

# RIVER WALK 2016 HIGHLIGHTS

For a fourth year, River Walk contracted local Greenagers to serve as community caretakers. Onsite teaching and training support their work and give teens the skills they need to implement trail and ecological improvements. The Great Barrington Land Conservancy continues to administer the trail and manage its conservation easements on behalf of the local community.

The hands-on training component of our program was especially vital to River Walk this year, which marked the first phases of two challenging three-year field programs along River Walk's downstream section. A riverbank stabilization program funded by the town's Community Preservation Act reinforces 130 linear feet (3250 sf) of especially steep and vulnerable riverbank, utilizing soil bioengineering. Then a partnership with adjacent property The Berkshire enables extensive riparian habitat improvements on 17 individual areas (8185 sf total). A summary of our accomplishments in 2016:

- Conducted **5 outdoor kinetic learning programs/field training** for **90** middle school students and Greenager apprentices and crew members; provided **5 e-birding programs** for 18 participants and **24 hours of field training** for River Walk's four apprentices.
- Conducted **10 on-site service learning programs: 163 volunteers** contributed **338 on-site hours**, including volunteer services provided by Greenagers, Eisner Camp, Berkshire Bank, Monument Valley and Mount Everett Middle Schools, Housatonic Valley Association, and Bard at Simon's Rock. Contracted **Greenager crews** provided 216 paid hours. **Four paid interns** contributed **500+ hours**. In addition, **208 students** and adults attended **11 lectures and tours**.
- **Managed and improved 0.5 mile of recreational river access:** trail grooming for safety and attractiveness; repairs to trail cribbing, surfaces, and 400 linear feet of split rail fencing; installed a 20-foot **Du Bois "peace bridge"**
- Continued ongoing **restoration of 2.63 acres of riverfront** with intensive native plantings and exotic invasives control. Removed garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed, goutweed, bindweed, Norway maple seedlings and stump sprouts, oriental bittersweet, grape vines, brambles, and other **invasive-exotics**. Planted 18 native plants. In the **special downstream mitigation area**, controlled canary reed grass, prepared 11 areas for live stake planting, and planted **613 trees, shrubs and plants** in two areas.
- Installed two rows of **130 new linear feet of down slope riverbank reinforcement** at the north Berkshire Corporation section, using bioengineering techniques; backfilled and revegetated the bank with **1068 native plants and live stakes** (value \$2076). Monitored and continued re-vegetation of existing 625 linear feet of downslope reinforcement. Propagated and planted **599 plants and shrubs**.
- **In total, 2280 native plants, live stakes, shrubs, and trees** were transplanted, purchased, propagated or donated (Total Value: \$5374.60)
- Published the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of **River Walk's 60-page guide** and completed the redesign of River Walk's **website**, with new media features and the addition of archival materials.
- We value all our contributors large and small. In 2016, we received and administered grants (\$500+) from Katherine L. W. and Winthrop M. Crane III Charitable Foundation, Berkshire Co-op Market, 79 Bridge Street Realty, Housatonic Heritage, The Roy Foundation, Town of Great Barrington, and Berkshire Natural Resources Council. This support helped to maintain the trail for public recreation, to protect natural resources connected to the Housatonic River, and to nurture a new generation of young stewards, by providing job skills and on-site educational opportunities impossible to duplicate in conventional classroom environments.