



RIVER WALK 2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2025 River Walk welcomed visitors into a lush riparian sanctuary to **experience the power and beauty of the Housatonic River**. We are committed to conservation. We understand that habitat restoration is a long-term responsibility that depends on community support. **River Walk provides hands-on and on-site educational experiences** to local youth and community volunteers. River Walk is a project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy and our work depends upon the gifts of individual donors as well as grant funding. **When you give to River Walk you are investing in the health of the Housatonic River and the strength of the community for years to come.**

We engaged local youth. River Walk interns develop the understanding and skills needed to maintain the trail. Their growth is guided by our Greenagers trail supervisors. **River Walk is committed to helping young adults develop a clear sense of their role as environmental stewards.**

We welcomed community volunteers. Each year River Walk depends upon volunteer hours provided by groups and individuals. Our work begins in the spring with a robust effort to get the trail in tip-top shape. Berkshire Bank employees have supported River Walk throughout the years with their annual volunteer day. Visitors to this riverside sanctuary benefit from the community effort of over two thousand volunteers. Each year, we strive to engage our community in the care and enjoyment of this special place.

Supporting an ever-changing habitat is a strong component of the skills that the River Walk team strives to learn and teach. At River Walk we are balancing our understanding of beavers with our need to care for our habitats and gardens. Just like us, beavers are struggling to survive in a changing climate. In 2024, beavers took trees and saplings from the riverbank, crossed the trail to cut down a red maple in its full autumnal glory, and then went on to consume the fresh saplings used to rebuild the wattle fence around the Bridge Street oak tree. In the spring of 2025, we surrounded select trees with protection cages and planted two new Hop Hornbeams. As we near the end of this year, we are engaged in creating a new enclosure of recycled fence posts and collected bittersweet vines to protect the historic oak tree on Bridge Street and its companion native plants.

River Walk is an outdoor laboratory for our community that demonstrates the long term approach needed to battle invasive species and foster native plants along the riverside. Each year our horticultural team and River Walk interns hand-pull invasive species, collect native seeds in our seedbed areas, and replenish native plantings as needed. All gardens require ongoing stewardship. Since our early days, invasive Japanese knotweed has been controlled through hand-pulling, a job made more difficult as it grows in areas where poison ivy thrives. This year understory plantings beneath the historic oak are flourishing and providing a symbiotic partnership that helps support the health of the tree.

Increased rainfall due to climate change is responsible for increased erosion in the downstream area, making our riverbank unstable and unsafe. In response, we will need to discontinue river access at River Walk. All off-trail foot traffic to access the river for boating in the upstream and downstream areas is prohibited in order to protect these sensitive areas. Our focus will be to support the growth of native plants needed to secure the riverbank.

River Walk celebrates ecological diversity. Visitors are able to enjoy a vast array of native trees and flowering perennials, including ferns and spring ephemerals. This healthy habitat supports numerous animal and insect species. For example, over 100 species of birds have been recorded at River Walk since 2017. Our shady banks help provide cool water conditions needed for aquatic life. River Walk is an essential part of the pollinator corridor of the Housatonic River.

Please visit www.gbriverwalk.org to learn more and to become a volunteer!