complete Phase II in West Boylston to restore and upgrade the MCRT between Thomas Street and I-190 and to construct the MCRT over Pleasant Street between Route 140 and Prescott Street. WG will also complete the MCRT bypass in Holden between Manning Street and River Street to achieve an accessible grade for the multi-use trail.

Other projects anticipated with the help of DCR Recreational Trails Grant match are the restoration of the Quag/West Washacum bridge in Sterling and a new design for the Manning Street to Mill Street section of the MCRT in Holden.

The design and engineering for the new MCRT connection at the Route 140/ Beaman Street causeway in West Boylston is underway in 2019 managed by the DCR and supported by WG through the DCR Matching Funds Program.

**MCRT Stewardship**

WG volunteers and Wachusett town Departments of Public Works completed many hours of shoulder mowing during the growing season. Teamwork helps keep the MCRT in good condition. WG trail patrollers removed parking lot litter, checked portable toilets for good maintenance and removed downed branches. Other volunteers continued to remove dead trees and clean drainage ditches. These amazing volunteers deserve our thanks. WG also hired snowplowing for the River Street, Holden, parking lot.

**Members and Volunteers Count**

**G**reenways grew to 956 donors in 2018 including 159 new members. Donors hailed from 104 different towns and 19 different states**.** 448 generous donors contributed to Wachusett Greenways’ MCRT Construction Fund. More than 200 volunteers of all ages help each year.

**Reaching Out**

WG volunteers participated in the Moving Together statewide bicycle and pedestrian conference in Boston and the annual Mass Land Trust Conference in Worcester. WG also participated in UMass Med School’s Earthday Celebration, Rutland 4th of July Parade 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 welcoming a strong number of new members.

**Honored by the MA Trails Community**

In July, the MCRT Coalition recognized WG at the Golden Spike Conference in Northampton with a trails award “with gratitude for your leadership in getting the idea of a 100 mile rail trail to be so natural and easy. And for your enduring patience in helping other groups organize around this idea.” And in November, the Greater Worcester Land Trust presented WG with the Evelyn Silver Award in honor of more than two decades of community partnership building to connect central Mass with trails and greenways.

**21 Miles Road Future Welcome Center**

Trail volunteers gathered tools and supplies here for year-round trail maintenance. The Greenways vegetable garden produces strong crops shared by volunteers and visitors. Landscaper Doug Hagman continued to donate mowing and leaf removal. Everett Reynolds, Dave Camarra and Seth Stidsen volunteer for snow removal and good neighbor support. Sentry Oil continues to make 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 and other outdoor adventures.

**New members and volunteers always welcome**!

You are invited to contribute at [www.wachusettgreenways.org](http://www.wachusettgreenways.org/). or by mail at Wachusett Greenways, P.O. Box 121, Holden 01520. A gift in *any* amount counts you as a member, and you will receive the *Wachusett Greenways* guide, which includes a map for the regions’ trails and greenways. Volunteers welcome.

Wachusett Greenways Board of Directors:

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