

Clean Water Habitat Restoration River Access Watershed Recreation

The Hoosic River Watershed Association

Strategic Plan 2012-2015



The Hoosic River Watershed Association

In partnership with participating state agencies as well as local municipalities, non-profits, universities, area businesses and our members.

Mission statement:

HooRWA is a citizens' group that looks after the river. We are dedicated to the habitat restoration, conservation, and enjoyment of the Hoosic River and its watershed, through education, research and advocacy.

We envision a watershed that is ecologically sound and adds to the quality of life of its residents.



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It is with gratitude and humility that we acknowledge that we are learning, speaking and gathering on the ancestral homelands of the Muhheaconneok who are the indigenous peoples of this land. Despite tremendous hardship in being forced from here, today their community resides in Wisconsin and is known as the Stockbridge-Munsee Community. We pay honor and respect to their ancestors past and present as we commit to building a more inclusive and equitable space for all.

The Hoosic is a three-state river. It is fed by streams that run down from the Green Mountains of Vermont, the Taconics of New York, and the sides of Mount Greylock, the highest peak in Massachusetts (3,491 ft.). It runs 70 miles from where it begins, at the Cheshire Reservoir in Massachusetts to where it enters the Hudson River at Stillwater, NY. Altogether, the Hoosic and its tributaries drain 720 square miles of land. The River passes through several towns, much of the watershed is farmland and forest.

Major tributaries are the Hoosic North Branch, the Green River, the Little Hoosic, the Walloomsac, the Owl Kill, White Creek, and the Tomhannock.





Hoosic River Watershed Association

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Hoosic River Watershed Association Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

HooRWA is committed to a diverse, inclusive and equitable environment where members, volunteers, staff and board members are heard, respected and valued regardless of gender, age, race, ethnicity, national origin, disability, sexual orientation or identity.

We share our passion for the Hoosic River Watershed with others so that they are inspired to be stewards of the environment both locally and globally. We care deeply about our partners, members and the communities in which we work. We learn from their experience, expertise and beliefs, and we embrace diversity, equity and inclusion to ensure a conservation ethic that welcomes and respects all people. We commit to including these principles in all aspects of the work of the Hoosic River Watershed Association.



Background

Although HooRWA has improved financially over the last several years, memberships have dropped off somewhat. So in the fall of 2022, having hired a new director, the Board determined to update its strategic plan.

The new plan is built on efforts in 2004, as revised in 2008, and 2011—the time the previous executive director was hired. Celebrating its 25th anniversary and coming off a recently concluded 3-year operating budget pledge campaign, the Board and staff agreed that it was a good time to seek new ideas and input, to develop a plan that supported membership growth and retention, to raise the profile of this successful but quiet organization and thereby inspire the Board, staff and organization members. In September of 2011, the Board of Directors, along with staff and invited guests from the Massachusetts Department of Fish and Wildlife's Riverways Program, Berkshire Environmental Action Team, the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts and Directors of local and regional land trusts, were invited to participate in a series of meetings which would lead to the development of a Strategic Plan for HooRWA. In 2018 the Board developed an additional projects list.

Therefore the current plan does not begin anew, as the Board felt the 2011 and 2018 efforts remained a relevant and sound basis for the new plan. Instead, a draft was created based on the earlier work and brought before the Board. The Board review resulted in a collaborative effort. The revised result was approved by the board on March 14, 2023.

Why a Strategic Plan?

The price of clean water is eternal vigilance. In considering the need to revise or develop a Strategic Plan, the Board reviewed the current environmental challenges to the watershed and the administrative challenges faced by the organization. Most of the river remains on the Environmental Protection Agency's Impaired RiverList, although most of its tributaries are not. "Impaired" means that the waterbody does not meet the standards of the federal 1972 Clean Water Act, essentially "fishable," including eating the fish, and "swimmable."



Environmental Challenges to the Watershed

Climate Change

- Warmer annual temperatures
- More frequent and extreme storm and drought events
- Changes in habitat, species, and diversity

River and watershed pollution

- Environmental damage from flooding
- Stormwater runoff from development and other impermeable surfaces
- Continued loss of floodplains to development
- Chemical and bacterial pollution

Spread of Exotic Invasive Aquatic and Riparian Species (such as)

- Aquatic: , Didymosphenia germinata (didymo), Trapa natans (water chestnut)
- Riparian: Phragmites australis (Common Reed) Japanese Knotweed, multiflora rose, barberry, purple loosestrife, honeysuckle

Administrative Challenges

- Building and engaging our membership
- Raising annual income
- Expanding our outreach and advocacy
- Communicating our role to the watershed, especially downstream
- Publicizing our work and successes

Strategic Goals

- Habitat Restoration
- River Access & Watershed Recreation
- Improve water quality
- Advocacy
- Strengthened organization

HooRWA's Strategic Plan focuses on fulfilling its mission and achieving the following goals:

- I. Restore and improve the habitat of rivers in the watershed for fish and other wildlife.
- II. Provide river access and recreational opportunities in the watershed.
- III. Ensure a clean Hoosic River.



- IV. Be the leading community-based environmental advocate for the watershed.
- V. Secure HooRWA's future.

Goal 1 - Restore and improve the habitat of waterways in the watershed for fish and other wildlife.

Strategies

- Partner with state and federal agencies and other non-profit organizations to remove dams.
- Continue to support the Hoosic River Revival Coalition in their effort at downtown river access.
- Support and expand, with partners, our annual water quality monitoring programs.
- Continue to research temperature and climate change within the watershed.
- Track down source of pollution near Linear Park in Williamstown.
- Continue to work with South Williamstown and the town on Hart Landfill.
- Work with Williams College on PCB, heavy metals monitoring.
- Continue to work with North Adams on plumbing and sewer infrastructure.
- Work with Williamstown Rural Lands to prioritize riparian land protection and to alert landowners to the benefits of streamside planting.

Goal 2 : Provide recreational opportunities and river access.

Strategies

- Lead local partners in the planning and development of the Mohican-Mohawk Trail and other foot trail projects in the watershed.
- Support the planning and development for the expansion of the Ashuwillticook rail trail through North Adams to Williamstown and into Vermont.
- Continue and maintain of Linear Link Trail and Hoosic River Path (Cole Field) in Williamstown.
- Work with the Town of Pownal and the Pownal Parks and Recreation Committee to complete the Strobridge Recreation Area in Pownal: hiking trails and river access.
- Work with Williamstown to improve access at Lauren's Boat Launch.
- Continue to work with Valley Falls and Rensselaer Land Trust on a project to develop public recreation at the site of a derelict Thompson Mill.
- Work with partners on Spruces recreational development.
- Work with Rensselaer Land Trust on weed control at Johnsonville takeout.



Goal 3: Ensure a clean Hoosic River.

Strategy – Educate river users, residents and visitors.

- Continue stewardship activities such as river cleanup days, removing exotic invasive plants, and improving habitat.
- Protect key habitat, such as bald eagle nesting sites.
- Continue to provide quality events which serve to educate our membership and the public on the values of the river and its watershed, including nature walks and edible plant walks.
- Partner with local schools and camps to provide watershed programs and also provide broader opportunities for interns and volunteers.
- Engage more people from New York and Vermont in our work.
- Work with indigenous people, especially the Mohicans.

Goal 4: Be the leading community-based environmental advocate for the watershed.

Strategies

- Serve as a resource to refer people with river and watershed issues to the appropriate person or agency.
- Develop relationships and contacts with local officials and federal and state agencies.
- Take a strong position on environmental concerns including pollution, storm water outflow, and development.
- Improve communication and publicity.
- Increase outreach
 - promote our successes.
 - publicize our fishable/swimmable goal.
 - strengthen our partnerships to deliver our message and develop contacts.
- Contact our members to determine their interests and ideas.
- Improve website appearance and update information.
- Continue to offer State of the River reports and recognition for major donors.
- Produce 3 print-newsletters annually.

Goal 5: Strengthen organization

In order to support Goals 1-4, HooRWA will strive to achieve the following targets during the next five years:



1. Increase and retain the number of the general membership by 10% per year.
2. Increase overall income from membership, major donors, businesses, and grants by 5% per year.
3. Increase volunteer opportunities

Strategies:

- Seek additional sources of income; foundation grants, business support.
- Educate citizens in all three states about the health of the river, identifying the most urgent threats to water quality. Using a range of media, explain how membership in HooRWA restores and protects water quality.
- Develop a program of recreational activities focused on the river and the watershed that will attract citizens from all three states and encourage them to value and protect the river through membership in HooRWA.
- Pursue several major projects—for example trails, dam removal, tree-planting, and monitoring—that will involve numerous volunteers from our communities. When volunteers have a stake in HooRWA, they are more likely to become members.
- Pursue long-term volunteership opportunities where volunteers can take on a leadership role.
- Continue to explore possible events that generate income and visibility (such as the Hoosic River Ride).
- Schedule activities and projects that will give major exposure to business sponsors, for example, a fun-run, a revived Riverfest, a HooRWA-sponsored project in connection with the Hoosic River Revival.
- Continue current efforts to identify potential major donors, to approach major donors with as much personal attention as possible, and to foster a continuing relationship with these donors, frequently soliciting their thoughts about HooRWA's direction and performance.

