



# The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association

Summer 2010

## North Adams “Community Conversation”

Can North Adams have a river we can be proud of? That might have been the theme of the public visioning meeting held June 26 in North Adams. Some seventy people attended the “community conversation” on the future of the river in that community, an event sponsored by the Hoosic River Revival Coalition and the Hoosic River Watershed Association. HooRWA board member Judy Grinnell, founder of the Hoosic River Revival Coalition, leads the team of state and local agency people and area residents active in it, and organized the day-long dialogue.

Much of the Hoosic River and its North and South Branches in North Adams are enclosed in high and wide concrete flood chutes and rock-walled levees. The river is inaccessible and unattractive.

The flood control structures, however, serve an important purpose. According to Jim MacBroom of Milone & MacBroom, an engineering, landscaping and planning firm specializing in river restoration projects and consultants for the Coalition, some sort of flood protection downtown is necessary. But the existing structures can be altered, and still adequately protect lives and property. What should the “new river” look like?

One of the consultants’ suggestions was the creation of a terrace-like access to the river, making the river narrower, deeper, and more

visible at that location. Pocket parks and greenways were mentioned, for a large number of riverside locations. Given the importance of art in the city, there was also a suggestion of outdoor sculpture along the river. And for the flatter South Branch of the river parallel to Route 8, it was hoped there might be created a natural meandering streambed for fishing and easy access.

The consultants’ job now will be to put together a report to present to the community in September, at which point priorities will be set as to which ideas to pursue.

At the conclusion of the event, Judy Grinnell said: “This was truly inspirational, to see so many of you committing your time, experience, and knowledge of our city to this project. Even the consultants, with all they know of other ‘river cities,’ are impressed with your ideas and suggestions. I look forward to continuing this conversation with you all in the Fall.”



A gaggle of families prepares to depart on the 2009 Hoosic River Ride. Register to ride and this could be you! Photo by Marc Freedman.

## 6th Annual Hoosic Ride August 21

This year’s annual Hoosic River Ride offers things New! New! New!

New headquarters at Southern Vermont College in Bennington.

New ride choices. How about the 75-mile Three-state Watershed Challenge (which includes Petersburg Pass and four covered bridges)? Are you a more laid-back rider, or are you bringing the kids? Consider The Hoosic 50, the 28-mile Two-state Tour, or the 8-mile Monument Loop. Tandem possibilities are available.

And things Old!! Old! Old!

This year’s ride will take you through historic villages, past regionally famous landmarks, along bucolic back roads with close and distant views of farm fields and forests, and along and over the Hoosic and several of its tributaries.

It will feature the well-supplied aid stations you’ve grown accustomed to. We’ll provide the same roving technical support, including a tech-check at the registration site. EMS help will be available at aid stations and at the registration area.

And, most importantly, you can look forward to the same great post-ride picnic, from 11:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Check out [www.hoorwa.org](http://www.hoorwa.org) for more information on the ride and for help with registering. (Costs to ride range from free for children under twelve with registered adult to \$30 and \$40 per person. Fees go up on the day of the ride.) Or call the HooRWA office with ride questions.

The first 150 riders will receive a T-shirt, so register soon!

Proceeds from the ride benefit HooRWA’s education, research, and advocacy efforts.



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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 Corner** by Jim Niedbalski

Hello! I hope you've been enjoying the summer and have had the chance to explore some of our beautiful watershed. HooRWA has sponsored several excursions that highlight beautiful natural areas and/or some of the projects we've been working on, such as the Hoosic River Greenway in Hoosick Falls, N.Y (which we highlight on page 3). And there are more to come. (Please see back page).

Our second fundraiser and major event of the year is Aug. 21, the sixth annual Hoosic River Ride. This event offers several bike routes of various lengths, some especially for families. (Please see page 1.)

On June 26, the Hoosic River Revival Coalition, in conjunction with HooRWA, hosted a Community Conversation on the Hoosic River (please see cover story). The turnout was great, and we await the consultants' report later in the summer.

Our monitoring coordinator, Kelly Nolan, has begun his annual monitoring and sampling;

read more about his efforts below.

Meanwhile, we're also working on re-establishing a connection from North Pownal to the Taconic Crest Trail via the Strobridge site (at the former Pownal tannery). And our summer intern and board members are performing trail work on the Mohican-Mohawk Trail, a footpath that will link the Deerfield and Hoosic river watersheds. This trail includes a new section of ridgeline trail from the Western Summit on Route 2 on the North Adams/Florida line to Spruce Hill in Savoy State Forest. The work was spearheaded by the Berkshire Natural Resources Council.

On the Fourth of July, as I stood on the levee of the river in North Adams watching the fireworks display, the Hoosic reflected, in almost surreal and eerie hues, the flaming spectacle of the grand finale. Let's continue to celebrate and enjoy our river in as many ways as we can.

Thank you. See you on the river! *Jim Niedbalski*

**Sampling Season Begins**

HooRWA monitoring coordinator Kelly Nolan kicked off the 2010 biological monitoring program in July. Benthic samples from six historical site locations, sampled in 2006, and a reference site located in the East Branch of the Green River were collected. Biological samples were also collected at the Thunder Brook dam in Cheshire, Mass., which is scheduled for removal in the next several months. Kelly's data will be used to establish the pre-removal conditions of the benthic

macroinvertebrate community there, for comparison to the post-dam removal community structure. Similar benthic samples will be collected later in August at the Hoxie Brook dam in Adams, Mass.. That dam is also scheduled for removal.



Thunder Brook dam will be removed.



## Hoosic River Greenway Concept Plans Revealed

On July 14, Landworks, a planning and graphics design firm and design consultants on the Hoosic River Greenway project, presented their draft conceptual design for the Greenway to the Greenway planning team. Landworks' design addresses goals articulated by the planning team, and responds to suggestions and comments made by residents of the Village of Hoosick Falls and of the Town of Hoosick at a public meeting held in March 2010. The design deals primarily with the 26-acre parcel (and its 2.5 mile-long abandoned railbed) purchased from the former Boston and Maine Railroad by the Village in January 2009, but also addresses lands of interest adjacent to or near the core greenway parcels. Development of the larger and longer Greenway will require many years of work and a great deal of successful fundraising.

The design breaks the core greenway into four segments. To the north, the designers identified a woodland/wetland segment. This stretch sits on a kind of shelf high above the river, and contains many acres of dense woodland, much of it wet. Landworks hopes that visitors to this section will get "a sense of what the Hoosic River looked like before the European settlement of the region." A gravel/stone dust surface is recommended for this segment.

At the southern end of the core greenway, Landworks has identified a river edge segment. This wooded area combines high overlooks with low-lying gravel and sand bar features, including one popular fishing and swimming hole. A gravel/stone dust surface is suggested here as well.

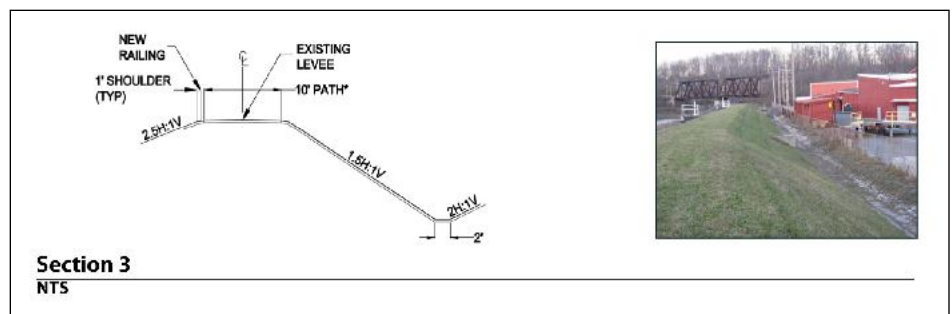
Two middle sections traverse the river edge of the Village itself. One

has been identified as a neighborhood/flood control segment. Much of this portion of the greenway would traverse flood control structures built by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers and managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation. The greenway planning team is in discussions with both entities regarding permits for this use.

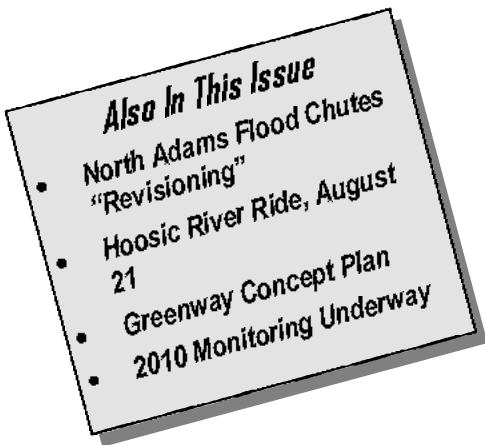
The so-called Village segment will make use of an existing street at the edge of a concrete flood wall, and a small pocket park high

above a falls and near the small Village downtown. Landworks calls for the greening of an existing parking lot in this area and a play area for this heavily trafficked zone. An asphalt surface is recommended for both segments (as was requested by several participants in the March meeting).

The greenway planning team (Village and Town officials and HooRWA staff and members) asked Landworks to turn their concepts into near construction-ready plans by late August. A public meeting on the plans will be held shortly thereafter.



The middle section of the Greenway may make use, in part, of a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers-constructed flood control levee. A permit from the Corps and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation will be needed. A portion of the Greenway may also traverse a Village street adjacent to a concrete flood wall. A mural would brighten the wall considerably! (Any suggestions?)



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## *The Hoosic River Voice*

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### Adventures/Excursions

### All about Culverts

HooRWA and some of our friends have had a busy summer with lots of adventures.

We sponsored a Pownal, VT-Buskirk, NY round trip bike ride. We retraced Thoreau's hike up Mt. Greylock. We hosted a walk of the His-



Pete "Petezoom" Persoff takes a break at the Buskirk covered bridge, before legally riding over it.

toric Hoosic in North Adams. We visited a new section of the Mohican-Mohawk trail. And we led folks on a walk along what will become the Hoosic River Greenway in Hoosick Falls.

There's are more outings to come, and we hope you can join us for them.

**August 14: Hike to Money Brook Falls.** Meet at the Hopper Road trail head in Williamstown, MA at 10 a.m. Bring water and lunch. Although we won't summit Greylock, this is a demanding 5 mile round-trip with some difficult footing. Offered in conjunction with Williamstown Rural Lands' Amble and Scramble.

**TBA: Float the Hoosic** from Buskirk to Johnsonville. (Watch our website for details.)

HooRWA volunteers have been working on a survey of all the bridges and culverts in northern Berkshire County. (Results will be used to help municipalities and the Commonwealth design future repairs and replacements with habitat values in mind.)

Here's the kind of things they're looking at – the upstream end of the culvert, and the culvert outlet.

