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FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

The Year in Review: Many Accomplishments to Celebrate

Carol R. Noble

As 2017, our 25th anniversary, draws to a close, I look back at a year filled with many new community outreach activities as well as tremendous accomplishments by the Great Barrington Land Conservancy (GBLC). I'd like to touch on some of the highpoints of this year.

Very talented and dedicated board members put in a great deal of time submitting grant proposals to improve existing trails and to envision the creation of new trails. We owe Rachel Fletcher, Christine Ward, Janice Kabel and Dale Abrams tremendous thanks for the many hours of time they have devoted to these efforts.

As they updated our Board members at Committee and Board meetings throughout the year, I have learned that successful grant writing is only the beginning. This year Pfeiffer Arboretum, River Walk and the newly envisioned Riverfront Trail, to run south from Bridge Street to Brookside Road, were recipients of



Local teens learned valuable skills as trails were improved at Pfeiffer Arboretum.

funding from a variety of sources. Christine, Rachel, Janice, and Dale then began the next steps in these projects.

As an example of what happens once a proposal gets funded, I'd like to briefly highlight the process with Pfeiffer Arboretum, where trail structures were dangerously eroded. Christine's grant, written to rebuild the bog trails and bridge at Pfeiffer, included a match of volunteer work hours. A great deal of planning preceded the actual work phase. The initial phase, in April, was to harvest black locust timber from the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest. In July, the work of rebuilding the trail was begun in earnest with the help of Greenagers.

The finished results are amazing, affording visitors the opportunity to traverse a highly diverse native habitat within 10 minutes of town. We are now in the process of

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Promoting land conservation, farm preservation, and community trails since 1992

For more information visit our newly updated and comprehensive website, www.GBLand.org and see the newsletter photos in color.

Moving Forward on the Riverfront Trail

Janice Kabel and Dale Abrams

Construction on parts of the new Riverfront Trail could begin as early as next summer.

The Committee Preservation Committee has approved \$115,000 to the Great Barrington Land Conservancy for construction of the first phase of the new trail. Final approval will be by the town's voters at the annual town meeting in May, 2018.

Once completed, the Riverfront Trail will run 1.25 miles from Bridge Street to Brookside Road, and will provide easy access to sections of the Housatonic River that have been closed off for many years. It will serve the senior community with an accessible trail, giving walkers a long, level route for outdoor recreation. The trail will be open year-round for walking and snowshoeing.

Community Preservation Act funds for the design and surveying of the new trail, were released by the Town last July 1. GBLC's Conservation and Stewardship Committee quickly brought Foresight Land Services and trail designer Peter Jensen onto the scene to mark out the trail pathways and features. A plan was finished within weeks.

The trail will be constructed in phases. Phase 1 will include two sections along the river and a spur link to State Road. This first section will begin alongside the Housatonic River near the Railroad Street Youth Project, then follow the river's edge behind the Dewey Academy. It will traverse the fields behind Dewey and then cross a new footbridge to Olympian Meadows, and follow the perimeter of this town park. Hikers may then follow the Olympian Meadows access road up to State Road and follow public sidewalks to a re-entry trail just past the Historical Society. The trail will bring hikers back to the river and a crushed stone section to Brookside Road. The

middle section, through the Fairgrounds, is planned for Phase 2.

Wherever feasible, a crushed stone surface trail will provide access for all, including those using strollers, wheelchairs, or assistive devices. This first phase will include more than 925 feet of crushed stone pathway, split rail fencing, seating benches, a footbridge, a reconstructed drainage culvert, signage, and a special spot for viewing the river and its wildlife.

GBLC's goal is to provide a gentle and accessible trail along the river to benefit seniors, families with small children, and the community at large, for generations to come.

GBLC expects to raise additional funds from the Massachusetts Department of Recreation and Conservation trails program, private foundations and from the public. You can become a trailblazer by donating to GBLC and this project at www.GBLand.org.

GBLC plans to maintain the trail for year-round access for hiking, snowshoeing, and birdwatching.

Although GBLC has taken on the development and construction of the trail, it

is only possible because of the support of the property owners along the route: the Great Barrington Youth Foundation (board members Steven Agar and Ed McCormick), the Town of Great Barrington (town planner Chris Rembold, town manager Jennifer Tabakin, conservation agent Shepley Evans), Dewey Academy (Carole Bratter, Ed Bratter, and Andrea Nathans), Monument Valley LLC (Dale Culleton), and the Berkshire Housing Development Corporation (president Elton Ogden). Thank you for working with us to bring this trail project from dream to reality. 



View along the proposed Riverfront Trail route

River Walk Highlights:

How do you enjoy this special trail beside the Housatonic River?



Each year River Walk provides a myriad of experiences and programs to the community. This year, along with ongoing internships, habitat reclamation, and youth education; we offered community programs and guided walks aimed at place-based learning, enjoyment and action. This year's offerings included:

- National Trails Day Paddle & Hike & History Walk*
- Greenagers Training*
- Peter Jensen Riverside Trails Workshop*
- Housatonic Heritage Walks with Elia Del Molino*

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*River Walk
Music Connects*



Stabilization of the River Bank



River Walk Science March



Tom Ingersoll Guided Tree Tour

Caring People are Vital to Lake Mansfield

Christine Ward and Dale Abrams

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Industrious volunteers turned out to work on April 29th for the annual Lake Mansfield Celebration and Spring Cleanup. For some of us, it was our 15th year of spring service, for others it was a new way to pitch in and connect with our lake community. Each year GBLC hosts events and workdays needed to keep the beach area and forest trails in tip top shape. This effort is supported through our work towards long term improvements as members of the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force.

The task force is forging ahead with nearly \$400,000 secured this year towards steps outlined in the 2016 Improvement Plan. A Community Preservation Act

loop trail. We are providing \$10,000 towards this \$25,000 project, to match the \$15,000 Community Preservation Act grant. This support, made possible through a \$7,500 grant from Highmark Health and other individual donations, will improve the accessibility of the much-enjoyed Lake Mansfield Forest trails. In addition, funding for diaper changing stations will be provided to further improve the beach area facilities.

When you swim, or walk or paddle, remember our lake and forest are powerful sites for environmental education. Each year we strive to connect community members and visitors to the natural world. Last summer, guided forest walks in the Conservation Forest helped Monument Mountain Regional High School students and kids from Boston (Youth Enrichment Services) connect with the natural world.

We believe that Lake Mansfield is essential to our community and that you are essential to its well-being. Thank you! 

PHOTO: CHRISTINA LANE



Lake Mansfield Clean Up Volunteers

grant of \$106,400 is being used to complete detailed engineering of Lake Mansfield Road from the boat launch north and for an improvement design for the outlet structure. A \$288,925 Department of Environmental Protection grant has been awarded to Great Barrington to install stormwater structures needed to capture sediment on Knob Hill. In addition, State funding is currently being sought for improvements to the boat launch area. Town support of a healthy habitat and safe recreation area is essential to this success.

Your support will also allow GBLC to help fund forest trail improvements and beach area amenities in 2018. The next phase of trail improvements will be led by the town to complete the accessible crushed stone surface of the



Local students learn about forest ecology at Lake Mansfield

Welcoming our Newest Board Members: Elia Del Molino and Rebecca Wolin

We are pleased to introduce our two newest Board Members.

Elia brings a large array of experiences and connections to the GBLC Board of Directors. With a B.Sc. from the University of New England and a certificate in GIS from the University of California, this Berkshire Natural Resources Council (BNRC) Rice Fellow can inform GBLC projects with his considerable GPS and conservation skills. Elia “wears a lot of hats”. He is currently employed as the Berkshire Environmental Action Team (BEAT) Program Manager and as Greenagers Trails Coordinator where he directs many youth projects including working as River Walk’s site manager. Elia grew up hiking the forests and swimming the lakes of Berkshire County. He is also a master tracker, and frequently leads guided walks focused on revealing the diverse signs of our native mammals. When asked what inspires him, Elia says “I love to introduce kids and adults to diverse plants and animals, to have them smell wintergreen and sassafras, and see their faces light up with delight and discovery.”



Elia provides “hands-on training” in reading forest clues at the Housatonic Heritage Walks in September

Rebecca Wolin is a relative newcomer to the Berkshires, having moved to Monterey from Westport, CT. She joined Berkshire South Regional Community Center last June as the Director of Finance. With a degree in Accounting from NH’s Plymouth University and a Masters Degree in Health Care Management from the University of Mass, Rebecca has spent more than 30 years working in corporate accounting and finance departments at large corporations. Responsibilities have included preparing and analyzing P&LS, operating and capital budgets and analysis, capital improvement projects and audits. She has also served on the boards of the Westport Young Women’s League for over 15 years managing fundraising and community service projects and on several Westport school’s PTA’s. We are excited to have Rebecca on our Board with the financial and data management skills she brings.



Rebecca Wolin, new Board Member and Treasurer

Visit GBLand.org to get updates on our latest initiatives, to become a member, to donate or to volunteer.

Support your Land Conservancy Volunteering is Rewarding and Fun

Volunteers are the backbone of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy — from our volunteer board, to trail maintenance, and more! There are many ways to get involved with GBLC, and we couldn't do all that we do without you. Our volunteers have helped to maintain the trails at Riverwalk, Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest, and Pfeiffer Arboretum, helped to staff our annual road race Run for the Hills, and support our annual Hullabaloo fundraiser.

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Do you have an interest in our local environment and the ability to help, even for an hour? Then we want to get

to know you! The major areas for which we are seeking volunteers include community event support, trail maintenance, publicity, photography, and our website. You can fill out an inquiry form online (<https://www.gbland.org/volunteer>) or send an email info@gbland.org.

If you have a special talent, skill, or interest that you don't see listed above, there is most likely still a way for you to contribute to GBLC. One of our board members would love to get a cup of coffee or take a walk in the woods with you to talk about how you can get involved. We can't wait to meet you!



Run for the Hills Volunteers. Volunteers are invaluable to GBLC's efforts.

SAVE THE DATES! GBLC 2018 Events

Jan 13 Winter Hike and Snowshoe at CHP

Feb 16 & 17 Tracking Programs with Sue Morse

April 2 River Walk Earth Day Cleanup & March for Science

April 29 Lake Mansfield Cleanup & Celebration

July 21 A.T. Community Day

Sept ? Hullabaloo

Oct 7 Run for the Hills

Message from the President Continued from page 1

designing new, highly visible signage so people can easily spot the Pfeiffer Arboretum trailhead.

We celebrated our 25th anniversary through a host of community outreach events. Beyond those highlighted in this newsletter, we ended the season with our 2nd Annual Hullabaloo on September 10 and our 7th Annual Run for the Hills (RFTHs) on October 1, supported by our Community Sponsors, Jane Iredale and the Berkshire Coop, who were honored at Hullabaloo and will be featured all year on our website, GBLand.org.

In addition to these events which are highlighted with photos and text inside this newsletter, we ended the season with our Second Annual Hullabaloo on September 10 and our Seventh Annual Run for the Hills (RFTHs) on October 2. Our two 2017 **Community Sponsors**, Jane Iredale and the Berkshire Coop were honored at Hullabaloo and will be featured all year on our website, GBLand.org.

More than 75 people gathered for Hullabaloo, held outdoors behind Naji's, on a beautiful evening for a convivial celebration. . We had a chance to honor the Ladd Family, whose generous transfer of a land parcel of almost 28 acres located on Stockbridge Road near the Berkshire South Community Center, protects valuable natural resources and open space to be enjoyed for generations to come. It is envisioned that the land will provide for the creation of a new hiking trail that connects to the

Threemile Hill Trail at Fountain Pond and walking trails at the Community Health Program complex to points further south along Route 7 including Berkshire South Regional Community Center. Hullabaloo also gave us an opportunity to display the winning photos from our first photo contest and to honor the photo contest winners.

This year has given us many reasons to celebrate our 25th anniversary. We've had great support from many new faces who have learned about us through our events and outreach. We look toward our members for support in growing our capabilities. Volunteers and financial support are integral to building our capacity . Let us know if you are interested and we will find ways you can help.

Be sure to check our website for winter programs and for local trails to explore on your own!

Wishing you joyous holidays and a very happy new year. **FN**

Carol R Noble

Like us on Facebook:

Receive reminders of these and many other GBLC events!

<https://www.facebook.com/GreatBarringtonLandConservancy>



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

- \$15 Student
- \$25 Individual
- \$40 Family
- \$50 Supporter
- \$100 Conserver
- \$250 Guardian
- \$500 Steward
- \$1000 Sustaining
- \$ _____ Other

PLEASE PRINT:

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GBLC Membership

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

- \$ _____ *Future Riverside Trail*
- \$ _____ *Conservancy Endowment Fund*
- \$ _____ *Housatonic River Walk*
- \$ _____ *Friends of Pfeiffer Arboretum*
- \$ _____ *Lake Mansfield*
- \$ _____ *Great Barrington Trails and Greenway*

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: GBLC

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Recording Secretary

Elia Del Molino

Rachel Fletcher

Rabbi Liz Hirsch

Janice Kabel, Esq.

Christine Ward

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.

GBLand.org

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GBLC logo courtesy of Michael McCurdy

ADVISORS

8 Rob Hoogs

Dennis Downing

Chris Vlcek

Peter Jensen

Ira Kaplan, Esq.

Ethan Culleton

Rose Tannenbaum

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