

RIVER WALK 2018 HIGHLIGHTS

For a sixth 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 marks the conclusion 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 reinforced 130 linear feet (3250 sf) of especially steep and vulnerable riverbank, using soil bioengineering. A partnership with adjacent property The Berkshire enables extensive riparian habitat improvements on 17 individual areas (8185 sf total).

A summary of 2018 accomplishments to date:

- Conducted **4 outdoor kinetic learning programs/field training** for **75** middle school students (Mount Everett and Muddy Brook Middle Schools), Greenagers and apprentices and **24 hours of field training** for River Walk's four apprentices.
- Conducted several public programs, including a **Worldwide March for Science, Lenox Garden Club Program and Tour, Tree Walk** with Tom Ingersoll, **River Walk Goes Wild (Edibles)** with Russ Cohen, **Pollinator Program** with Heather Cupo, **(4) Heritage Walks, (2) private tours, and (7) e-birding** programs for **247** participants.
- Eight organizations throughout Berkshire County gathered to honor Du Bois's love of rivers and dedication to environmental justice with music, poetry, and more. **W.E.B. Du Bois: Born by A Golden River** featured **17 presenters**, with **100+** in attendance.
- Conducted **8 on-site service learning programs: 158 volunteers** contributed **380 on-site hours**, including volunteer services provided by Greenagers, Berkshire Bank, Big Y, and Mount Everett Middle Schools. Contracted **Greenager crews** provided **64** paid hours. **Four paid interns** provided **725** paid hours and **Trail Master Elia Del Molino** provided **111** paid hours.
- **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. Reconstructed wattle fence. Painted upstream railings.
- Continued ongoing **restoration of 2.63 acres of riverfront** with extensive 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**. **In total, 2294 native plants, live stakes, shrubs, and trees** were purchased, propagated or donated (value \$5975).
- Developed native **habitat for Monarch butterflies** to improve Monarch numbers. Maintained plantings of *Asclepias syriacus* (common milkweed). Witnessed egg laying and found caterpillars and saw Monarchs.
- Installed **100 new linear feet of down slope riverbank reinforcement** at the downstream section; backfilled with compost, then replanted, completing the 130 linear foot section. Monitored and continued re-vegetation of existing 750 linear feet of downslope reinforcement.
- Accommodated approximately **12,000 visitations** by locals and tourists.

We value all our contributors large and small. In 2018, we received and administered grants (\$500+) from Project Native, Katherine L. W. and Winthrop M. Crane III Charitable Foundation, 79 Bridge St. Realty, Housatonic Heritage, Town of Great Barrington Human Services and Community Preservation Act, Cheswaty Foundation, and Berkshire Coop Market. This support helped to maintain the trail for public recreation, to protect the Housatonic River's natural resources and nurture a new generation of young environmental stewards.