



# HOUSATONIC RIVER WALK

## Why Do We Need to Raise \$40,000 Each Year?

**Housatonic River Walk** is a riverside greenway in the downtown center of Great Barrington, Massachusetts, along what was once south Berkshire County's most severely abused riverbank. After more than a century of neglect, River Walk has restored the Housatonic River to the community by providing a laboratory to learn about natural resource protection and environmental stewardship. Since 1988, more than 3000 community volunteers have reclaimed a riverbank once abandoned to the river's PCB contamination and general neglect. They have recreated native habitat, secured public access, removed 400+ tons of debris, and provided a half-mile of artfully crafted riverside walking trail and canoe access, for more than 12,000 visitors each year. There is much more to do.

Our yearly budgetary needs are considerable. As always, these costs are offset more than 50% by in-kind volunteer labor and services. Annual funding must provide for:

1. **Riparian habitat restoration** (2.63 acres). Native plants are propagated each year from seeds, cuttings, and divisions from River Walk and planted along the riverbank and within the Du Bois rain garden/river park. Simultaneously, riverbanks are weeded for exotic invasives such as garlic mustard, Japanese knotweed, bittersweet, grapevine, Norway maple seedlings, multiflora rose, and canary reed grass. More than 200 different native species have been planted along the River Walk. In time, the native habitat will be self-sustaining.
2. **Riverbank stabilization**. River Walk's downstream trail suffers severe scouring and erosion. Downslope riverbank reinforcement at vulnerable locations has proven effective against the worst ravages of recent storm events and flooding. Additional sections are required to prevent the trail from eroding and falling into the river. The choice to reinforce with bio-logs and native vegetation enhances riparian habitat development.
3. **Trail improvements and maintenance**. River Walk's popular half-mile trail of hand-crafted stone cribbing and permeable stone dust surfaces, along with its W.E.B. Du Bois and William Stanley interpretive signage, stone seating areas, and other trail amenities require ongoing improvement, repair and weekly custodial attention.
4. **Environmental education**. Through a partnership with Greenagers, our local youth organization that fosters service and stewardship, River Walk provides a laboratory for teenagers and young adults to learn about natural resource protection and acquire professional training in horticulture and environmental stewardship. Greenagers now serve as River Walk's community stewards, continuing its ongoing native habitat reclamation, bio-engineered erosion mitigation, and trailway development. Working alongside professionals, they are responsible for the day to day care and

maintenance of the site, for trail improvements, and for reclamation activities necessary to restore River Walk's once devastated and abused riverbanks to native conditions—planting native flora, controlling invasive species, and mitigating erosion through organic methods of stabilization.

Greenagers and other young people receive kinetic learning and orientation programs, riverbottom cleanup, as well as hands-on training in the field. Apprentices selected from regional high schools train and work on site weekly from Spring through Fall. Teams of Greenagers, both paid and volunteer, accomplish special projects. Fifteen or more volunteer workdays and public programs are planned each year, including Earthday Cleanup, monthlong birding, Nature Story Times for families, Guided Nature Walks, Heritage Walks, W.E.B. Du Bois: Born by a Golden River, and other special programs.

5. **Project administration, promotion, and general services** include accounting, insurance, project oversight, grant administration, trash removal, pet waste management, printing, postage, website, newsletters, photo-documentation, etc.



**For more information, please contact:**

Christine Ward, Project Director

Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk

PO Box 1018, Great Barrington MA 01230

[river@gbriverwalk.org](mailto:river@gbriverwalk.org) [www.gbriverwalk.org](http://www.gbriverwalk.org) 413-528-4061