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FIELD NOTES ²⁰¹¹

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

Putting Vision into Action

As 2010 comes to a close, I can't help feeling awed by the amazing work accomplished by the dedicated volunteers and project coordinators working on behalf of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy and its many projects. For more than 20 years, the Conservancy has supported land acquisition and conservation projects in the Great Barrington area. In this issue of Field Notes you'll see so many examples of the essential role that the Great Barrington Land Conservancy plays in preserving and shaping the landscape that makes the Berkshires feel like home.

The Conservancy provides essential administrative support for a wide range of projects that directly benefit our community including River Walk, Lake Mansfield Alliance, Great Barrington Trails & Greenways, the Friends of Du Bois, and the new Peter Berle Wildlife Conservation Area. Your support of the Conservancy directly helps these projects by keeping their administrative costs to a bare minimum. As a result, the project coordinators and volunteers can stay focused on putting vision into action, shaping the future of Great Barrington.



Volunteers clear bittersweet from the trail at Lake Mansfield

In this issue you'll learn about major progress on controlling invasive plants at the Pfeiffer Arboretum on Long Pond Road. As River Walk celebrates its first year as a National Recreation Trail, you'll hear about how the trail was heroically resurfaced by the Greenagers youth service group. You'll also hear about a year of firsts for Great Barrington Trails & Greenways: the first New England Trails Symposium; the first Great Barrington Walk About, a new trail head and trail surface for the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest, and a new Fountain Pond section of the Three Mile Hill Trail. Please take inspiration from these articles and visit any number of these Great Barrington trails and conservation areas during the coming year.

Everything you read about in this issue happens because of the generous support of our members. Your support of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy through a tax-deductible membership donation is essential. Thank you in advance for your support.

Sincerely,

Dale Abrams, Board President



Newly completed trail head at Lake Mansfield.

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.

Pfeiffer Arboretum

Going Native

Ira Kaplan



Invasive plants removed at Pfeiffer Arboretum

Pfeiffer Arboretum is a 38-acre property between Long Pond Road and Long Pond that is open to the public for hiking and nature study. The Arboretum is notable for its diversity of shrub, herbaceous and tree species. But, despite ongoing maintenance efforts, invasive species were getting out of control and overtaking the native plant diversity of the Arboretum. To protect

the Arboretum, board members, Sarah Volkman and Chris Vlcek, applied for and obtained a federal grant from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to control exotic invasive species.

Although, GBLC initially hoped to control invasives without the use of herbicides, research informed us that

these invasive plants couldn't be eliminated without them. The Conservancy hired Bay State Forestry who proposed a method for the treatment of invasive species called Integrated Vegetation Management, involving both selective cutting and carefully controlled herbicide application. Before any work could be done, permission had to be obtained from the Great Barrington Conservation Commission. A special thanks goes to Rob Hoogs of Foresight Land Services (one of our newest board members) who donated his company's professional services delineating the wetlands and appearing before the Commission to obtain their approval. The Conservation Commission is viewing this as a "test case" in the battle against invasive species.

The first phase of the work was carried out during October 2010. The larger diameter invasives—such as bittersweet (a climbing vine) and buckthorn (a small tree)—were cut with a chain saw. Then herbicide was applied directly to the stump to be absorbed into the root system to kill the plant. Smaller invasive bushes such as Japanese barberry, tartarian honeysuckle and multiflora rose were treated with a foliar spray that is absorbed by the leaves and drawn into the root system. All work was done so as to protect nearby native plants and wetlands.

As you walk the loop this winter, you will notice many cut bittersweet vines and downed buckthorn trees. But a larger transformation will be visible next spring, when the invasive bushes do not re-sprout and begin to die off. This is the first of a three-year treatment program, with work and monitoring continuing each year to control any remaining invasive plants.

Our next project will be replacing the boardwalks on the trail. Please consider making a special donation for the purchase of white oak planks and join us "going native" on our next volunteer work-day! For more information contact Ira Kaplan, 528-1211, ijklaw@verizon.net

Lake Mansfield Update: Town Wins Stormwater Grants

Chris Rembold, Great Barrington Town Planner

Thanks to the efforts of the Lake Mansfield Improvement Task Force (LMITF), the Town of Great Barrington received a small grant from Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to develop plans to address stormwater runoff at Lake Mansfield. The funds, authorized by section 604(b) of the federal Clean Water Act, and passed from the US Environmental Protection Agency to the states, will be targeted at controlling

runoff pollution that enters the lake from the boat launch and Knob Hill.

Currently, runoff from this area dumps sediment and pollutants right into the lake. This pollution has been documented as a major contributor to the growth of invasive weeds like Eurasian Milfoil and a general decline in water quality. The grant of \$10,500 will pay for an engineer to develop conceptual plans for catch basins, drainage swales, and other solutions

that will catch and filter the runoff.

GBLC and the Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA) have long advocated for improving the health of the lake. Christine Ward, LMITF Chair and LMA Coordinator, was excited about the news. "Swimmers, fishermen, boaters and everyone who uses the lake will benefit from the improvements." The concept plans developed with these funds will form the basis for a future grant application for construction funds, in order to implement the solutions.

The project will coordinate its efforts with the Massachusetts Office of Fishing and Boating Access, which has expressed its strong interest in helping improve runoff issues at the boat launch.

It is also just a portion of a comprehensive approach to managing stormwater and runoff in the lake watershed. The Town recently received approval for \$266,500 to fund stormwater improvements on Castle Hill Avenue. An article about this project will appear in a future newsletter.

More information is available on the Town's website: www.townofgb.org



Major entry point of run off into Lake Mansfield

Trail Talk

Christine Ward

Trails are powerful tools for connecting to the land. A woodland walk allows us to leave the hustle and bustle of our daily lives behind and to immerse ourselves in the natural world. There we find a peaceful moment, a surprising discovery or a chance to connect with others. Trail work builds even more deeply on these benefits. The trail builder develops skills that require an ability to read the landscape

and utilize resources thoughtfully. Hours spent working in the woods strengthen our desire to preserve these rich natural spaces. This year GBLC has provided essential support to successful trail initiatives that have provided the community with improved or newly open trail opportunities. For more information visit: www.gbtrails.org

Great Barrington WALK ABOUT: GB Trails & Greenways Supports Community Health

4 On September 11th, 2010 Great Barrington Trails and Greenways partnered with the Town of Great Barrington and Fairview hospital on the premier Great Barrington Walk About. The event was designed to support community health and to engage folks in exploring links to existing and developing trails as ways to actively enjoy our town resources. “This is an opportunity for folks to use their feet to demonstrate their support for a pedestrian friendly Great

Barrington!” said Deb Phillips, GB Select Person and GB Trails co-chair. Historic downtown Great Barrington, River Walk and the developing Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trails were enjoyed by the forty folks who took advantage of a beautiful fall day to get out and get going. Most folks chose the 3.5 mile loop trail, many discovering new pedestrian routes that are easily available for everyday enjoyment. Don’t miss our next GB Walk About on September 10, 2011.

Peter Jensen Launches Northeast Trail Symposium

In June 2010, Peter Jensen was supported by Great Barrington Trails and Greenways (a GLBC project) & Housatonic Heritage in accomplishing a long held dream: to provide local trail builders with a state-of-the-art trail building conference. For 3 days 40-50 trail builders and experts were engaged in a dynamic exchange of ideas, beginning with a host of speakers addressing the importance of accessible trails and their impact on the community. Project planning and installation techniques were taught

both in the classroom and in the field. Twenty-five workshops addressed a myriad of trail building essentials and met the needs of both beginner and more experienced trail builders. The symposium was hosted by Berkshire South Community Center and was a great success. As Meredyth Babcock, volunteer coordinator of Westfield River Wild & Scenic said, “I had such a marvelous time; my brain is full of information and my heart full of trail dreams!”





Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest Trail: Great New Trail Developments

Lake Mansfield Alliance (LMA) continues its efforts towards the development of trails in the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest. Current work includes the construction of an accessible trail portion connecting the beach area parking lot with the previously constructed bridge/boardwalk and the clearing of a new ¼ mile loop trail, which will provide opportunities for walking, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. This next phase of

trail building will greatly enhance this developing trail system, which is already seeing increased community use. The current work is the result of 2 years of planning and is supported by a substantial Recreational Trail Program Grant as well as many other funding sources. LMA volunteers support the trail construction contractor, Peter S. Jensen, as they work to develop this resource for the Great Barrington community.

This year's volunteers have included:

Lake Mansfield Alliance Members
Greenagers
Students from the Mountain Road School,
New Lebanon, NY
Appalachian Mountain Club
Appalachian Trail Conservancy

Funding for the current work comes from:

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

Top: Exiting the Lake Mansfield area on the GB Walk About

Bottom: Hikers take an inaugural stroll on Fountain Pond Trail



Fountain Pond -3 Mile Hill Trail: A New Community Trail Provided by the Work of Many

The Fountain Pond-3 Mile Hill Trail was officially opened to the public on October 13th. This 2.5 mile trail can be accessed at either Fountain Pond or at Berkshire South Regional Community Center and connects the properties of Berkshire South, Berkshire Natural Resources Council and MA DRC. Recent efforts have been energized by the partners of Great Barrington Trails and Greenways. Over the past two years, approximately 75 individuals representing seven different organizations, including 42 youth, gave 1,650

hours to the construction of this trail. This enthusiastic concentration of labor allowed us to surpass our trail development expectations and to open this trail to the public in October 2010. Special recognition was given to AMC Regional Trail Director, Matt Moore and Greenagers Director, Will Conklin for their leadership in coordinating the efforts of teen trail builders. The new trail provides access to a rich natural woodland habitat with opportunities for hiking, trail running, birding, walking, education and stewardship.

River Walk Revitalization

Rachel Fletcher

In record breaking heat, with nothing more than wheelbarrows, buckets, shovels, rakes, and willpower that wouldn't quit, a mighty team of Greenager volunteers, led by the great Will Conklin, spread more than 100 tons of surface material over River Walk's half mile of trail. Five hundred man/woman-hours later, River Walk has a brand new trail. This work was funded through a \$4,455 grant from Rails-to-Trails Conservancy and National Park Service Rivers, Trails & Conservation Assistance program.

In other news, the year at River Walk:

- Revised and reprinted 10,000 new River Walk brochures with Housatonic Heritage assistance
- Continued its ongoing restoration of 2.63 acres of riverfront with intensive native plantings and exotic invasives control
- Removed garlic, mustard, bedstraw, bindweed, goutweed, nightshade,

multiflora rose, Japanese knotweed, Norway maples, grape, oriental bittersweet, celastris and other invasive-exotics

- Produced and planted 1512 native trees and plants valued at \$3,522
- Re-configured the raingarden for a more attractive appearance
- With Peter Jensen and Greenagers, completed 100 linear feet of down slope riverbank reinforcement at the north Berkshire Corporation section, utilizing bioengineering techniques and revegetated the bank. Continued revegetation of 50 linear feet of downslope reinforcement along south Berkshire Corporation section
- Conducted 11 on-site service learning programs. 197 volunteers contributed 933 on-site hours, with special workdays provided by the Greenagers, Environmental Law Coalition, Great Barrington Rudolf Steiner School, and Camp Chase; and 185+ participants benefitted from 4 lectures, 7 tours and 1 walk-a-thon.

Many thanks to our generous donors for making all of this year's accomplishments possible: the Berkshire Environmental Fund of Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation; the Town of Great Barrington; the Katherine L. W. and Winthrop M. Crane III Charitable Trust; the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, The Turkeybush Foundation, as well local foundations and businesses, including Berkshire Corporation, Windy Hill Farm, Crystal Essence, Gallery Eight, Pittsfield Cooperative Bank, Reistan Enterprises, Great Barrington Garden Club, and Wheeler and Taylor.

Special thanks to the Town of Great Barrington for disposing of River Walk's trash and debris and managing our storm drain drop inlets that prevent oil and sediment from entering the river.

Looking ahead to next year, we are planning to replace River Walk's popular flowforms (installed originally in 1994); add interpretive signage panels for the W. E. B. DuBois River Garden park; improve the River Walk trailhead kiosk; continue our learning service programs; and conduct riverbottom cleanups. *For more information visit: www.gbriverwalk.org*



Clarke Peters helps in the newly organized rain garden in the Du Bois River Garden Park

Upcoming GBLC Events

March 10

LMA – Cabin Fever at Crissey Farms

April 23

River Walk/Spring Clean Up

April 30

Lake Mansfield Clean Up

May 14

Pfeiffer Trail Work Day

Sept 10

GBLC Annual Meeting

Sept 10

Great Barrington Walk About

Happenings

at the Du Bois Homesite

Rachel Fletcher

The Friends of the Du Bois Homesite will join the African American Heritage Trail and others this February in a month-long celebration of the 143rd birthday of W.E.B. Du Bois in recognition of his life-long promotion of education.

Among the February 2011 offerings are:

- W.E.B. Du Bois: A Life Examined, taught by Du Bois scholar, Dr. Homer (Skip) Meade, a comprehensive course on four consecutive Thursdays
- The debut of "Du Bois in a Box" curriculum for grades 4-8 and 9-12
- The publication of W.E.B. Du Bois in Great Barrington Trail Brochure, a self-guided walking tour about the town's people and places as Du Bois recalled them
- The dedication of Bard College at Simon's Rock Library as a site on the African American Heritage Trail
- 11th annual Du Bois Birthday Celebration at Clinton A.M.E. Zion Church
- 5th anniversary celebration of the Du Bois Center in Great Barrington with a showing of the award winning film *The Road to Freedom: The Vernon Johns Story* starring James Earl Jones

Stay tuned for event dates!

For more information, email: info@DuBoisHomesite.org
or visit www.AfricanAmericanTrail.org

GBLC Going Green

Help the Conservancy go green by reducing our use of paper! **Please include your email on your membership form**—and we'll keep you updated about our activities via email. Thanks for helping us move toward a smaller ecological footprint.

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*

\$___ *Pfeiffer Arboretum Trail*

\$___ *Housatonic River Walk*

\$___ *Lake Mansfield Alliance*

\$___ *Great Barrington Trails and Greenways*

\$___ *Friends of Du Bois Homesite*

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

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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

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