



# The Hoosic River Voice

News from the Hoosic River Watershed Association

Winter 2010

## Hoosic River Revival Coalition Receives Grant Award



Flood chutes in North Adams.

The Hoosic River Revival Coalition's initiative to revitalize the Hoosic River in downtown North Adams has been chosen a Priority Project by Governor Patrick Deval and Secretary Ian Bowles of the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. This project is one of only five projects that will receive grant funding in fiscal year 2010 through the Department of Fish and Game (DFG) Division of Ecological Restoration (DER).

Judith Grinnell, chairman of the Coalition and member of the HoorWA Board of Directors, said, "Being chosen a Priority Project is a tremendous affirmation of the value of this river restoration concept. It shows the confidence of top-level state environmentalists in North Adams as a forward-looking, energetic community that can carry through revitalization of our river. In just two years, our Coalition has made great progress. The Coalition is composed of 35

elected and appointed city officials, representatives from relevant recreational and regional planning organizations, the artistic community, interested citizens, and local businesses. We have formed a steering committee which meets monthly, created a brochure and powerpoint presentation, executed an outreach program, and obtained the endorsement of not only both former Mayor John Barrett and Mayor Richard Alcombright, but also many North Adams civic organizations. Now we are in a position to move forward aggressively on this project that is so important to North Adams and its future."

The flood chutes through which both the South and North Branches of the Hoosic flow in North Adams were built over fifty years ago by the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers following major floods in the 1930s. While effective for flood

protection, the chutes are inhospitable to fish and other aquatic animals and prevent the community from seeing and enjoying the river.

The Hoosic River Revival Coalition, working with the Hoosic River Watershed Association, is focused on these channelized reaches of river. It hopes to use contemporary flood control methods to provide flood protection while at the same time benefit fish and wildlife, allow for access to the River by the community, and create the potential for appropriate waterfront development.

Designation as a Priority Project will allow the Coalition to use the resources of the DER to help plan a late Spring community-wide day-long meeting with river restoration professionals. At this meeting, members of the North Adams community will have the opportunity to learn about other projects like this and to share their ideas on how the Hoosic River might be modified. The river restoration professionals will then develop a concept plan for the downtown area, which the North Adams community will then assess. A diverse committee representing all facets of North Adams will work with the professionals on bringing this project to fruition.

**Do you want The Hoosic River Voice electronically? We can email you when we place each issue on our website. Let us know at [office@hoorwa.org](mailto:office@hoorwa.org).**



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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

As I write this, it's raining heavily, and the Hoosic is running high and fast – over 3,000 cubic feet per second as measured in North Adams. That level is still significantly lower than historic high flows – the kinds that devastated downtown Adams and North Adams on many occasions before the flood control chutes were built in the 1950s and 1960s.

After heavy rain and/or snowmelt, it's rather remarkable to see the chutes filled halfway or more, compared to the relative trickle we see (or often can't see) during low-water times.

And therein lies the problem. While the chutes have certainly prevented untold amounts of property damage and possible lost lives, the few miles of river encased in cement in Adams and North Adams is hardly a thriving ecosystem. It's not accessible and much of it isn't even visible.

But we've learned a lot about rivers and their environs in the last half-century. We know they're incredibly valuable for much more

than just producing electricity and serving as a conduit for industrial waste. The recreational, educational and ecological benefits – and potential associated economic benefit—of rivers are worth protecting and enhancing. That's where HoorWA and the Hoosic River Revival come in.

Spearheaded by North Adams resident Judy Grinnell, the Revival, in less than two years, has mobilized public officials and community residents to think about what we can do to potentially mitigate some of the chutes' negative effects – loss of habitat, high water temperatures, poor scenic quality and an overall sense of "losing" our river. HoorWA joined forces with the Revival, and Grinnell is now on the HoorWA board of directors. It's great news that the state Division of Ecological Restoration recently labeled the project as a priority project (see front page). Certainly, any efforts regarding the flood chutes will require working with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, the builders of the chutes and the agency who oversees them.

See you on the river!

**Where Roads and Rivers Meet**

There are several hundred stream crossings within the Massachusetts section of the Hoosic watershed. Road culverts and bridges allow us to cross streams and rivers, but many disrupt stream functions and fragment stream habitat. In the past, the primary concern has been getting water from one side of the road to the other, but that is changing as we have come to recognize the disruption caused by habitat fragmentation.

BEAT (Berkshire Environmental Action Team) is heading up an effort to survey culverts and bridges in

Berkshire County in an effort to make every road repair an opportunity to improve ecosystem and habitat connectivity. HoorWA has agreed to work with them in this effort. The information collected will be entered into the UMass Stream Continuity database that can be used by MassDOT (Dept of Transportation) and others when road repairs are needed, with the objective of providing for both stream flow and allowing aquatic wildlife to pass easily under the road.

HoorWA members Lauren Stevens, Harold Brotzman and Dick Schlesinger have received training from Jane Winn of BEAT and are ready to team with others once spring arrives. If you are interested in helping with this effort, please contact HoorWA as we are hoping to get things organized and plans made before then. The project is expected to last through 2010. Surveys would be at the convenience of volunteers.





## Join Us for Snow Play at Prospect Mountain

HooRWA and Prospect Mountain Nordic Ski Center will host a day of fun in the snow on Saturday, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2010, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Prospect Mountain sits high up in the Hoosic River watershed and offers over thirty kilometers of groomed and tracked trails (and access to wilderness trails in the nearby Green Mountain National Forest), for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and family fun.

Scheduled activities include informal lessons for beginners in cross-country skate or classical techniques, at 10:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. A "Skijeger'n", a winter scavenger hunt, will be held from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. "Ski-hunters" will use a special trail map to find as many as twenty-five brightly colored markers located on trails throughout the center. Awards will be given to the top three finishers in each of several categories. Other events are also planned. (Thanks to Prospect's Bill Koch Youth Ski League for Skijeger'n.)

Prospect Mountain has been a favorite winter destination for families for generations. Its rustic lodge offers good hearty food, including vegetarian fare, at reasonable prices. Equipment can be rented at the Prospect Mountain shop (but call ahead – at 802-442-2575 – to reserve the sizes you need).

The cost for Snow Play is \$25 per individual (\$15 for Prospect pass holders) and \$50 per family (\$35 for Prospect pass holder

families). HooRWA members get \$5 off.

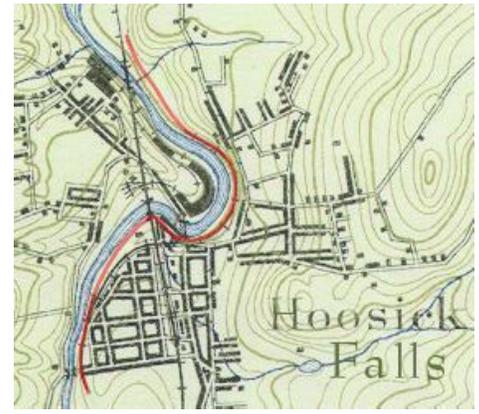
*Bring a water bottle and holder, which we can refill as you need.*

Register on-line at Active.com or Skireg.com, or by contacting the HooRWA office. Proceeds of Snow Play at Prospect will benefit HooRWA's educational, research, and advocacy programs.

### SNOW PLAY AT PROSPECT MOUNTAIN Saturday February 27, 2010 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Register on-line today or on-site on the day of the event from 8:30 a.m. to noon.

Prospect Mountain is about eight miles east of Bennington VT on VT Route 9, on the right side of the road going up the lo-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-o-ng mountain.



### Hoosic River Greenway Public Visioning Meeting Wednesday February 24

St. Mark's Episcopal Church  
70 Main Street  
Hoosick Falls, NY  
6 p.m.-8 p.m.

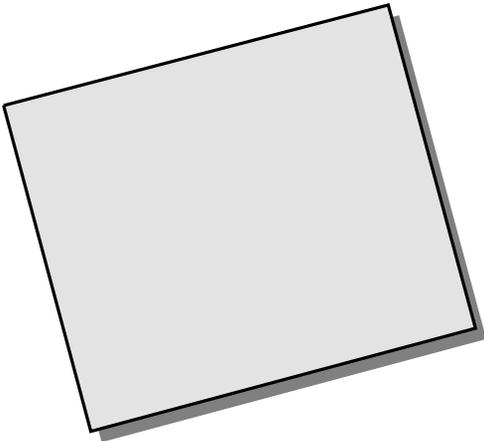
Join the Village of Hoosick Falls, HooRWA, and professionals from Landworks, an award-winning landscape architecture, planning, and graphic design firm, as we create with you a vision for the Hoosic River Greenway. We'll talk about biking and walking, fishing and picnicking, kayaking and roller blading and cross-country skiing – and more! How do you picture the new path along the river? How can the Greenway help realize your dreams for the community? What specific elements would you like to see incorporated in the Greenway?

Light refreshments will be served.

(The first phase of the Hoosic River Greenway will be located on a twenty-six acre, 2.5 mile-long abandoned rail parcel purchased by the Village in January 2009.)

**Hoosic River Watershed Association**  
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## Winter Excursions

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Join us this winter for guided tours in the watershed, free to members. (We'll request a donation from non-members.)

### **Sunday, February 14**

HooRWA board member Rick Dovey leads a Valentine's Day x-c ski tour of The Trustees of Reservations' Mountain Meadow, 10 a.m. to noon. Meet at the Benedict Rd. parking lot in Pownal. Follow White Oaks Rd. in Williamstown across the Vermont border; keep left. The lot will be on your left. Please pre-register at 413 458-2742 or [office@hoorwa.org](mailto:office@hoorwa.org) by February 12.

### **Saturday, February 20**

HooRWA board member Drew Jones leads a snowshoe hike through Hopkins Forest to the Ta-

conic Crest, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Bring a snack. Meet at the Hopkins Forest parking lot, near the junction of Bulkley St. and Northwest Hill Rd., Williamstown. Please pre-register at 413 458-2742 or [office@hoorwa.org](mailto:office@hoorwa.org) by February 18.

### **Saturday, March 6**

HooRWA board member John Case leads a x-c ski tour on the Sarah Tenney Trail north of Route 2 in Williamstown (about 1.5 miles west of Route 7). Meet at 10 a.m. on the pull-off on the south side of Route 2 opposite the state gate at the entrance to the trail. Requires intermediate x-c skiing expertise. (We'll snowshoe or hike if we must.) Bring a lunch and plan to be out for two to three hours. Contact John Case by March 5 at 413 458-8023 or [jocase@adelphia.net](mailto:jocase@adelphia.net) so he

can apprise you of conditions at the time of the trip.

*In case of bare ground, the trips become hikes. In case of uncertain weather, the leaders will be at the meeting places at the appointed times to discuss other outing options.*



HooRWA board member Rick Dovey administers the Tap Water Challenge at Word Play Power Day on October 24th. "Why buy bottled water?" was the question. "No reason to!" was the answer. Photo: Cheryl Sachs.