

INSIDE

River Walk a National Trail	2
New Berle Conservation Area	3
Du Bois Homesite Opens	4
GB Named "AT Community"	5
LM Trail Nears Completion	6
A Gem at Long Pond	7



FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

Fall/Winter 2009

GB Farmland Preserved

Sarah Volkman

In early August, the Great Barrington Land Conservancy presented \$13,375 in donations to Karin Beebe and son, John, of Riverhill Farms—a sum that represents a portion of the community contribution required by the Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR). The APR was awarded to the Beebe family by the Massachusetts Department of Agriculture and preserves exclusively for agricultural use a newly acquired 36-acre tract of Riverhill Farms along Egremont Plain Road in Great Barrington.

Karin's husband, George Beebe, started Riverhill Farms on the 15 acres next to Root Pond along Route 23 that his father, Dr. John B. Beebe, purchased in 1940. George became a first generation farmer in a family of doctors. With the addition of the most recent APR purchase, George and his family now own 470-acres used for grain corn and hay production. The land encompasses eight formerly free-standing farms, that George farms himself. The APR prevents the development or subdivision of any portion of the farm in perpetuity.

Karin and George's son, John, helps on the farm and hopes to eventually head up the farm operation. "John is a natural with machinery," boasts his father, who spent the summer teaching John the ropes. He adds, "As a farmer, you have to do everything from mechanics to marketing and economics." So John is finishing his senior year at college and will have other



Dale Abrams and Stefan Apse of GBLC present Karin Beebe and son John with a check for the community contribution to the APR

experiences, along with training on the farm, before he takes over his father's reigns.

With the help of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy's members and more than 70 local residents who donated to the cause, the Beebes received the 5% community contribution required by the state-sponsored APR program, without which they would not have been eligible for the APR. Additionally, the Great Barrington Board of Selectmen and the town's Conservation Commission each contributed an additional \$5,200 toward the community contribution.

GBLC is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the community's natural resources and distinctive character. Through promotion and fund-raising endeavors, GBLC enables the dedication of open space to agricultural, recreational and scenic purposes through acquisitions, conservation easement and agricultural preservation restrictions.

River Walk Named a National Recreation Trail

Rachel Fletcher



River Walk dedicated a National Recreation Trail, Du Bois River Garden June 2009

2 In May, U.S. Interior Secretary Ken Salazar designated Great Barrington's Housatonic River Walk as a newly recognized National Recreation Trail, joining it to America's National Trail System. The National Park Service designation recognizes exemplary trails of local and regional significance.

A special trail dedication took place on June 13th at River Walk's W.E.B. Du Bois River Garden Park with U.S. Rep. John W. Olver, State Sen. Benjamin Downing, State Rep. Smitty Pignatelli and 150 others attending. Several members of Comstock Small's family were present to dedicate the stone bench named in honor of River Walk's dearly loved volunteer.

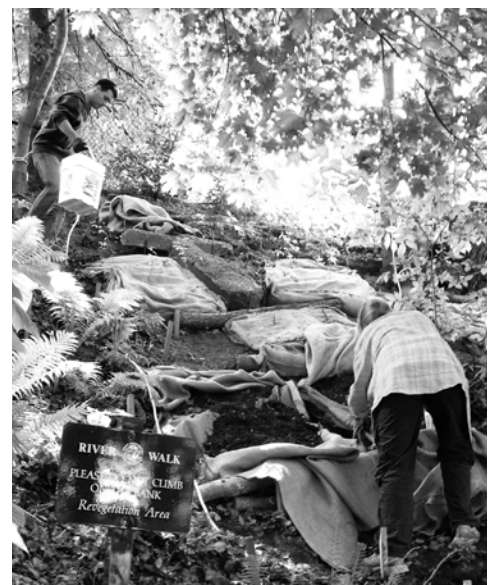
During the special River Walk tour that followed, Bernard Drew of the Great Barrington Historical Society discussed the achievements of

electrical inventor William Stanley; Heather Cupo of Plant Euphoria demonstrated River Walk's native plant restorations and compost tea program; Peter Jensen of Peter S. Jensen & Associates demonstrated sustainable trailmaking techniques; Steven Mack of Foresight Land Services discussed River Walk's riverbank stabilization and bio-engineering project; conservation biologist Suzanne Fowle explained River Walk's ecological monitoring program; and Dennis Regan of the Housatonic Valley Association unveiled plans for a new state-of-the-art canoe launch planned for the current access point near Bridge Street. River Walk's founding director Rachel Fletcher discussed W.E.B. Du Bois's environmental and river advocacy at the Du Bois River Garden.

A condition of the designation is that the trail remains open for public use for at least ten

consecutive years. To help ensure River Walk's maintenance, **an anonymous donor will match every contribution of \$250 or more, up to \$50,000.** We are \$8,500 towards the goal. All gifts to River Walk are tax deductible.

To help accomplish its various programs this year, River Walk was awarded \$133,308 over four years from the Housatonic River Natural Resource Damages Fund paid by General Electric for PCB Pollution. In addition, River Walk received grants of: \$1,875 from the Town of Great Barrington; \$2,000 from the Katherine L. W. and Winthrop M. Crane III Charitable Trust; \$1,500 from The Berkshire Garden Club, and donations from several local foundations and businesses, including Windy Hill Farm, Pittsfield Cooperative Bank, Wheeler and Taylor, and Turkeybush Foundation. A grant from the Great Barrington Garden Club funded botanical signs for River Walk's seedbank gardens. For more information visit www.gbriverwalk.org or contact Rachel Fletcher at 528.3391 or e-mail river@gbriverwalk.org



Biopillows installed to stabilize and vegetate the upstream slope through biotechnology.

The Peter Berle Wildlife Conservation Area

Shep Evans



The Konkapot Brook at Route 7, South Street in Stockbridge

In 2008, The Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC) was awarded a \$75,000 grant from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service / Division of Bird Habitat Conservation to help defray administrative costs associated with placing Conservation Restrictions on a projected 200 acres of the Peter Berle Wildlife Conservation Area in Great Barrington's Monument Valley. The 3,000 acre area, named after the late president of the Stockbridge Land Trust who grew up in Great Barrington's Monument Valley, is a complex of wetlands, brooks and marshes between Monument Mountain and Three Mile Hill to the West and Beartown Mountain to the East.

Work on the conservation restrictions began last winter, with neighborhood meetings and consultations with individual landowners. Several properties are "in the pipeline" and the first large acre property is in the final stages of formal documentation. This first property to be conserved is comprised of over 300 acres of very special wetland and adjacent upland habitat, and GBLC looks forward to adding other large adjacent acreage in the months ahead.



Panorama of Monument Valley

Connected waterways, adjacent marshes, ponds and beaver dam impoundments of Agawam Brook, Muddy Brook, Stony Brook and Konkapot Brook—all flowing northward from the headwaters near Rt. 23 in Great Barrington to the bridge under State Route 7 (South Street) near the intersection with Ice Glen Road in Stockbridge—make up the core of the Conservation Area. Designated by Mass Audubon as an Important Bird Area for its pristine and valuable bird habitat for migratory stopovers and breeding grounds, the area is utilized by birds such as the American Black Duck, American Woodcock, the state-listed Pied-billed Grebe, American Bittern, Common Moorhen and the rare Sedge Wren. A number of neo-tropical migratory songbirds are seasonal visitors, including the Black-throated Blue Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Louisiana Waterthrush and Canada Warbler.

Funding for the grant was secured through the very able fundraising assistance of Christopher Nye of the Orion Society, the technical land conservation expertise of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council and the strong support of numerous partners and collaborators, including the Myrin Institute, Ducks Unlimited, the Stockbridge Land Trust, Mass. Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, The Trustees of Reservations, Mass Audubon's Important Bird Area Program, the Laurel Hill Association and The Nature Conservancy.

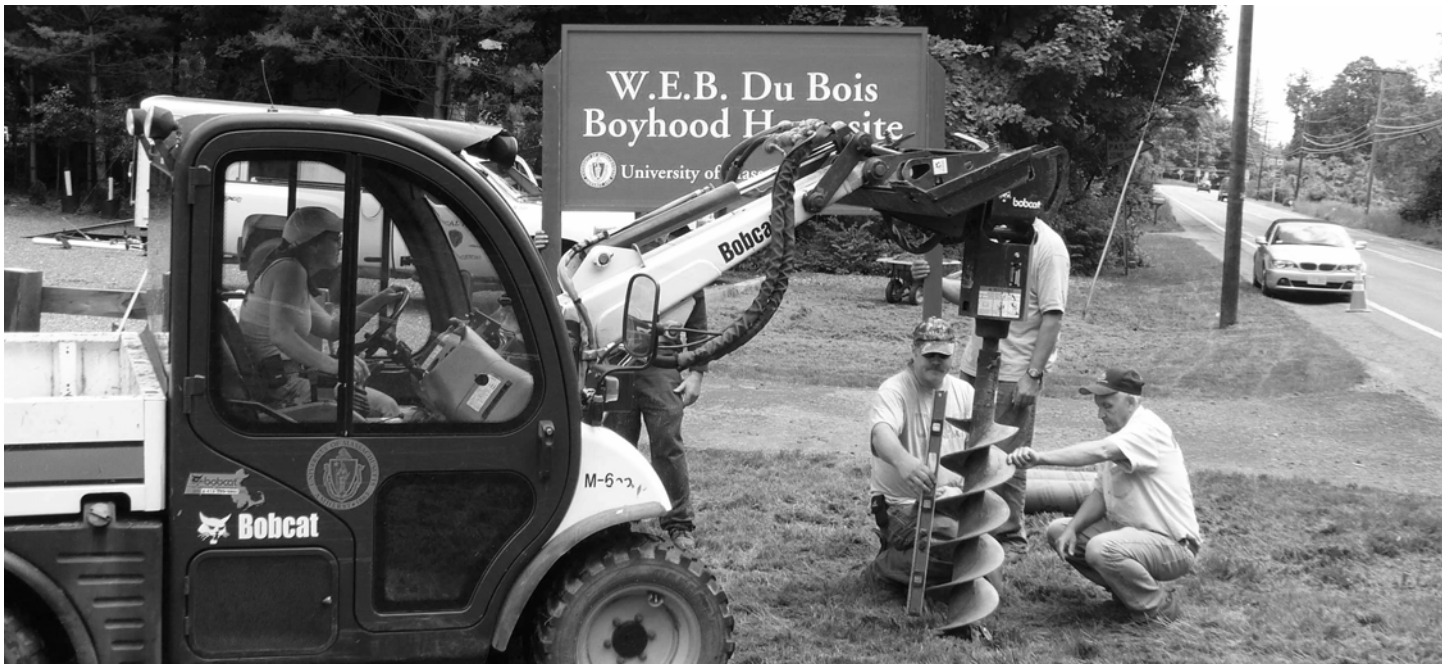
Friends of the DuBois Homesite

UPDATE

Rachel Fletcher

was placed at the rear of the property in 1969, when the park was dedicated; and a boardwalk trail to the archaeologically sensitive Burghardt-Du Bois family homesite.

- A 6,000-square-foot visitor orientation facility with exhibit space, meeting/classroom space, office, and gift shop would be established downtown. It could at first be in an existing storefront, then ultimately in a building, either new or existing.
- A downtown walking tour featuring key locations



Jack Rogala and UMass crew make site improvements; Berkshire Record

Workshops held in September 2008 and April 2009 brought together a nucleus of interested people to shape a direction for heritage tourism at the W.E.B. Du Bois Homesite on Route 23. Since the site opened to the public in 2008, the Friends of the Du Bois Homesite have worked with the W.E.B. Du Bois Center based at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst on long-range plans to promote the Du Bois legacy at the Homesite and throughout Great Barrington. The process is funded through a University of Massachusetts President's Grant, matched by the Friends of the Du Bois Homesite, Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area and National Trust for Historic Preservation.

The meetings resulted in a final report compiled by Michael Singer Studio in July 2009 with several recommendations:

- The Homesite on Route 23 would gain a small restroom station; an additional interpretive trail loop; a woodland amphitheater around the boulder that

from Du Bois's youth. Those walking the trail could carry informational devices, or stop at certain locations for modest exhibits and recorded messages about Du Bois and the community.

In related news, the W.E.B. Du Bois Center based at the W.E.B. Du Bois Library, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, was established in February 2009 to engage scholars of all ages in critical social issues in race, equality and democracy.

The Friends of the Du Bois Homesite continue to serve as local stewards of the Homesite and partner with The Du Bois Center to restore the Du Bois legacy in Great Barrington. The 40th anniversary of the 1969 Homesite Dedication was celebrated with the Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church on Sunday October 18th. A copy of the July Planning Report can be downloaded from the Friends' website www.DuBoisHomesite.org.

For more information, contact Rachel Fletcher at 413-528-3391 or info@DuBoisHomesite.org

Great Barrington Trails and Greenways

Dale Abrams

Great Barrington Trails and Greenways welcomed a new collaborator to its partnership of more than 15 community and regional organizations early this year. The Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), based out of Harper's Ferry, VA named Great Barrington one of the first Appalachian Trail Community Partners. Selected towns along the AT are awarded this designation in recognition of community efforts in support of trail stewardship, land conservation, as well as proximity and resources available to AT hikers. ATC was most impressed by how many volunteers in the community get out to take care of our local trails.

With ATC backing, GB Trails organized a wide array of trail stewardship and building opportunities this year. A prime example was a trail building collaboration at Fountain Pond State Park. The Appalachian

Mountain Club (AMC), Greenagers, Berkshire Natural Resources and the Appalachian Trail Conservancy led the effort that resulted in over six hundred volunteer work hours this summer. The trail builders set thirteen sections of bog bridge, placed stepping stones and built several sections of rock turnpike and cribbing. All this work was done despite the challenges of rain and mosquitoes! Berkshire South supported the work by providing a home-base to the energetic AMC teen trail crew that worked on the project during August.

On this new trail, hikers will soon be able to trek into the native woodlands behind Fountain Pond and up along Three Mile Ridge. Eventually, a five mile round trip hike from Fountain Pond to Berkshire South Regional Community Center on Crissey Road will provide access to the varied habitats on lands held by the



Joan Silverman views map at GB Visitor Center kiosk

State, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, and Berkshire South. This work would not have been possible without the collaborative model that GB Trails has provided. “When you put motivated, capable folks in a room together amazing things can be accomplished,” said Christine Ward, GB Trails co-chair, of the effort.

The AT Communities program also provided funding to revise the Great Barrington Trails and Greenways map and purchase three outdoor kiosks for display. One kiosk now graces the outside of the Chamber Visitor's Center on Main Street, and another location is planned for the heart of Housatonic. A third location is still in exploration. A new “Where to Go, What to Do” side panel prominently identifies 11 recreation sites in Great Barrington and Housatonic and uses graphic symbols to illustrate what adventures await users at each site.

Great Barrington Land Conservancy is a lead partner of Great Barrington Trails and Greenways.

For more information visit:

www.gbtrails.org



Steve Paradis of ATC recognizes Great Barrington as an Appalachian Trail Community

Trail Building at Lake Mansfield

Christine Ward



Wheeler & Taylor employees volunteer at the Lake Mansfield Trail

Just like jazz, when talented people get together great things happen.

The trail building project in the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest has been powered by an eclectic volunteer force and supported by diverse funding agents. This joyful collaborative effort has involved GBLC through the coordination of Lake Mansfield Alliance and the Town of Great

Barrington through the guidance and support of the Conservation Commission and the Department of Public Works.

We've accomplished a great deal so far. Our work has been shaped by master trail designer, Peter Jensen. A bridge-boardwalk has been carefully built through a sensitive wetland habitat area. In October, an access trail was constructed in the town right-of-way providing

a safe connection to the Welcome Street sidewalk and allowing for the continued development of a "central loop trail" connecting our downtown and neighborhoods with river, forest and lake.

Now, final funding is being sought for the last phase of trail building. This effort will provide a forest trail system designed to encourage "people-powered excursions" to and from Lake Mansfield. The accessible system will meet national standards and will provide an amazing resource to all community members. Upon completion, the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail System will continue to engage many in active resource stewardship and to provide students with an outdoor classroom for environmental studies. Join in! Consider making a dedicated donation to support this great community project.



Peter Jensen and Eva Ward trail building

Funding for this project comes from:

- MA DCR, Recreational Trails Program
- Town of Great Barrington
- Lake Mansfield Alliance
- Fields Pond Association
- Berkshire Environmental Endowment Fund
- Berkshire Garden Club
- Private Donors

Over 500 volunteer hours have powered this project. Thanks to:

- Lake Mansfield Alliance Members
- Simon's Rock and Berkshire Community College Students
- Greenagers
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Appalachian Trail Conservancy
- Wheeler & Taylor
- Ward's Nursery



BIKERS

The Great Barrington Bike Committee is working with 11 other communities to create a bikepath from Vermont to Connecticut. We are looking for volunteers to help us chart the course through Great Barrington. Contact Ira Kaplan, 413.528.1211 or ijklaw@verizon.net

Pfeiffer Arboretum

UPDATE

Chris Vlcek

Looking for a brisk hike through a diverse hardwood forest? Views of a pristine, undeveloped lake? An observation deck over a lake-edge wetland? It's all right here at the Pfeiffer Arboretum! This little-known gem of a trail on Long Pond Road is owned and maintained by the Great Barrington Land Conservancy. New GBLC Board Members Ira Kaplan and Chris Vlcek are pleased to pick up the torch from early trail builders Peter Jensen, Peter Flemming, and Honey Sharp Lipman to rekindle community awareness of this special location.

On May 23rd several GBLC trailblazers gathered to “spruce” things up. We replaced 6 hemlock bog bridges, cleared fallen trees and encroaching saplings, and repainted the trailhead sign and trail markings. Matt Moore, of the Appalachian Mountain Club, earned extra appreciation for hauling the bog bridges and chainsaw through the trail. To make the trail more accessible, we restocked the trailhead with the original interpretive trail guides. Featured in the guide, and on the trail, are native plants including the spice bush, the less-common tulip poplar tree, and unfortunately, some invasive species such as buckthorn and bittersweet.

To address this rather “thorny” issue, we recently applied for a USDA-NRCS funded grant for the removal of invasive species at the Pfeiffer Arboretum. Though we did not get the grant this time around, we were encouraged to re-apply. Later this year, we'll tackle some of the easier targets on our own, starting with severing the bittersweet vines from the trees. For the upcoming year, we are strategizing for the long-term replacement of the deteriorating bog bridges and stabilization of a portion of the lower trail.

To help our efforts in the short-term, please join us Saturday, November 7th from 10am to 2pm for a Work & Lunch Trail Day. Contact us to let us know if you're coming. And do visit the trail—it will be beautiful this fall!

Contact: *Chris Vlcek*, 528-5571 or chris@littlewolfarch.com

GBLC

Membership Form

Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution to GBLC to support efforts to preserve and enhance the community's natural resources and distinctive character.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$20 Individual | <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 Guardian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 Family | <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 Steward |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Supporter | <input type="checkbox"/> \$1000 Sustaining |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 Conserver | <input type="checkbox"/> \$____ Other |

CHECKS PAYABLE TO: GBLC

In addition to my membership, I would also like to support my favorite projects:

\$___ *Farmland Preservation Fund*

\$___ *Conservancy Endowment Fund*

\$___ *Housatonic River Walk*

\$___ *Lake Mansfield Alliance*

\$___ *Great Barrington Trails and Greenways*

\$___ *Friends of Du Bois Homesite*

NAME

ADDRESS

CITY/STATE/ZIP

PHONE

EMAIL

GREAT BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVANCY
POST OFFICE BOX 987
GREAT BARRINGTON, MA 01230

GREAT BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVANCY

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dale Abrams, President
Peter Flemming, Treasurer
Shep Evans, Peter Berle Wildlife Conservation Area
Rachel Fletcher, River Walk, Friends of the Du Bois Homesite
Christine Ward, Lake Mansfield Alliance, GB Trails
Chris Vlcek, Pfeiffer Arboretum
Susan Witt, Community Land Trust in the So. Berkshires
Ira Kaplan, Esq., Pfeiffer Arboretum
Dennis Downing, Esq.
Anthony Barnaba, Advisor
Lou Oggiani, Advisor
Peter Jensen, Advisor
Sarah Volkman, Consultant

GBLC is dedicated to preserving and enhancing the community's natural resources and distinctive character. Through promotion and fund-raising endeavors, GBLC enables the dedication of open space to agricultural, recreational and scenic purposes through acquisitions, conservation easements and agricultural preservation restrictions.

Graphic Design Bill Allen
GBLC logo courtesy of Michael McCurdy

To learn more about Great Barrington Land Conservancy projects, please contact us at (413)-528-4456 or greatbarringtonland@gmail.com

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
PERMIT # 95
GT. BARRINGTON
MA 01230

GREAT BARRINGTON LAND CONSERVANCY
POST OFFICE BOX 987
GREAT BARRINGTON, MA 01230

