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FIELD NOTES

Newsletter of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy

2012

Community Supports New Conservancy 5K Race



5K runners crossing the finish line

An amazing thing happened on Sunday, October 16, when hundreds of people came out to support local farms, community trails, and land conservation by running and walking in the Great Barrington Land Conservancy's first Run for the Hills 5K event. Given the many events going on that day (Walk for the Homeless and Occupy Main Street to name just two), this was a remarkable demonstration of the compassion and engagement that exemplifies the character of our wonderful Berkshire communities.

The impetus for the Run for the Hills 5K was a board decision to create an event that would simultaneously raise the Land Conservancy's profile in the community and showcase the landscape we strive to preserve. Our goal was also to expand our support base to include businesses and individuals who care about our work but hadn't found an opportunity to give before. Long before the event occurred, the decision was validated as many local businesses stepped forward with financial support.

On race day, our event organizing team was awed by the enthusiasm and support that emerged from the Kilpatrick Athletic Center at Simon's Rock that Sunday morning. An amazing 185 runners and walkers headed out on the Run for the Hills 5K course traversing the gorgeous rolling hills on the west side of Great Barrington. Together, these runners, walkers, and a generous group of local businesses raised \$4,172 to support the land conservancy's work. This was awesome!

We are deeply thankful to all the volunteers who helped in the planning and preparation, and for those who staffed the event. It was wonderful to be able to rely on the collective expertise and energy of the group and at times simply watch the event unfold. To see so many folks, from 5 to 70+ years old, having a great time running and walking the beautiful course was inspirational! To be able to run in the 5K myself was a huge gift; a sweet icing on the cake.

All of this was made possible by the generosity of our sponsors (Wheeler & Taylor, Berkshire Coop Market, Windy Hill Farm, Ward's Nursery, Barrington Brewery, CrossFitGB, MoHo Designs, and the Arcadian Shop) and our amazing hosts at Bard College at Simon's Rock and the Kilpatrick Athletic Center. Thank you as well to our town staff and the board of selectman for clearing the way for the event. This community support is vital to the future our organization and all the work we do. Thank you in advance for renewing your Great Barrington Land Conservancy membership. We hope to see you on the Run for the Hills 5K course this coming year... as a walker, runner, or volunteer.

Thank you!

Sincerely,
Dale Abrams, Board President

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Pfeiffer Stewardship Expands

by Chris Vlcek

The 38-acre Pfeiffer Arboretum property on Long Pond Rd offers a quiet walking loop and beautiful overlook of pristine Long Pond. Our annual Pfeiffer Arboretum trail workdays give us an opportunity to evaluate and identify future stewardship needs for the property, such as invasive plants, trail signs, and boardwalk repairs.

In 2010, the Conservancy received a three year NRCS grant for the removal of invasive plants—especially bittersweet, buckthorn, and barberry—which were spreading over the front acreage along Long Pond Road. We are pleased to report that two seasons of control work has led to a significant reduction of invasive species on the property, but the management will be ongoing.

2

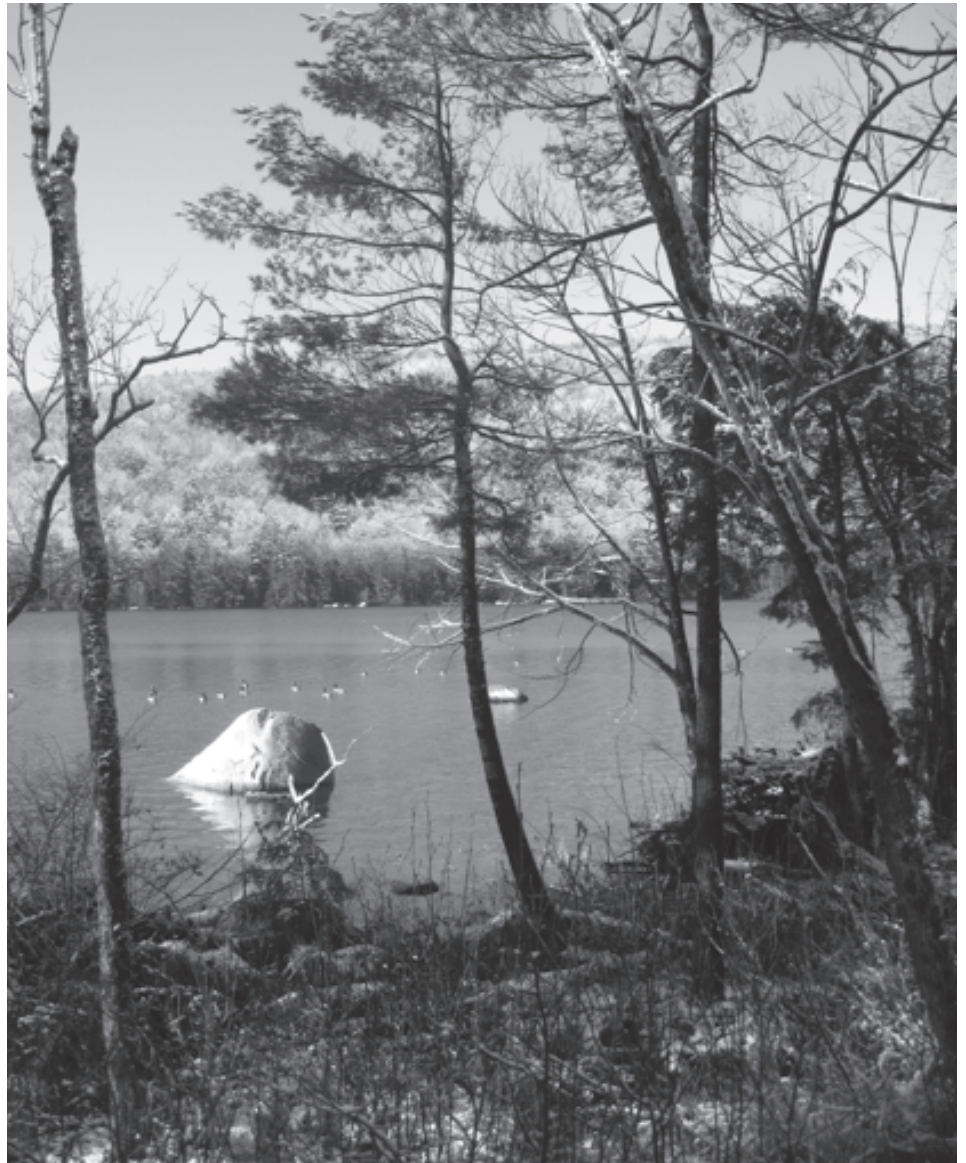
The Land Conservancy has joined with other GB Trails and Greenways partners in submitting a collaborative grant proposal to Housatonic Heritage to fund a variety of trail improvement projects, including work at the Pfeiffer property. If this funding comes through, we hope to replace the original brochure and trail marker system with a revised and simplified map-based interpretive trail guide that will engage visitors in discovering the unique features of the Arboretum.

The funding would also help with plans to rebuild several hundred feet of deteriorating bog-bridging—originally installed in 2002—with rot-resistant black locust timbers, providing a long-lasting enhancement to the trail. A unique opportunity to obtain the needed lumber from wind-fallen locust trees in the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest was identified by our board. This winter the community will be able to watch a small scale demonstration of ox-drawn timber harvest methods as downed trees are moved through the snow covered forest to the beach parking area, for milling and transportation to the Pfeiffer property.

Stewardship volunteers are always needed, so please contact us if you are interested in lending a hand; info@greatbarringtonland-conservancy.org.



Top: Greenagers work crew at Pfeiffer Bottom: Long Pond view from Pfeiffer Trail.



Community Preservation Act: *What's It All About?*

The Community Preservation Act (CPA) is a smart growth tool that helps communities preserve open space and historic sites, create affordable housing, and develop outdoor recreational facilities. CPA also helps strengthen the state and local economies by expanding housing opportunities and construction jobs and by supporting the tourism industry through preservation of historic and natural resources. Municipalities adopt CPA through passage of a ballot measure.

CPA allows communities to create a local Community Preservation Fund for open space protection, historic preservation, affordable housing and outdoor recreation. Community preservation monies are raised locally through the imposition of a surcharge of 1- 3% of the tax levy against real property. Typically the first \$100,000 of assessed property value is exempt. A property valued at \$400,000 (\$300K after exemption) with a \$13 mil rate, would have a \$39 annual surcharge at 1%, \$78 at 2%, or \$117 at 3%. Further exemptions can be adopted for low income households and low and moderate income seniors.

The CPA statute also creates a statewide Community Preservation Trust Fund, administered by the Department of Revenue (DOR), which provides distributions each October to communities that have adopted CPA. These annual disbursements serve as an incentive for communities to pass CPA.

Each CPA community creates a local Community Preservation Committee (CPC) upon adoption of the Act, and this five-to-nine member board makes recommendations on CPA projects to the community's legislative body.

Property taxes traditionally fund the day-to-day operating needs of safety, health, schools, roads, maintenance, and more. But until CPA was enacted, there was no steady funding source for preserving and improving a community's character and quality of life. The Community Preservation Act gives a community the funds needed to control its future.

Information about the CPA is available at www.greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org. This article is adapted with permission from the Community Preservation Coalition: www.communitypreservation.org

McAllister Stewardship Group Forms

by Jess Wikle



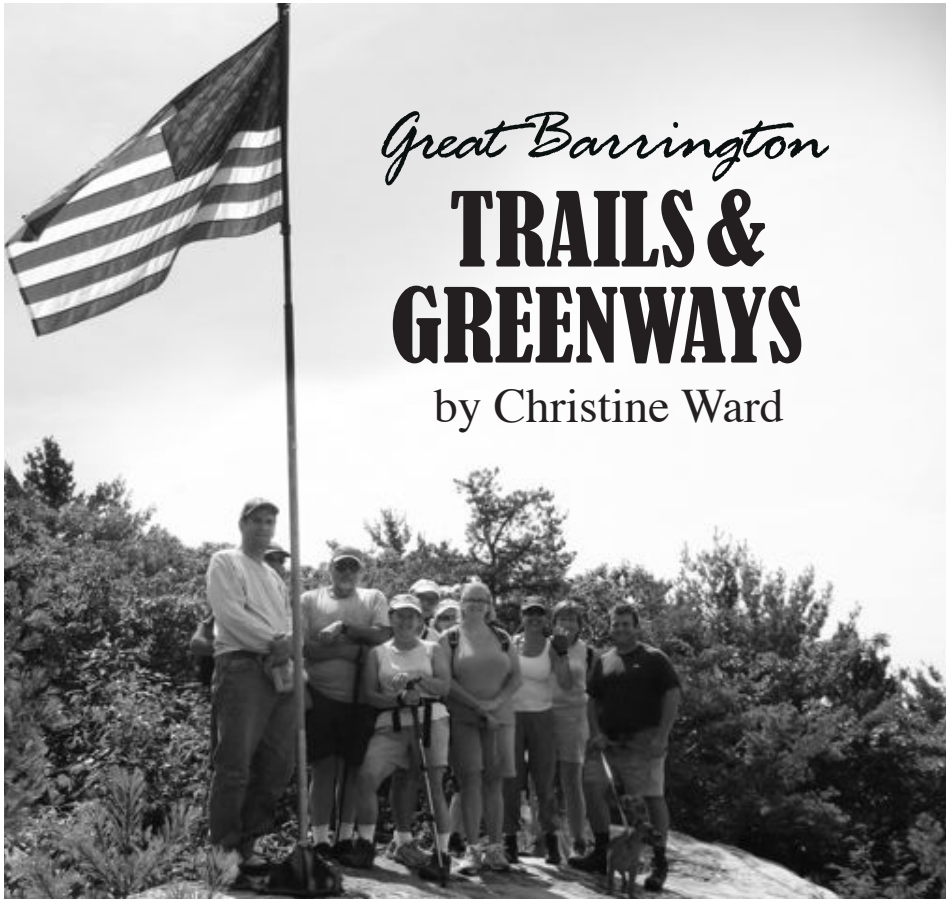
Greenriver Trail at McAllister Wildlife Refuge

Over the past year or more, ideas have been brewing about forming a stewardship group for the town's largest conservation property, the McAllister Wildlife Refuge, which extends from the Haley Road entrance near Alford Road to the Green River. In August, the Land Conservancy held our summer potluck in a neighbor's backyard overlooking the refuge property. Jess Wikle, a local forester, gave a wonderful introduction to the property and invited all in attendance to join a new Friends of McAllister group.

The group has met twice since the Land Conservancy potluck to explore ways to support stewardship of the town owned property. Among the ideas discussed are erecting an informational kiosk at the entry to the property and updating and posting the rules and regulations for the property. Marking the property boundaries and developing a stewardship plan for the

property are also on the priority list. The group is planning volunteer workdays to map and improve the trails, begin invasive species management, and perform a plant inventory for the property. Wikle has reached out to the Hoffman Bird Club about conducting bird surveys and for guidance on managing of the property for the benefit of birds and other wildlife, as was requested by the McAllister family who donated the land to the town.

Over the winter, the group intends to put together a plan for a plant and trail inventory of the entire property. The hope is to carry out this inventory in the spring, and use the information to move ahead with planning a trail map and writing a stewardship plan for the property. Neighbors, youth groups, and the community at large, are encouraged to help with these stewardship efforts. Please contact Jess Wikle for more information at jwikle24@yahoo.com.



Great Barrington
**TRAILS &
GREENWAYS**
by Christine Ward

GB Challenge hikers at Flag Rock

4 TRAIL TALK

Open to all, community trails invite us to connect with the natural world, ourselves and others. Climb a mountain, slip through a forest, or find your place beside a lake or river; for many a daily walk is an essential part of a healthy lifestyle. Great Barrington Trails and Greenways is pioneering a collaborative model for trail maintenance and development. Partnerships are invigorating! Working together allows us to share expertise, resources, and the joys of meeting our mutual challenges in innovative and cooperative ways.

**2011 GB CHALLENGE:
Trails for a Healthy Community**

Over the summer, Great Barrington Trails and Greenways offered a series of nine graduated walks and hikes as a “challenge” aimed at helping community members gain strength and endurance while enjoying some of Great Barrington’s wonderful open spaces.

The series began with gentle walks of the trails at Lake Mansfield, the Pfeiffer Arboretum, and the McAllister Wildlife Refuge. Greater strength was developed as we explored the hilly terrain of the Fountain Pond/3 Mile Hill Trail and enjoyed a special opportunity to hike up to Flag Rock from

the Housatonic Village. In midsummer, we relished the views and wildflowers of the Benedict Pond Loop Trail in Beartown State Forest. And in the beginning of August, we climbed Monument Mountain and heard poetry while enjoying panoramic views.

In September, an energetic group enjoyed the 3.5 mile GB WALK ABOUT loop which connects Lake Mansfield to the Housatonic River Walk and our vibrant downtown. And finally, on Sunday, September 4th, thirteen intrepid hikers took on the final challenge of the 2011 GB series and hiked 5.4 miles of the Appalachian Trail from RT 23 south to Homes Rd. Our perseverance was rewarded by a beautiful misty forest studded with an amazing array of brightly blooming mushrooms and glimpses of Ice Gulch cloaked in the velvet green of moss and fern.

Every hike was a poignant reminder of the astonishing good fortune of living here, in a place so rich with natural beauty, where well-tended trails are an invitation for all to enter and explore.

**AMBITIOUS PLANS for 2012:
Shared Success Spurs Future Efforts**
Great Barrington Trails and Greenways

plans to strengthen and enhance existing trails with a multi-faceted 2012 trail program, to support community connections to our areas natural resources and rich history. Building upon the momentum of our existing collaborative, our upcoming efforts are structured to interweave the “common work” of trail building and care at several sites simultaneously so as to maximize the impact of shared expertise, funding, and stewardship. This plan creates many opportunities to involve the community in trail stewardship. A total of ten trail maintenance workdays will be offered at four community trail sites. All the work proposed provides for the engagement and training of community volunteers, with an emphasis on local and visiting youth. Appalachian Mountain Club & Greenagers are essential partners in this effort. Each year they provide hands-on skills development and environmental education training resulting in high-quality trail improvements. AMC & Greenagers leadership is essential for the development of young stewards with the skills and appreciation needed for the future care and protection of our rich natural heritage.

A workshop involving draft animal power in forestry in the Lake Mansfield Conservation Forest will be a highlight of our 2012 season. Capitalizing on winter conditions, local teamsters will pull previously felled or downed black locust trees to the demonstration mill at the Lake Mansfield parking area. The selected lumber will be cut for use in the repair of bog-bridging at the Pfeiffer Arboretum, a conserved property on Long Pond Road, owned and maintained by the Great Barrington Land Conservancy. The workshop will interweave the history of draft power, forest ecology, and sustainable lumber harvesting within the workday. The program is provided by Lake Mansfield Alliance in collaboration with Greenagers. The community will be invited to view and participate in this winter workshop which will result in local lumber being used in the repair of local trails.

TRAIL STEWARDSHIP: Will you help us maintain our Community Trails?

Each year we provide a series stewardship days designed with you in mind. Join us, and experience the joy of common work. To be included in a GB Trail Workers email group, contact us at gbtrails1@gmail.com or visit www.gbtrails.org for a listing of volunteer days, as well as guided hikes and trail events.



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Top: Final challenge on Appalachian Trail Bottom: Ox team in action

River Walk 2011 Highlights

by Rachel Fletcher



Du Bois Tribute at Source to Sound event. At right: Greenagers control invasives at River Walk.

In 2011, River Walk tested the feasibility of permanently engaging Greenagers as the official community stewards of River Walk, managing trail and ecological improvements and educational outreach efforts. This new partnership is proving to be an overwhelming success.

2012 marks River Walk's 25th anniversary. Be sure to join us in September 2012 for a special celebration when we "pass the baton" and formalize our partnership with Greenagers, ensuring that area youth will be involved in the care of River Walk for years to come.

A summary of our accomplishments are below. Of them all, perhaps most significant have been successful efforts, over the last three years, to stabilize River Walk's downstream riverbank—just in time to withstand Hurricane Irene and other severe storm events.

- Initiated new partnership with Greenagers. Tested feasibility of permanently engaging Greenagers to become official stewards of River Walk, to manage trail and

ecological improvements and educational outreach efforts. Expect to formalize the partnership in 2012.

- Managed and maintained 0.5 mile of recreational river access; trail maintenance for safety and attractiveness.
- Implemented trailway improvements; comprehensive repairs to sinkholes in trail surface, installed new stone cribbing and curbing where needed to deter erosion. Major repairs to 400 linear feet of split rail fencing downstream. Managed tree damage and debris from multiple storm events.
- Continued ongoing restoration of 2.63 acres of riverfront with intensive native plantings and exotic invasive plant control.
- Removed invasive exotics plants including garlic mustard, bedstraw, bindweed, goutweed, nightshade, multiflora rose, Japanese knotweed, Norway maples, grape, oriental bittersweet, and celastris.
- Propagated 1368 and planted 1700 native trees and plants (to date); value \$4,091.
- Re-configured raingarden to control

wild appearance. Aggressively cut back and transplanted existing vegetation. Dug out grass. Smoothed out exposed soils. Replanted.

- Installed 100 new linear feet of down slope riverbank reinforcement at the north Berkshire Corporation section, utilizing bioengineering techniques; revegetated the bank. Continued revegetation of 150 linear feet of downslope reinforcement along the Berkshire Corporation Section.
- Conducted 8 on-site service learning programs. 104 volunteers contributed 343 on-site hours, with special workdays provided by the Greenagers, Berkshire Community College students, Rudolf Steiner School, and the Environmental Law Coalition.
- Two interns contributed 333.5 hours.
- 268 students and adults attended River Walk sponsored 5 lectures and 7 tours.
- Paid tribute to W.E.B. Du Bois for a Housatonic Valley Association, Source to Sound canoe event.
- William Stanley Overlook featured as a location for a new film on the electrical inventor.

Learn more and find out how you can become involved at www.gbriverwalk.org



UPCOMING GBLC EVENTS

March 8 LMA Cabin Fever

April 21 River Walk/Spring Clean Up

April 28 Lake Mansfield Clean Up

May 12 Pfeiffer Trail Work Day

August 3 GBLC Potluck & Annual Mtg

September 8 River Walk 25th Anniv.

September 22 GB Walk About

October 14 Run for the Hills 5K Race

W.E.B. Du Bois Future National Historical Site

by Rachel Fletcher



W.E.B. Du Bois c 1907

Come spring, you will see some substantial improvements to the Du Bois Homesite. The trail will be extended to the house foundation with new interpretive signage. But even more exciting is our progress to create a national destination in Great Barrington to honor Du Bois and his legacy. We are calling it the W.E.B. Du Bois National Historic Site, which includes the Homesite, creating an audio walking tour in downtown Great Barrington and building the W.E.B. Du Bois Center for Democracy and Social Justice. The Center will allow us to more fully tell Du Bois's story and engage a broad public through exhibits, public programs and multimedia programs with an emphasis on youth and global citizenship.

Along with the new name, we have produced a brochure to announce our plans and create interest. Much of the past year was spent working with scholars at UMass Amherst to lay the foundation for this ambitious venture, with a strategic plan for developing the three venues, new partnerships, and a first challenge grant to raise seed money. This grant will allow us to hire a professional leader to build a robust national organization and oversee the program vision.

The Friends of Du Bois will continue to be the local stewards of the homesite and to sponsor programs in Great Barrington until we have a leader for the National Historic Site. And so, with gratitude to GBLC for sponsoring us in the early years, we will be joining the W.E.B. Du Bois National Historic Site under the new sponsorship of Housatonic Heritage. You can follow our progress at www.duboishns.org

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*

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Graphic Design by 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 info@greatbarringtonlandconservancy.org

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