



The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association

Spring 2010

Community Conversation on the North Adams Flood Chutes: Preserving Flood Protection, Creating Recreational and Cultural Amenities



Channeled confluence of the North and South Branches in North Adams.

On Saturday June 26, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., at St. Elizabeth's of Hungary Parish Center, Milone and McBroom, an engineering, landscape architecture, and planning firm will lead a discussion on the flood chutes in North Adams – how to preserve their flood control functions while, at the same time, making them recreational and cultural amenities and drivers of economic growth. Many communities around the nation have been able to create 21st century flood control systems that also benefit fish and other aquatic organisms, allow for appropriate river access, and promote waterfront developments of many kinds.

The morning will focus on the present-day condition and effects of the flood chutes, and will offer examples of how citizens in other commu-

nities have successfully retrofitted similar flood chutes to meet additional recreational and cultural objectives. Participants will then split up into smaller groups, and with guidance from Milone and McBroom professionals, discuss what might be done to preserve the flood control functions of the chutes while also addressing river recreation, parklands, and economic development. Just before lunch the gathering will reconvene to hear summaries of the individual group discussions. Lunch will be provided free to participants, who might enjoy it along the river.

In the afternoon, again with guidance from the professionals, the discussion will focus on implementing the morning's ideas. At the close of the workshop, Milone and

McBroom staff will summarize the day's work and describe what comes next. This will include the presentation in autumn 2010 of a Concept Plan developed according to the ideas generated by the Community Conversation. At that time, interested citizens can discuss and come to consensus on the goals outlined in the Plan.

In preparation for the June 26 meeting, members of the Hoosic River Revival Coalition, the meeting's sponsors, will lead walking tours of sections of the Hoosic River on Friday June 18 and again on Friday June 25, from 5 p.m. to 8 p.m. Contact the Coalition at hoosicriverrevival@gmail.com or 413 822-2376 for more information about the walks, the Community Conversation or the Coalition.

The Hoosic River Revival Coalition is a group of city officials, representatives from recreational and planning organizations, the artist community, and local businesses; and citizens. HooRWA is represented on the Coalition and serves as its fiscal agent. The Community Conversation is made possible by support from the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game Division of Ecological Restoration, and by generous donations from area residents and businesses.

**TO DO! Attend the
Community Conversation on the
Hoosic River in North Adams
June 26
St. Elizabeth's of Hungary
Parish Center
Lunch provided FREE**



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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.*

Hello!

It's early May, and HooRWA is gearing up for our annual Riverfest on May 29, the celebration of the river and its watershed. We hope you plan to attend and participate in the activities and help support HooRWA.

On June 26, the Hoosic River Revival Coalition will host a Community Conversation on the Hoosic River (please see cover story). This is a very important step in the efforts of the Coalition and HooRWA to develop a plan to improve the recreational and cultural amenities of the flood control chutes in North Adams while maintaining their flood control features. Please try to attend, as citizen input is crucial to these efforts.

We want to remind boaters who utilize our watershed – specifically Cheshire Lake, but all waters as well – of the ongoing effort to prevent zebra mussel infestation. Last year the invasive, non-native mussels were discovered in Laurel Lake in Lee and have since moved downstream into the Housatonic River.

President's Corner

Cheshire Lake has been identified by the state Department of Conservation and Recreation as a high-risk waterbody, but the mollusk can't get in the lake if boaters don't accidentally bring it there. The DCR, supported by HooRWA, asks that all boaters – not just engine-powered boats but canoes, kayaks and sailboats as well – thoroughly wash their boats in hot water after they visit a lake or river that is known to have zebra mussels, such as the Hudson River, Lake Champlain and Lake George. (For more details, visit the DCR web site.)

Once the zebra mussels gain a foothold, they multiply rapidly, crowd out native mussels and generally can wreak havoc on a lake ecosystem. They can clog inflow and outflow pipes, attach to docks and ramps, and their sharp shells can cut the feet of unsuspecting swimmers. Please join us in helping to prevent zebra mussels from spreading to our watershed and beyond.

See you on the river!

Jim Niedbalski

2010 Water Quality Assessment Report Out

Monitoring coordinator Kelly Nolan has posted the 2009 sampling results for six sites in the watershed. He and his colleagues collect samples of bottom-dwelling insects called benthic macroinvertebrates every September, and spend much of the winter months identifying them and calculating metrics to determine water quality. The 2009 sampling included representatives of ninety-five different organisms. Results indicated water quality ranged from near pristine to impaired.

The sampling locations included a site in North Adams on Notch Brook,

at the request of the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MA DEP); two in Adams on Miller Brook; and two on the Hoosic in Williamstown. A site on Ladd Brook in Pownal was also assessed as a follow-up to HooRWA's 2008 sampling there.

MA DEP analyzes water quality by comparing benthic macroinvertebrate communities in water bodies to "reference" sites: locations where macroinvertebrate populations closely resemble those present in undisturbed streams of similar geology and habitat. Kelly believes that

he may have found such a site in Notch Brook, where the number of identified species was large and included several typical of clean, undisturbed environments.

On Ladd Brook in Pownal, however, the community was assessed as fair to poor. As a result of these findings, Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation is proposing that Ladd Brook be added to the state's Impaired Waters List. Such waters are ranked high-priority for restoration efforts.

Copies of the 2010 report are available at our website.



Greenway Community Meeting

On March 31, more than sixty people, including seniors from the high school's Science and Society and Government classes, attended a public "visioning" meeting at the Fire House in Hoosick Falls. The meeting was organized by Landworks, a planning and graphics design firm from Middlebury, VT. HooRWA and the Village of Hoosick Falls have hired Landworks to provide design, engineering, and cost estimating services for the initial phase of development of the Hoosic River Greenway, a 2.5 mile stretch of abandoned rail line purchased by the Village of Hoosick Falls from Pan Am Railways in January 2009.

After introductions by HooRWA member and former Village Trustee Maggie Casey, Patrick Olstad, lead landscape architect for the team, explored the concept of "greenway," sharing photos of a variety of kinds of greenways (from nature trails to commuter bike paths) with a variety of amenities (from picnic areas to historic markers to well-lit plazas and sculpture parks). The group learned how greenways can improve community health, connections with neighbors, and property values. Finally, the gathering took an imaginary walk along the Hoosic Greenway as it is today.

Then the large group broke into three smaller groups (each facilitated by two volunteers), to answer a number of questions, including: Where are your favorite spots along the greenway; where should one pause? Where and what kind of safety, aesthetic, and other concerns do you have along the greenway? How do you use the path now? What elements and activities should be developed along the greenway? What should it

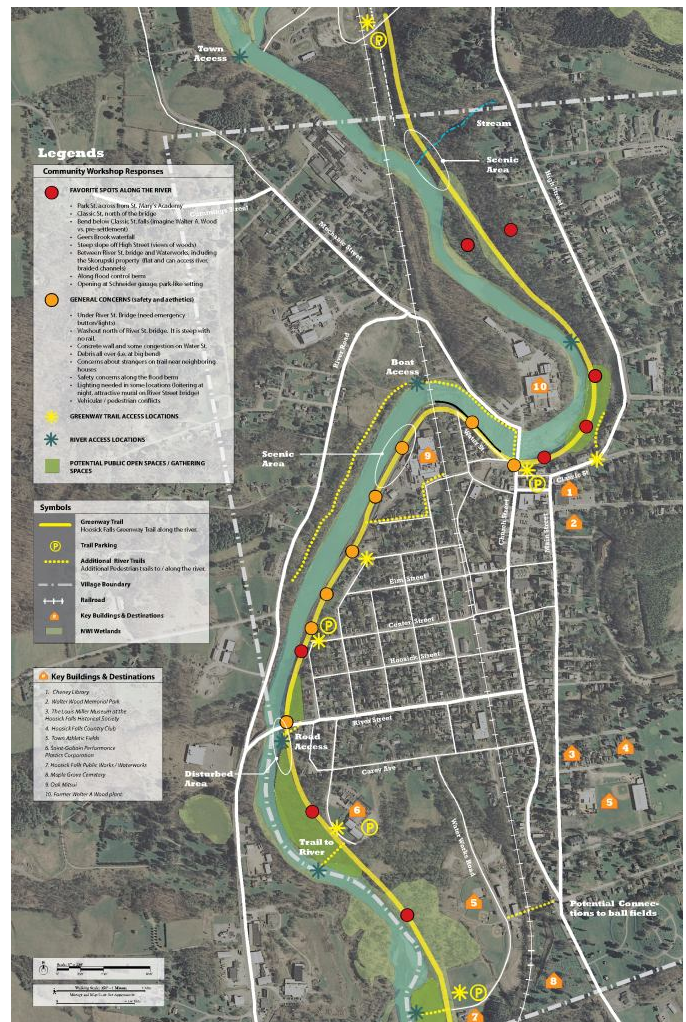


Above: Village Trustee Ric Di Donato shares his group's findings with the others.
Below: The findings of the meeting in map form.

look like? The evening closed as small group suggestions were shared with the group as a whole. Participants requested benches routinely placed along the path, signs about amenities in the Village, a mix of wild and more manicured spaces, lighting for some sections, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing, and access to the river for boating and fishing. Landworks will use the recommendations produced that night to develop a design for the core greenway, to be delivered this summer.

The meeting was dedicated to the memory of Mark Revet, who spearheaded the effort that raised

nearly \$30,000 to purchase the abandoned rail line. Mark was killed in a plane crash in November 2009.



Also In This Issue

- Hoosic River Revival community conversation scheduled.
- Water quality report out.
- Greenway visioning meeting held.

Spring 2010



The Hoosic River Voice

Riverfest 2010 to be held May 29, Williamstown

Riverfest, HooRWA's annual celebration of the Hoosic, will be held Saturday May 29, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., at Cole Field on the Williams College campus.

The day starts with the traditional Riverfest bird walk. Rafting, river art, music, and activities – fun runs! geocaching! water critters! exhibits! raffle prizes! more! – follow.

The event will be held under the big tent rain or shine. Raffle and entry tickets can be had for \$5 in advance or \$7 at the gate. Children ten and under attend free of charge.

Riverfest is supported by Williamstown Savings Bank, our title sponsor, and



major sponsors Alton & Westall and the Williams College Center for Environmental Studies. Raffle tickets can be purchased at the bank's office on Route 2 in Williamstown.



Leslie Reed-Evans and her fellow birders usually see Baltimore Orioles along the Hoosic at Riverfest. Join her at Cole Field from 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. for her annual Riverfest bird walk. *Photo by Tim Daniel, OH Division of Wildlife.*

Excursions, Past and Future

This year, HooRWA is offering a series of guided excursions to help residents learn about the watershed. Winter trips included a cross-country ski tour of Mountain Meadow, a snowshoe hike through Hopkins Forest to the Taconic Crest, and a "snowplay" day at Prospect Mountain. Spring trips saw a canoe/kayak cruise from North Adams to Pownal, a bird walk in Hopkins Forest, and a hike from North Pownal to the Taconic Crest. Watch the papers and our website (and be sure we have your email address) for notification of summer excursions, which could include guided canoe trips, bike rides, and hikes, as well as the annual Hoosic River Ride on August 21st, based this year at Southern Vermont College in Bennington.

