



The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association Winter 2012
Clean Water Habitat Restoration River Access Watershed Recreation

Hoosic River Greenway Groundbreaking Ceremony Held



HoorWA's Steve McMahon speaks while shovelers stand at ready.

A groundbreaking ceremony was held on Sunday December 4, 2011 to celebrate the start of work on the Hoosic River Greenway, and to thank those who made the purchase of the former abandoned railbed possible. Many of the more than fifty families and other supporters who contributed toward the \$26,000 purchase joined greenway volunteers, town and village officials, and other honored guests for a few presentations, a little digging, and a lot of cheering on a mild and sunny day on the Greenway. Afterward, many of those present walked the newly cleared southern section, or enjoyed a reception at the restored Victorian home of Ric and Suzanne DiDonato.

Mayor Matt Monahan kicked off the ceremony with thank yous to several area businesses and many individual donors, and to the Greenway steering committee (which has met nearly monthly since 2005). Looking forward, he said "Walking, bicycling, bird watching...there are 101 different uses for it. This is going

to be a fantastic resource for the community."

Eli Yearcik, representing Parks & Trails NY (PTNY), noted that even despite obstacles over the years, the vision for the Greenway had remained intact. PTNY would know: it awarded the Village a Healthy Trails, Healthy Communities grant in 2007, and was the steering committee's premier problem solver for several years. Fran Gotcsik, Director of Programs and Policy at PTNY and a stalwart Greenway supporter, wrote to HoorWA about the groundbreaking: "This is such an important milestone for HOORWA. I know how long and hard you have worked to get to the point of a ground breaking. I have always been impressed by your methodical approach, tenacity and ability to meet and overcome every challenge. The best part is that Hoosick Falls now has a great place to walk and enjoy the river - something that will benefit residents and visi-

tors for generations. Thank you for all that you and HoorWA have done."

HoorWA Executive Director Steve McMahon spoke about HoorWA's efforts in the watershed, and the high priority the Greenway has been for the organization.

And then they dug. Wielding ceremonial shovels were Mayor Monahan; Marilyn Douglas, former Town of Hoosick Supervisor; Ric DiDonato, Village trustee and steering committee member; Jeremy Driscoll, Village trustee; Laura Reynolds, former Village Mayor; and Lauren Stevens, HoorWA President.

The ceremony marked the start of work on the 3,800 foot-long southern segment of the Greenway. Suttonscapes, owned by resident Dave Sutton, was contracted to clear and grade a ten foot-wide tread, and to clean up an old dumpsite on this segment – readying it for surfacing in spring 2012. Sutton donated nearly one-half the cost of the job.

Two hundred thousand dollars in grants through the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation will fund much of the work on this and other segments, but they require that matching funds also be secured. Suttonscape's substantial in-kind donation will help the Village meet those match requirements, and free up additional grant monies as well. HoorWA and the Village will continue to seek additional public and private grant support.



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HoorWA is dedicated to the restoration, conservation and enjoyment of the Hoosic River and its watershed, through education, research, and advocacy.

President's Post by Lauren Stevens

The Hoosic River Watershed Assoc. acquired its acronym, HoorWA, at a time when an HRWA existed on the Housatonic River. To avoid confusion, we invoked our o's, coming up with a mouthful that sometimes people don't understand or at least aren't sure how to pronounce. Just say, hurrah, as in "Hurrah for HoorWA!"

In addition, the concept of a watershed association can be confusing, because the word "watershed" has two, distinctly different meanings. Sometimes it refers to the high ground that separates basins. Someone talking about a watershed moment has that meaning in mind: a turning point or moving from one thing to another, based on an idea like crossing over the Hoosacs on Rte. 2 east of North Adams from the Hoosic to the Deerfield drainage.

The other meaning refers to the basins themselves. When we give our watershed address, the Hoosic, we're thinking of that meaning. In this sense, the definition of water-

shed, basin, drainage or catchment is that all the precipitation that falls in that area eventually exits at one point. For the Hoosic, that's Lock No. 4 on the Champlain Barge Canal, in Schaghticoke, New York, because canal builders incorporated Hoosic waters into the functioning of that lock, which carries boats around shoals in the Hudson.

Everyone has a watershed address, because all precipitation has to go somewhere—otherwise we'd be guppies. A river and its tributaries drains water from an area.

Everything that happens in a watershed affects its river. The runoff from roads, driveways, parking lots or roofs—all eventually ends up in the river. Silt disturbed by construction, mining, logging or agriculture, unless or even if precautions are taken, is likely to become river borne. The discharge from septic systems, industries and wastewater treatment plants ends up in the river. The release of any hazardous material, from oil to cleaning solvents to pesticides to PCBs, anywhere from the ridgeline down, impacts the Hoosic and the life it sustains.

Geologist and explorer Major John Wesley Powell defined watersheds as "that area of land, a bounded hydrologic system, within which all living things are inextricably linked by their common water course and where, as humans settled, simple logic demanded that they become part of the community." Since humans and their activities are part of the watershed ecosystem, and indeed often come to dominate it, it is fitting that we form associations to look out for our river, for what happens in the watershed and for ourselves. *Lauren*

A Report on the Hoosic River by J. Kelly Nolan, Monitoring Coordinator

Nine stations along the main stem of the Hoosic River were sampled for physical, chemical, and biological data. All stations had been sampled in prior years by HoorWA, MA DEP, VT DEC, and/or NYS DEC. The samples were collected post Tropical Storm Irene on 9/20/2011 from Adams, MA to below Hoosick Falls, NY. Preliminary data indicates that high flows from Irene impacted the benthic macroinvertebrate (BMI) community by washing away the organisms themselves and/or through changes in the river substrate.

Of interest was the North Branch of the Hoosic River station, located just below the Route 8 Bridge crossing. At the time of sampling, the river was very turbid, with heavy sediment deposition on the substrate. Such sedimentation can negatively affect BMI communities. This station had the fewest BMI organisms in the sample (34 compared to the normal hundreds of organisms). A trend summary report of all the stations is currently being written and should be complete by the end of March 2012.



What's the Climate for Tomorrow? Steve McMahon, Executive Director

“What’s the climate for tomorrow?” More often we check on the weather for tomorrow or for the upcoming weekend. Climate change, unlike weather, is measured in much longer time durations. Climate doesn’t change over a month, season or even a year but is measured over several years, decades, and even centuries. It is a measure of accumulated global weather data but is also based upon changes observed in our region, county, or especially our watershed. And we know, even without the news story accounts and supporting scientific data, that our climate is changing. There is a “feeling” of the region being drier in summer and stormier in winter. Summer temperatures have been higher; spring flooding has been more severe. Scientists warn that changes in our climate, both globally and locally, will result in more frequent storms and many of these storms will be more intense than those experienced in past decades.

Long-time residents of the watershed know the Hoosic, Walloomsac and Little Hoosic rivers can flood. Last year’s flood from Tropical Storm

Irene and the resulting damage to housing, roadways, river banks and stream ecosystems will not be forgotten soon. Rain-swollen rivers exceeded and eroded their banks, sweeping trees, stones, boulders, backyard debris, and unwanted pollution downstream. Not disregarding the economic impacts and personal losses felt by community residents, the damage to our high quality trout-supporting rivers and streams was also significant. It will take many years for the habitat to heal.

So what can we do? How can we support the resiliency of the Hoosic River watershed? As Northeasterners, we can’t change the weather; we can only wait for it to change, often by the minute. But we can be observant and participate in actions which pro-

tect our watershed. We must protect floodplains from development and cut back, where possible, on the paving of surfaces that increases water runoff, erosion, and pollution. When flooding occurs, monitor the rivers and streams near you for increased pollution and contact HoorWA about river clean up days. Step up, advocate, volunteer and be supportive of river protection. This is your watershed!



Photo of Cole Field by Tim Martinelli

“One of the handsomest streams in the world.”

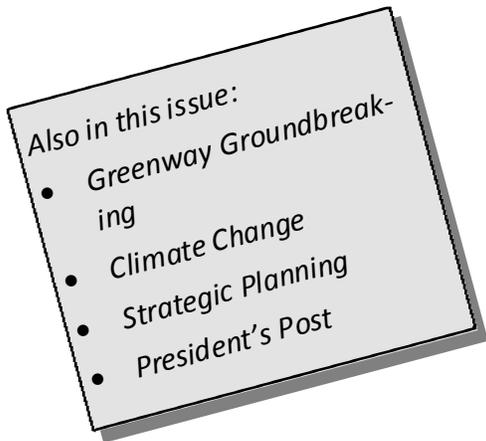
So wrote Timothy Dwight in 1799, while on a horseback trip along segments of the Hoosic River from Hoosick Falls, NY to Williamstown, MA. Over 200 years later, we know the Hoosic has suffered periods of agricultural and industrial pollution; and while much cleaner now than during those times, it is not yet fully open to swimming and not all sec-

tions are safely fishable. Who will work to keep the Hoosic clean, improve wildlife habitat, and enhance access? HoorWA will! The Board of Directors has completed a review of a new 3-year strategic plan. Our primary goals include:

- *Fighting for Clean Water*
- *Strengthening Advocacy*
- *Restoring Watershed Habitat*

- *Researching Climate Change*
- *Providing River Access and Watershed Recreation*

In the next few months, this plan will be finalized and implemented. With your help, HoorWA will continue to protect your watershed “from the ridgetops to the river.”



Winter 2012



The Hoosic River Voice

26th Annual Meeting

HoorWA's Board of Directors held the 26th Annual Meeting of the Association on Monday, January 9th, in the Fellowship Hall of the First Congregational Church.

Over 20 people attended and heard a presentation by Executive Director Steve McMahon on the recently completed strategic plan.

There was also a presentation from guest speaker Russ Cohen, of the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game. Mr. Cohen spoke on the importance of trout streams and their inhabitants and what we in the Hoosic River watershed could do to identify and protect these cold water streams.

The following nominees were elected to HoorWA's Board of Directors: Harold Brotzman, John Case, Sarah Gardner, Thom Gentle, Judy

Grinnell, Wendy Hopkins, Nic Howe, Tom Hyde, Drew Jones, Jim Niedbalski, Joe Overlock, Matt Scholl and Lauren Stevens. The officers elected for 2012 were President: Lauren Stevens; Vice President: Tom Hyde; Treasurer: Harold Brotzman; and Secretary: John Case.



Russ Cohen at the 26th Annual Meeting

Upcoming Excursions

Saturday February 4.

Cross Country Ski, Hopkins Forest, Williamstown, MA; 10 a.m.-noon
A ski (or hike) excursion in the lower Hopkins Forest to the Wire Bridge Farm. Meet at the Forest Parking Lot off Northwest Hill Rd. Best for back-country skis. Leader, Drew Jones.

Saturday February 18

Snowshoe Trip, Petersburg Pass, 10 a.m.-12:30 p.m.

Meet at the parking lot off Rt. 2 at the top of Petersburg Pass on the MA/NY line. Please call or email John Case by Feb. 15 to participate (458-8023, jcase@adelphia.net).

Saturday February 25

Snowshoe/ski/hike upper Mountain Meadow, Pownal, VT 10 a.m.-noon
Meet at the parking lot on Benedict Rd., off White Oaks Rd. north of Williamstown. Rain cancels. Questions? Lauren Stevens, 413 458-3154.