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# FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

## Riverfront Trail Construction Begins

Janice Kabel and Dale Abrams

Sometimes, dreams really do come true. This fall, the decades-old dream of extending the Housatonic River Walk southward became a reality.

Peter Jensen, who designed and built River Walk nearly 15 years ago with hundreds of volunteers, returned to Great Barrington in October to begin construction of the new Riverfront Trail which will extend south from Bridge Street to Olympian Meadows and from Brookside Road north to the Fairgrounds boundary.

A ribbon of crushed stone has been laid down, and an old drainage culvert restored. Still to come are a footbridge, wildlife viewing areas, and split rail fencing.

The construction work will be completed next summer, and the new Riverfront Trail will be open for all to enjoy from dawn to dusk for walking or snowshoeing. Along the trail there will be informational signs that point out important local historical and natural features.

A more elaborate trail extending south from Bridge Street was first envisioned by regional planners in the 1990s, but never built. Eventually, the concept of a trail on the west bank of the Housatonic River was placed in the Town Master Plan and Open Space and Recreation Plan. Events in the past few years have finally made construction possible. Our citizens enacted the Community Preservation Act, bringing access to funding for design



*GBLC broke ground on the new Riverfront Trail which will connect visitors to a long-inaccessible section of the Housatonic River.*

and construction. Property owners along the proposed trail route agreed to grant easements to GBLC for the trail right-of-way. Town staff, the Great Barrington Conservation Commission, and the Commonwealth's Recreational Trails and Natural Heritage and Endangered Species programs all assisted GBLC in creating a route along this rarely-seen section of the river.

We are especially grateful to these property owners who allowed the trail to be

built on their lands: Great Barrington Youth Foundation, Dewey Academy, the Town of Great Barrington, Lido Property, LLC, and Bostwick Gardens. The Town will construct trail segments that run through Olympian Meadows and the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Field.

The Riverfront trail will feature a five-foot wide walking path from Bridge Street through Olympian Meadows with close views of the Housatonic River. At Brookside Road, the path will be six-feet wide to accommodate those using wheelchairs or walkers and will feature a seating area and a wildlife viewing area. The two segments can be connected by public sidewalks on South Main Street. Our hope is that the two new trail segments will be connected across the Fairgrounds property in the future.

Once completed, the Riverfront Trail will become an important part of the community trail network

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# A Perfect Day for the Run for the Hills!

Jane Angelini

A record number of 142 runners, walkers, and kids enjoyed participating in this important annual fundraiser for GBLC. A number of new names supported our mission for a total of 34 business sponsors. A big thanks to all of our sponsors and to the Kilpatrick Athletic Center at Simon's Rock and its staff for hosting the event. Participants enjoyed the community gathering and traversing the beautiful autumn Berkshire Hills. See you on October 4, 2020 for our 10th Annual Run for the Hills Race!

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PHOTO: EVA WARD



10K runners en route



PHOTO: TRACEY MAC

Fun Run families do push ups

We are grateful to the donors who support all of our GBLC projects, including the Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA), River Walk (RW) and River Walk Future Fund (RWFF), as well as our Community Partners and Business Sponsors of the 9th Annual Run for the Hills (RFTH):

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# Standing Up for Lake Mansfield

Christine Ward

We need your help to protect Lake Mansfield and to support our ongoing lake conservation efforts. This year the Great Barrington Land Conservancy made steady progress with trail improvements and the Knob Hill rehabilitation planting. But our job is far from over. **We strongly encourage you to attend town meetings where key decisions are being made.**

Through the Lake Mansfield Alliance project and our service on the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, we are working to ensure a healthy future for this invaluable natural habitat and recreation area.

However, your advocacy will help determine whether Lake Mansfield improvements are accomplished.

This summer, the Great Barrington Selectboard voted in favor of a bold plan to address the most significantly degraded area of Lake Mansfield. The Lake Mansfield Road Design Plan, recommended by the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force, includes stabilization of the lake edge, stormwater drainage improvements, removal of a portion of the existing roadway, and installation of a new recreational path.

In September, the Selectboard voted to pave the most severely degraded section of Lake Mansfield Road as an interim measure with the stipulation that this section be changed to one-way access. This controversial decision was made despite opposition from Improvement Task Force members and neighbors.

In response, the Great Barrington Conservation Commission required a review of the interim paving plan in accordance with a town Wetland By-Law. While they approved of the interim paving of Lake Mansfield

Road, they recognized the deterioration of the shoreline caused by the road and ordered that the Town of Great Barrington take steps to address this ongoing violation.

The Commission requires that the Town remove pavement from all but the eleven foot lane and a five foot wide pedestrian walkway, and begin the rehabilitation of the shoreline with native plantings by November 2020. **The**

**town has been called to present a restoration plan to the commission in April 2020 for review and approval.** This marks the very first time that the Town has been required to address this ongoing road-caused degradation.

In the meantime, the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force is moving ahead to secure funding needed for a construction-ready Lake Mansfield Road Design Plan by applying for a Community Preservation Act grant. This design will result in enormous habitat and recreational improvements. **But, the funding will need to be approved by citizen vote at the May 2020 town meeting.** Each of us has a role to play, so gather up your friends and family and attend these crucial town meetings.

**Visit [www.GBLand.org](http://www.GBLand.org) for ongoing updates on meetings and improvement efforts.**



*Joyful volunteers at our Annual Lake Mansfield Clean Up Day.*

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## Riverfront Trail Construction Continued from page 1

maintained by GBLC: Housatonic River Walk, community trails at the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest, and the walking loop at the Pfeiffer Arboretum on Long Pond Road. We hope this new trail will become a route into town for hikers on the Appalachian Trail.

By building this trail, GBLC is meeting a community

need for walkable neighborhoods and providing access to cherished natural areas. We need your help to raise the required matching funds for the state grant and funds for long-term maintenance. Go to [GBLand.org](http://GBLand.org) to become a part of the Riverfront Trail!

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**Visit [GBLand.org](http://GBLand.org) to get updates on our latest initiatives, to become a member, to donate or to volunteer.**

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*GBLand.org*

Graphic Design by Rose Tannenbaum  
GBLC logo courtesy of Michael McCurdy

**GBLC is dedicated to conservation and stewardship of our community's natural resources and special places.**

We work to protect open space for ecological, recreational, agricultural, and scenic purposes. We organize community volunteers on behalf of land conservation and stewardship. We partner with local, regional, and national land trust organizations. We support sustainable agriculture as a means of preserving our farming heritage. We support neighborhood initiatives that align with our mission.

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