

HOUSATONIC
RIVER WALK
FOURTH EDITION



Trail Guide

HOUSATONIC

RIVER WALK

NATIONAL RECREATIONAL TRAIL
LOCAL TREASURE

*...it's cherishing something local
that everybody can have in common,
and to me a thing like that can't go wrong.
It's just a little narrow walkway, scaled right,
but it's an enormously suggestive thing.*

— WENDELL BERRY ABOUT THE RIVER WALK

Welcome to River Walk, a greenway trail along the Housatonic River in Great Barrington, Massachusetts.

River Walk was created by community volunteers who live in and around Great Barrington. It is maintained to allow public access to the river and to reclaim its banks for the benefit of wildlife and people. This guide describes the historical and environmental features of River Walk and explains some of the technical means taken to build and maintain the trail and plant community.

RIVER WALK exists through the generosity and permission of the property owners along the river so that the public may enjoy the riverbank habitat. As you walk along the trail, please remember that you are passing through private property and are here as a guest.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

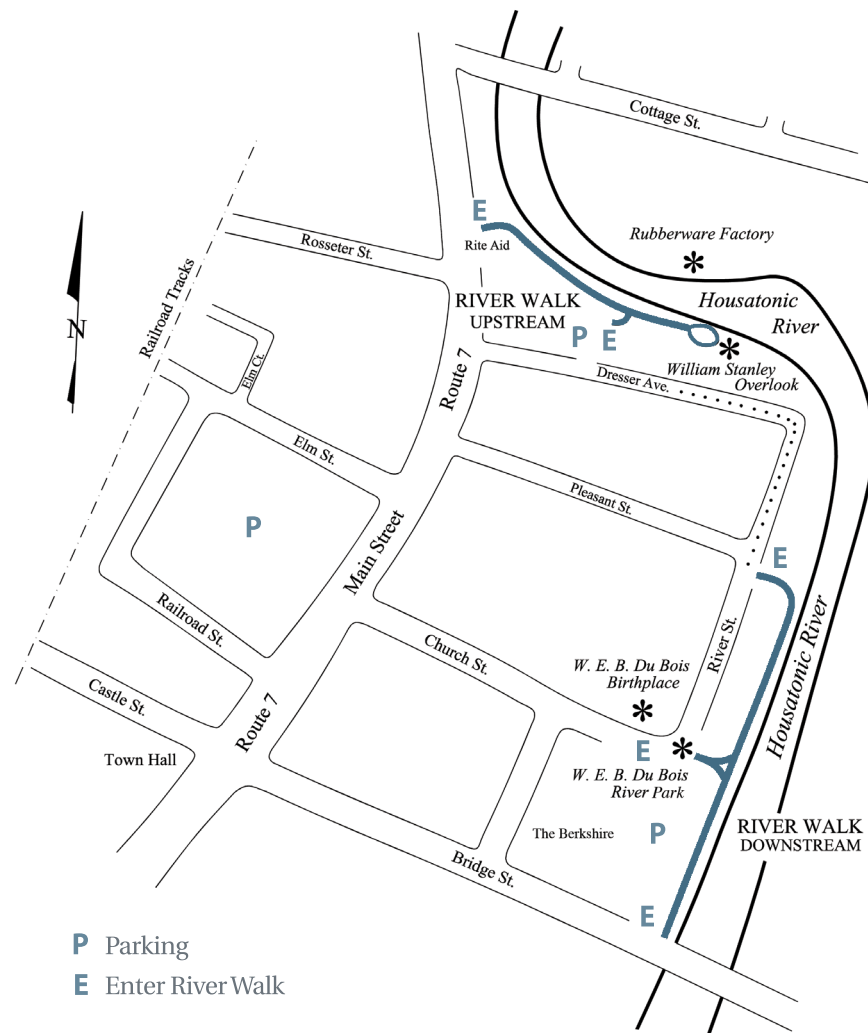
River Walk roughly follows the west bank of the Housatonic River between Cottage Street and Bridge Street. The trail's two completed sections are linked by Dresser Avenue and River Street. The upstream section extends from the River Walk bulletin board at 195 Main Street to the William Stanley Overlook. The trail exits at the stairs to St. Peter's Church parking lot on Dresser Avenue. The downstream section of the trail begins adjacent to the Berkshire Corporation parking lot on River Street and ends at Bridge Street.

There are thirteen points of interest shown on the River Walk maps—the *Upstream Map* (pages 8–9) shows sites A through F, with site descriptions that follow on pages 10–21, and the *Downstream Map* (pages 26–27) shows sites G through M, with descriptions following on pages 28–45.

Let's begin at site A at the River Walk entrance on Main Street.

HOUSATONIC RIVER WALK

Great Barrington

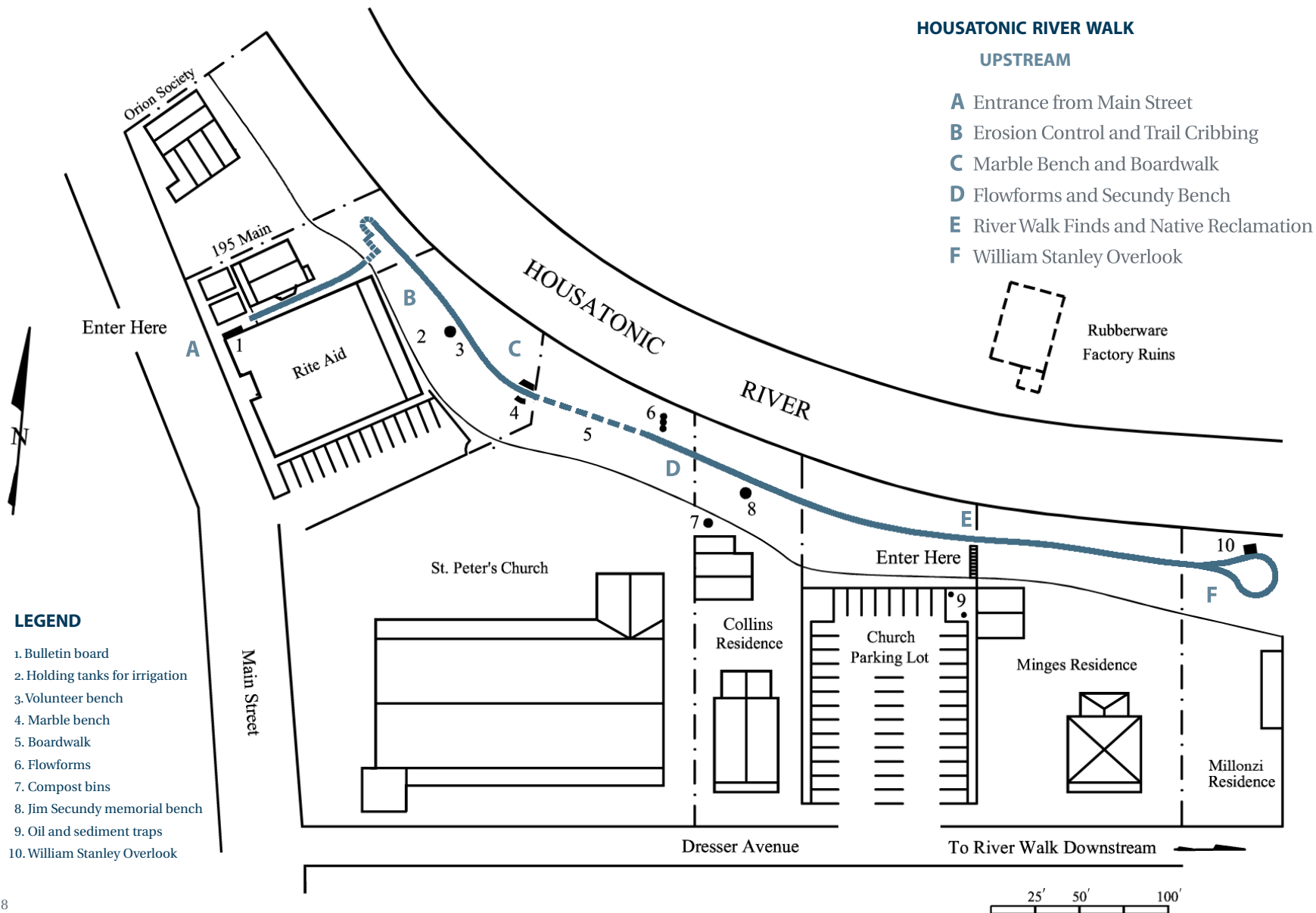


RIVER WALK

Upstream

*...the town had made a sewer of
the beautiful Housatonic River,
instead of the park it might have been.*

— GREAT BARRINGTON NATIVE W. E. B. DU BOIS, 1960



A | ENTRANCE FROM MAIN STREET

You are about to enter River Walk through the gate at 195 Main Street. In 1988, the work of River Walk began here when sixteen volunteers removed fifteen tons of accumulated rubbish and demolition debris from the riverbank. In time, the property owner, The Community Land Trust of the Southern Berkshires, granted permission to construct a River Walk trail. Since then, more than 2,800 volunteers have continued the effort, collecting an additional 400 tons of assorted debris, reclaiming the riverbank, and building a half mile of nature and walking trail.

The bulletin board on your right displays a photo history of the River Walk project and the names of its volunteers and contributors.

As you descend the stairs, look to your left, past the sugar maple and dogwood planted in memory of Dr. Thomas and Mary Gilligan. Volunteers face challenging conditions when starting to clear a new section of trail. First, they selectively remove underbrush, dead and fallen trees, and grape and bittersweet vines, then carry the debris away. They install the trail using various leveling and cribbing techniques before applying a tread surface of gravel. Taking care to prevent the erosion of exposed soil, they plant and restore the riverbank. Benches, signage, fencing, lighting, railing, stairs, and other finishing touches can then be added for your enjoyment.

In this area, as Great Barrington developed during the Industrial Revolution, the Housatonic River became a “working” river spoiled by dioxins, raw sewage, PCBs (polychlorinated biphenyls) and everyday household waste. Many towns like Great Barrington were built with their backs to the river, abused by years of neglect. Now the river is seen as a natural treasure with spectacular views and wildlife such as bald eagle, osprey, cedar waxwing, egret, and great blue heron. River Walk volunteers continue working to reclaim the river and connect it to downtown.

B | EROSION CONTROL AND TRAIL CRIBBING

Steep riverbank slopes are especially vulnerable to erosion. The two main causes of erosion here are water runoff from rooftops and shortcuts heedlessly blazed off the trail. We have installed catch basins and culverts to curtail and control water runoff. Above the path, water from the rooftop of Rite Aid Pharmacy is collected and used for irrigation. Any overflow is slowly dispersed through an infiltration trench at the top of the slope. In other places, water is channeled under the trail.

This site was occupied by Melvin's Prescription Pharmacy when the building was completely gutted by fire in 1978. The charred debris was bulldozed over the bank. Twelve years later, in a massive cleanup effort, 108 volunteers representing dozens of community organizations removed over seventy-five tons of demolition debris and storm-damaged trees from the bank. After the cleanup, the steep bank was stabilized, seeded, and mulched. Then in 2004, storm-water mitigation and irrigation projects enabled intensive restoration planting along the steep and fragile slope. The infiltration trench and the irrigation system collect rooftop runoff, control erosion, and deliver water to a complement of appropriate native plants. The area is a seed source for propagating plants throughout River Walk.

The first 136 feet of River Walk trail, a simpler version of what you see today, opened to the public on November 1, 1992. Large cribbing stones from Butternut Basin, installed to retain the bank above the trail, are all that remain from the original construction. The River Walk trail was designed, engineered, and constructed under the leadership of Peter Jensen.

As you proceed along the path, you will pass a low stone seat that is dedicated to the memories of Comstock Small, Bob Mills, and Bill Barrett, River Walk's most valued volunteers. Bob specialized in knotweed eradication. Bill oversaw debris removal from the Melvin's fire. Comstock devoted more than 1,000 hours over nine seasons, far more than any other person.

The Volunteer Bench was dedicated on June 13, 2009, when the National Park Service named River Walk a National Recreation Trail, adding the greenway to a network of community trails nationwide. U.S. representative John W. Olver awarded the certificate.

C | MARBLE BENCH AND BOARDWALK

As you sit on the marble bench, you can look down on the large rock armouring that was installed in the 1950s to prevent the river from changing course and eroding its way toward Main Street. Rivers tend to flow faster along the outside of a curve like this one, picking up sediment and depositing it downstream along the next inside curve, where the river moves more slowly.

One of the most fragile areas of the riverbank lies just behind you. Utility poles were placed to secure the steep slope. Selections of Berkshire County's indigenous plants are introduced here to help retain soil on the steep slope.

As you leave the bench and proceed downstream to the boardwalk, you are passing from the pharmacy property of the late Melvin Katsh to the grounds of St. Peter's Roman Catholic Church.

Steel sheet piling, installed in the 1950s, was cut through to make way for the boardwalk. The boardwalk decking is made of Trex™, a building material made from reclaimed plastic and waste wood. Trex uses no virgin wood and is post-consumer recycled. River Walk uses this type of material where appropriate.

You may be wondering why so many stakes are poking up out of the ground. These stakes offer safe, erosion-free footing for volunteers working on the bank. They catch leaves and branches that provide protective mulch. They help secure the bank until sufficient root structure develops.

All along the riverbank, the ecosystem is very much influenced by humans. Much of the soil contains gravel and organic fill, laced with bits of debris that remain even after cleanup. Many plants that grow here were introduced from far away. Between the marble bench and the river is a Katsura tree that is native to eastern Asia. Its seed may have dispersed from a tree in a nearby garden.

In fact, many of the plants that you see here are not indigenous and have been identified by state officials as invasive exotics, non-native plants that grow so prolifically they degrade our native biodiversity. Norway maples largely provide the tree canopy overhead. These prolific seeders often take over urban woodlands like this one. Volunteers are restoring a more indigenous canopy by weeding out the Norway maples to allow native trees to grow. An understory of oriental bittersweet has slowly been replaced by young trees and shrubs such as spicebush and witch hazel. The ground layer is being planted with native woodland plants. Volunteers regularly remove prolific exotic seeders such as garlic mustard and celandine poppy.

A list of native plants along the River Walk can be found at the end of this guide. If you are visiting River Walk in the spring, you will find a deliberate exception to the native ecosystem. For many years, Dolby's, an area florist, donated a thousand daffodil bulbs each spring after taking a first cutting. River Walk volunteers planted the bulbs on the bank.

D | FLOWFORMS AND SECUNDY BENCH

Below the trail are three concrete sculpted Flowforms. Inspired by hydrologist Theodor Schwenk and developed by John Wilkes and Jennifer Greene, Flowforms derive from the work of anthroposophist and educator Rudolf Steiner. Here, they receive water runoff from a storm drain on Main Street, then direct the flow through a pattern that aerates and helps purify the water before it reaches the Housatonic. Flowforms have been installed throughout the world in banks, schools, health centers, and parks and have been used successfully to help process raw sewage organically.

Below St. Peter's Church, volunteers removed three tons of organic debris from a section of bank laden with trash, grass clippings, and leaves. To stabilize the disturbed slope, three Norway maples were cut down and their trunks were tied into the bank, creating a terrace for new native trees to grow.

As you continue along the walk, you will notice a service trail leading from the church parking lot. It allows workers to access the River Walk trail with wheelbarrows.

As you approach the stone sitting area, you are entering the property of Carla and Ruairi Collins. The bench was created by friends of Jim Secundy and dedicated to his love for the outdoors. The seating area is framed by a wattle fence constructed under the leadership of local basketmaker Wendy Jensen.

Adjacent to the Collins' barn are compost bins created and used by River Walk. Organic materials are composted, then reused as soil amendments and mulch for new plantings.

This 275-foot section of River Walk from the boardwalk to the stairs at site E opened to the public on October 23, 1994. The cribbing stones along this section of trail came from Beartown State Forest, Bidwell House, and the Hudson property in Monterey, Massachusetts.

E | RIVER WALK FINDS AND NATIVE RECLAMATION

The river was once dammed here to power a gristmill that stood on the opposite bank. At site F, you can read about the ruins of a rubber factory that can be seen directly across the river.

You are standing on a section of trail constructed of gabion baskets, geotextile, and gravel. Each gabion is made of heavy-gauge wire and measures 3' wide by 6' long by 1' (or 3') high. Volunteers loaded fifty-two tons of rocks into the twenty-six gabions along the River Walk trail.

As you pass the stairs leading up to the church parking lot, you are entering the Minges property. You may exit here or continue along River Walk. At the top of the stairs, water runoff from the church parking lot is directed through a surface drain that traps oil and sediment before water discharges into the river.

While excavating soil to place a gabion in this area, Comstock Small found a Native American hunting spear point made of Hudson Valley chert. Here, volunteers removed more than ten tons of assorted household rubbish, including numerous Spam and Schaefer beer cans from the 1950s, assorted shoes, and plumbing parts. Upstream, votive candle shards, plastic flowers, and slate roofing tiles were taken from behind the church. Perfume bottles, decanters, and boxes of cigars were removed from the old Melvin's Pharmacy, together with a 1961 Town of Great Barrington bicentennial coin and a large concrete safe.

In 2007, River Walk partnered with the Minges family and cut the Norway maples that crowded this section of River Walk. Taking out the dense, non-native canopy allowed sun-loving species to be introduced for the first time on the upstream section. Removing these trees eliminated a substantial seed source for this successful but invasive plant.

Native plants are the keystone of our reclamation work. They contribute to surface water quality by shading and cooling the river and by stabilizing the bank, preventing erosion and river siltation. Native plants contribute to riparian reclamation by cleansing and taking up pollutants and by replacing non-native invasive plants, which in turn increases biodiversity and expands wildlife habitat and food sources. We search out species that can survive, compete, and adapt to River Walk's disturbed and stressed conditions. We choose native seed sources because they have a genetic advantage in this region's climate.

F | WILLIAM STANLEY OVERLOOK

On the opposite bank of the river, in 1886, electrical inventor William Stanley (1858–1916) developed his alternating-current transformer. His laboratory was in Horace Day's rambling, vacant rubberwear factory, the foundation of which is just visible from where you stand. From here, Stanley ran wires across the river to light stores and offices on Great Barrington's Main Street.

Stanley's innovation allowed efficient, long-distance transmission of power. He went on to establish a manufactory of transformers and other electrical products in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, in the 1890s that evolved into General Electric (GE). Ironically, a later innovation in power transformer production incorporated polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the reckless handling and disposal of which resulted in major contamination of the Housatonic River.

PCBs are toxic and a suspected carcinogen. Used as insulating fluids in electrical transformers for forty years, large quantities of PCBs leached into the river from the power transformer division at the GE plant in Pittsfield, just thirty-five miles upstream. In a settlement reached in 1999, GE agreed to clean the first two miles of highly contaminated river sediment in the vicinity of the Pittsfield plant. As of 2016, corrective measures for remaining areas of contamination are being negotiated.

The William Stanley Overlook, a tribute to Great Barrington's industrial heritage, was dedicated on June 3, 2006, with three generations of Stanley descendants attending. Property developer Dale Culleton donated the limestone from local sources for the cul de sac.

For more information about William Stanley in Great Barrington, read *Fifty Sites in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Associated with William Stanley, Jr. and the Emergence of the Modern Electrical Age* by Bernard Drew.

A new section of trail resumes downstream. To continue your tour of River Walk, exit up the stairs to the parking lot and turn left onto Dresser Avenue. After 300 feet, the street turns right into River Street. Proceed another 300 feet to the River Walk entry sign on your left.

It is our hope that volunteers will one day plan and complete the gap between the two sections of trail.

RIVER WALK

Downstream

*...the Housatonic River should be a clear and limpid stream,
flowing gently through grass, trees, and flowers,
flanked by broad roadways and parks
as the lifestream of the town.*

— GREAT BARRINGTON NATIVE W. E. B. DU BOIS, 1961

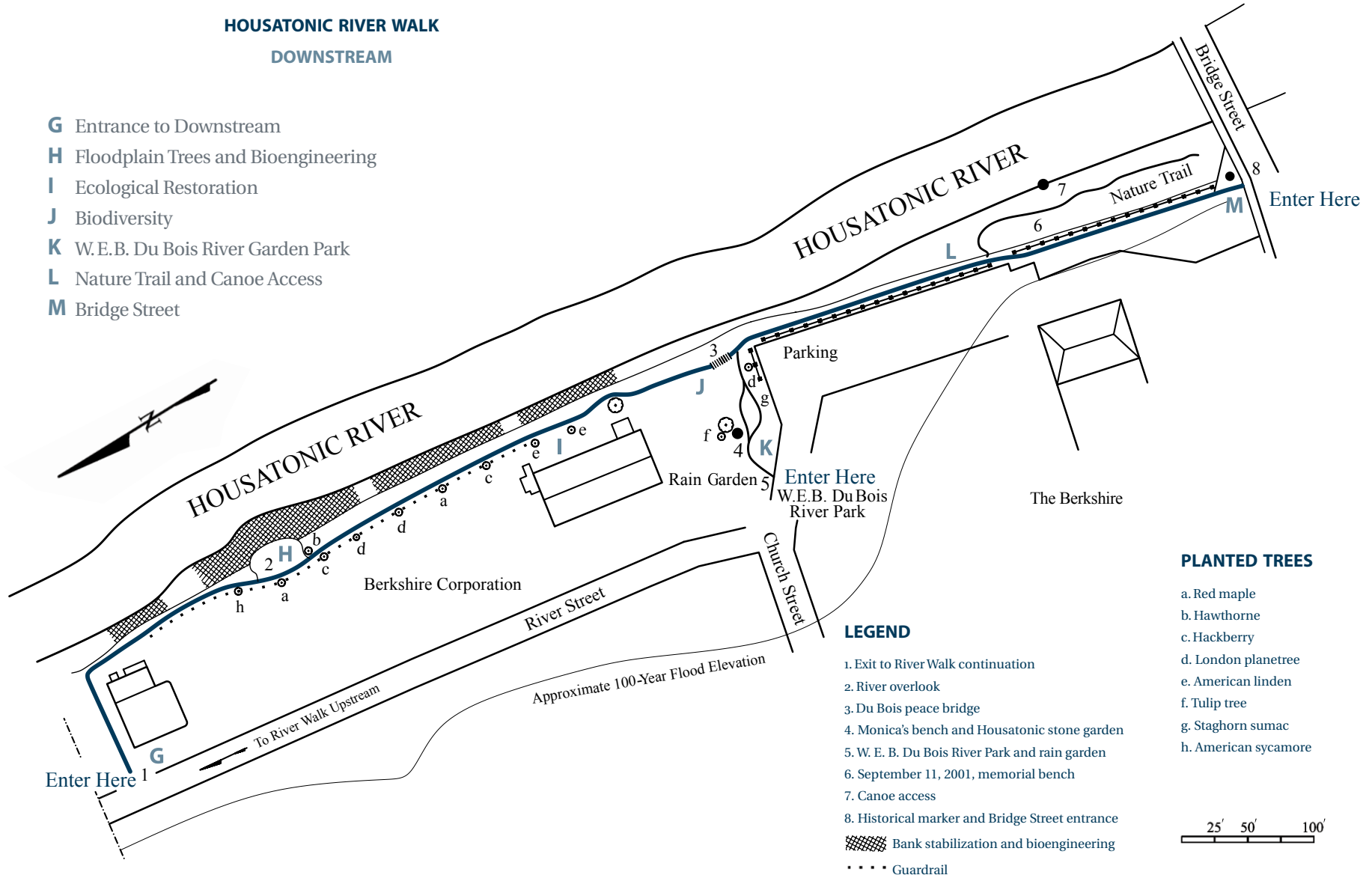
The downstream section of River Walk has a fascinating history. In the pre-Columbian Northeast, the various tribes who settled in what is now Massachusetts used ancient trails to travel from coastal areas to mountain passes and river valleys. One east-west Native American highway stretched from what is now Westfield in the Connecticut River valley to the Hudson River valley, crossing the Housatonic at a ford said to be in this vicinity. In a river as large as the Housatonic, the shallow water of the ford could have spread over wide sections of what is now the town of Great Barrington.

The Native Americans might have used this open expanse for fishing and trapping. It would have been a good place to rest before traveling the mountain passes, a good place to settle and farm the rich soil, and a good place to meet and trade with people passing through. Long before Europeans made a town here, Mahicans chose this spot to live where their highway met the river.

As history progressed, what once might have been a wide, low crossing was constricted artificially to meet the needs of rural industry and town life. Today this downstream section of River Walk passes through a former school complex and a local business. Unlike River Walk's shady path upstream, this trail travels through a highly developed area of traffic and parking lots. Open space, sun, and a busy atmosphere contrast this section of River Walk to the upstream section.

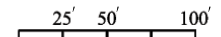
HOUSATONIC RIVER WALK DOWNSTREAM

- G** Entrance to Downstream
- H** Floodplain Trees and Bioengineering
- I** Ecological Restoration
- J** Biodiversity
- K** W.E.B. Du Bois River Garden Park
- L** Nature Trail and Canoe Access
- M** Bridge Street



PLANTED TREES

- a. Red maple
- b. Hawthorne
- c. Hackberry
- d. London planetree
- e. American linden
- f. Tulip tree
- g. Staghorn sumac
- h. American sycamore



G | ENTRANCE TO RIVER WALK DOWNSTREAM

This is the north entrance to River Walk's downstream section, on which construction began early in 1997, and it contains two places of historical significance. One site is dedicated to civil rights pioneer and Great Barrington native W. E. B. Du Bois, and the other commemorates an important conflict between Native Americans and European settlers.

The downstream section is for walking and nature viewing and is wheelchair accessible. It is not intended as a bike path.

Many years ago, the river here was artificially narrowed in an effort to expand usable land near the river. The accessible trail, built on top of the fill, takes advantage of this disturbance to the river system.

You are walking on land belonging to Berkshire Corporation, whose employees have enthusiastically encouraged and helped the expansion of River Walk.

H | FLOODPLAIN TREES AND BIOENGINEERING

A variety of native floodplain trees have been planted along the path to provide cooling cover essential for a healthy river. The soils along an urban street and in a floodplain are similar; the soil is usually compacted and is alternately saturated or dry. This is true on this stretch of River Walk where the soils are made of debris accumulated and compacted by the town over the last few hundred years. Trees adapted to life in the floodplain are often well suited as street trees.

Some tree species have shown themselves to adapt well to the rigorous conditions along this River Walk section. American sycamores have beautifully mottled bark and large leaves and can grow to 100 feet tall. American lindens, or basswood, can be found growing up and down the Housatonic in great numbers. They have large heart-shaped leaves, very soft wood, and a beautiful perfume when blooming. Red maples are ubiquitous in New England. They are an indicator of wetland, but will grow elsewhere as well. In late winter and spring, their buds and flowers are scarlet; in autumn, their leaf color is astonishing.

You may notice other bottomland trees that grow here, including a huge cottonwood by the elevated walkway and silver maples that lean over the river. In their shade grow slippery elms and box elder, a scrub maple unfairly maligned for its prolific clusters of seeds. A large butternut tree adorns the W. E. B. Du Bois River Park, straight ahead.

One hackberry tree was planted along the path by the Sarah Deming Chapter of the Children of the American Revolution in remembrance of children who have lost their lives to the river. In winter 2000, a tragic accident on the Housatonic deeply moved the community and had a great impact on River Walk. On January 25, five-year-old Shirley Palmer lost her life after falling into the icy river by the bridge at Cottage Street, several hundred feet upstream of River Walk.

To permit heavy search equipment access to the river, rescue teams excavated more than 100 cubic yards of soil and felled several mature trees. Subsequent repairs to the riverbank changed its profile significantly. A diminished angle of slope increased flood storage capacity and mitigated further erosion. Stone retaining walls at the top of the new slope stabilized the trail bed.

The disturbance of established native vegetation and mature trees exposed the site to erosion and sun, and invited the return of aggressive non-native plants such as knotweed, bittersweet, multiflora rose, and garlic mustard. River Walk crews planted a dense cover of more than 800 native plants, shrubs, and trees that were specially selected to combat erosion by quickly spreading roots and branches. Over twenty new species of riparian plants, including swamp white oak, pin oak, elderberry, witch hazel, alder, dogwood, and viburnum, now enhance the biodiversity of the area.

This stretch of River Walk was once part of the yearly floodplain. Historically, it flooded only once every 100 years. One way to envision this area before it was filled for urban use is to stand on the River Walk trail so that you can see the water's surface. Imagine a soil level no more than a few feet above the water level stretching from the river to the far side of River Street. This lowland, or floodplain, would have extended from the corner of River Street and Dresser Avenue to beyond the Bridge Street bridge.

Filling a floodplain concentrates water volume in a narrow channel, diminishes storage capacity, and increases the potential for flooding. Recently, in 2011 and 2012, Hurricanes Irene and Sandy exceeded the 100-year flood mark and the river escaped its banks.

Now that we depend on filled floodplain as the base for our trail, we are concerned with erosion caused by winter ice scouring and heavy flow from large storms. We use a variety of techniques to prevent and correct erosion problems. One of these is biologs, specifically, coir logs made of coconut fibers. As you stand at the overlook and look down the riverbank, you can see these logs pinned to the bank. They are used to deflect the erosive power of the river and to collect silt. We plant them with species tolerant of the site conditions to create a living buffer. Instead of scouring the bank, the silt deposits itself between the rows of coir logs and restores the riverbank.

The river overlook we have built here is a good spot for watching the river and wildlife. River Walk volunteers have spotted beaver, muskrats, skunks, raccoons, deer, great blue herons, cedar waxwings, chickadees, eagles, osprey, and kingfishers. They have found helgramites (dobson fly larvae) and snapping turtle eggs. The list will lengthen as we invite the river back into our lives.

The split-rail fence along the riverbank ensures public safety and prevents foot traffic from eroding the fragile banks. The areas on either side of the fence are managed very differently. On the river side, where steep banks meet the water's edge, we weed invasive exotics and plant native species to encourage natural habitat. On the path side, a cultivated public garden with blocks of flowering native plants and a row of specimen trees follows the trail.

Ecological restoration is a term we use for activities that help ecosystems reestablish in disturbed areas, as when we stabilize the riverbank, plant indigenous species, or manage invasive exotic plants.

Before this trail segment was built, Japanese knotweed covered the land between the parking lot and the river. Knotweed is an aggressive and invasive *Polygonum* that crowds out all other plant life. Volunteers sifted the soil on top of the bank for knotweed roots, then picked and re-picked new sprouts. Then, we planted a diversity of native species to shade out and overtake the tenacious knotweed. We planted trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants to mimic a stable riverbank. Vertical layers of plants catch the rain before it flows down the bank, preventing erosion. We keep the knotweed at bay through regular cutting of recurrent stems without digging out roots, which exposes the bank to erosion yet, without using herbicides.

Some banks along River Walk are exceptionally steep and unstable, and eroded by the action of the river into almost vertical walls. The slope of a stable riverbank allows materials falling on the bank to remain in place without sliding. This ideal angle, which varies for different materials, is known as the Angle of Repose.

Urban environments do not offer sufficient space for riverbanks to move naturally through the processes of erosion and deposition. Constraining a river increases river velocity and causes erosion.

Sometimes it requires armoring, as on the small section of riverbank in front of you. In 2008, we undertook an ambitious stabilization project that combined engineering and vegetative techniques. Large boulders armor the lower riverbank and protect it from erosion. Dense plantings of stoloniferous native plants, known for their ability to quickly grow roots and many stems, protect the upper bank.

The technique of using living organisms to achieve structural ends is known as bioengineering and requires close monitoring and ongoing maintenance. Sometimes, we cut stems along the River Walk from existing stoloniferous plants such as willows and shrubby dogwoods. We plant the stems as live stakes that penetrate the bank, or bundle them into fascines that root in place and hold the soil. Once established, the stems generate branches and leaves, the latter protecting the soil from erosion by wind and rain, while trapping organic matter, which in turn develops new soil over time. The stems also provide on-site sources for future cuttings. Sometimes, beaver travel the river in early spring and cut the stems for food or new home-site materials. No matter who or what the cutting agent is, the end result often is root production in the parent plant and further stabilization of the riverbank.

A stable ecosystem consists of many diverse components. If one entity is disturbed or fails to thrive, another is ready to fill the vacancy. This section of the Housatonic was almost a true monoculture of Japanese knotweed. By planting a broad variety of plant species, we have increased biodiversity, attracting a greater variety of insect and animal species. As the process continues, microhabitats develop.

Most native plants in North American forests have a complex symbiotic relationship with bacteria and fungi that inhabit the soil of healthy forests. This biodiversity is lacking at River Walk, where most of the “soil” is a compilation of debris, fill, and just plain junk.

From 2004 to 2009, under the leadership of Heather Cupo, aerobically brewed compost tea was applied to various areas of River Walk to improve and diversify the life in the soil. The tea is a cold-water extract of compost, essentially a microorganism farm where bacteria and fungi are grown before dispersing onto a crop or soil. It is made from fully finished compost containing a diverse assortment of desirable microorganisms and fungi. The non-toxic tea is tested to assess the quality and quantity of its microorganisms, then applied to the soil as an inoculant to assist plant growth.

Compost tea expert Dr. Elaine Ingham, from Oregon State University and Soil Foodweb Inc., has shown that the organisms extracted through this process suppress disease and produce plant-accessible nutrients. Her studies suggest that aerobic compost tea can

BIODIVERSITY *CONTINUED*

increase the biodiversity of soil organisms and improve root number and length. Compost tea reduces the need for fertilizers, irrigation, and fungicides in agricultural crops such as apples, potatoes, grapes, and turf grass.

Here on River Walk, a study was conducted from 2006 to 2009 under the direction of environmental scientist Dr. Don Roeder of Bard College at Simon's Rock and biologist Suzanne Fowle. The study monitored the growth and success of four species of native plants: woodland sunflower (*Helianthus decapetalus*); agrimony (*Agrimonia gryposepala*); spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*); and maple-leaved viburnum (*Viburnum acerifolium*). We planted these four species in each of twenty-two experimental plots at five sites along the River Walk trail. We measured their growth in several ways, such as stem length, leaf production, seed production, number of new stems, and biomass. Twice during each growing season, our scientists and interns hunkered down in the plants to count and record every leaf and flower.

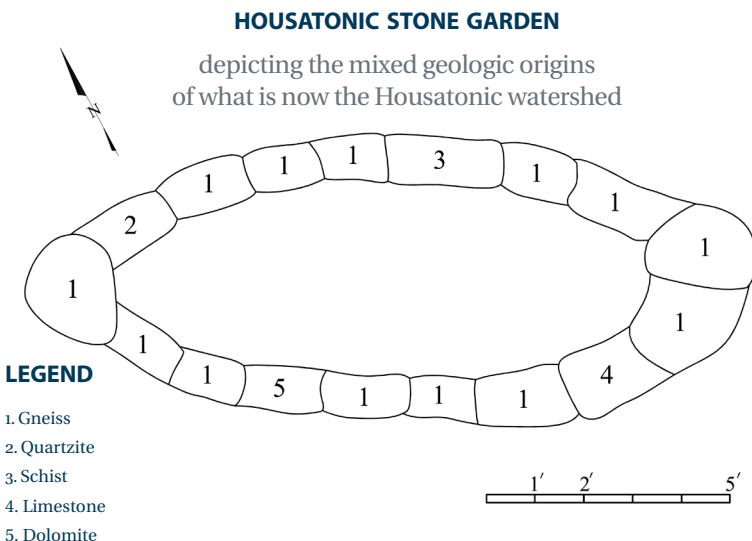
Half of our experimental plots received compost tea treatments. By comparing plants that received tea treatments to the control plants, we learned how the tea affects plant growth and whether its impact is the same on all four species. Our science crew collected and weighed every weed from the plots, then compared control weights to tea-treated weights.

Our findings are posted on the River Walk website. They helped prioritize future plantings and directed future compost tea applications along River Walk. To our knowledge, River Walk is the only site in Massachusetts that has tested compost tea in steep riparian conditions.

Over the years our efforts to increase biodiversity at River Walk have focused on pollinator species and butterflies, Monarch butterflies in particular. The loss of Monarch butterflies is well documented. Loss of food and habitat are considered primary causes for this decline. Setting aside space, we have planted milkweed, their favorite food, to aid their survival. Our food crops and ecosystems also depend on other pollinator species that are in similar decline. We have thus increased various native plant species that specifically expand nectar and pollen available throughout the seasons for pollinators.

K | W. E. B. DU BOIS RIVER PARK

This area was once a rubbish dump concealed by a snarl of invasive multiflora rose, oriental bittersweet, and buckthorn. Volunteers transformed it into a park that embraces River Walk. Here the town connects to the river as you come down Church Street and enter this little haven. Sit for a while on the stone bench, dedicated in July 2006 to the memory of Monica Fadding, River Walk's horticulturist and restoration consultant.



From the bench you can see a raised garden made of stones that represent the mixed geologic origins of what is now the upper Housatonic watershed. (See figure.) Gneiss, quartzite, schist, limestone, and dolomite form the geologic basis of Berkshire County.

During the development of River Walk, a guiding thought emerged that plants native to Berkshire County would be used to revegetate as many areas as possible. The plants growing in this garden are typical of the region's woodland plants. They are the first yield of our Native Natives program, producing plants whose genetic provenance is here in western Massachusetts. This garden now produces seed and plants that are transplanted to other areas as needed.

A complete list of River Walk's Native Natives is located at the back of this guide.

On the south side of the park, a raised berm is planted with sumac and a variety of native understory plants. These beautiful native plants are typical of the "old field" phase of ecological succession. *Ecological succession* describes the process by which a piece of land slowly evolves from meadow to old field to young woodland to mature woodland to old growth forest.

To ease the negative effects of flooding and heavy runoff, we have created a rain garden between the street and the river. The rain garden is a low swale, or catch basin, of land where runoff velocity is slowed, where indigenous wetland plants filter and cleanse the water, and where the water can soak slowly into the soil. If there is excessive water, it flows into an overflow drain, where suspended sediments are trapped. The rain garden produces seeds used to vegetate other areas along the River Walk trail.

The Housatonic River plays a special role in our local and national history. This park entrance to River Walk is located at the corner of River and Church Streets, a mere 200 feet from where the great civil rights leader W. E. B. Du Bois was born in 1868. Du Bois wrote that he was “born by a golden river” and advocated that we “rescue the Housatonic” and create “the park it might have been.”

Great Barrington is “turning its back to the river,” Du Bois warned in a talk about the Housatonic River for the annual meeting of the alumni of Searles High School in July 1930. Again in 1961, he wrote to Searles Alumni Association president George P. Fitzpatrick and admonished the town for failing to clean and restore the river to “a clear and limpid stream, flowing gently through grass, trees, and flowers, flanked by broad roadways and parks as the life stream of the town.”

W. E. B. Du Bois died on August 28, 1963, in Accra, Ghana, on the eve of the historic civil rights March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.

On September 28, 2002, with Du Bois's son, David Graham Du Bois, in attendance, the W. E. B. Du Bois River Garden park was dedicated in recognition of Dr. Du Bois's lifelong passion for the causes of environmental justice and rivers everywhere. The park became a site on the Upper Housatonic Valley African American Heritage Trail in 2006.

The outdoor exhibit—W. E. B. Du Bois: Champion of Rivers Here at Home and Around the World—opened on September 8, 2012, on the occasion of River Walk's twenty-fifth anniversary celebration.

For more information about W. E. B. Du Bois in Great Barrington, read *Fifty Sites in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, Associated with the Civil Rights Activist W. E. B. Du Bois* by Bernard Drew.

L | NATURE TRAIL AND CANOE ACCESS

This property was once the site of Searles Middle School, originally a high school, which opened for classes in 1898. The nearby William Cullen Bryant Elementary School, built in 1888, was named for the poet, journalist, and orator who lived in Great Barrington from 1816 to 1825. Both schools closed in 2005.

In 2016, work began for the preservation of the Searles school building and its reuse as a luxury hotel, The Berkshire. The Berkshire and River Walk are working together to reclaim the riverfront's native habitat. Hotel plans include a Searles Conference Center that incorporates the histories of Searles, the Housatonic River, and River Walk.

In 1989, seventy Searles eighth-grade students cleaned up the riverbank next to their school, hauling out twenty tons of trash to make possible a nature trail and canoe access to the river. As they made the riverbank more attractive and accessible, they learned about the dynamics of the river.

The area surrounding River Walk was at one time a floodplain that captured nutrient-rich sediment carried by the river. Its many layers of vegetation held rain and slowed its release into the ground. Permeable soils absorbed and cleaned the floodwaters. With shaded streams, wide shallow banks, wetlands that hosted a great diversity of life, and a community of plants specially adapted to periodic flooding, this pristine floodplain played a crucial role in

sustaining the purity of our water. Floodplains keep water clean and prevent erosion.

All the rain that falls in the entire Housatonic watershed ends up in this river, unless it first evaporates or is used by a plant or animal. If the rain falls on an absorbent surface, it slowly sinks into the ground, where it is filtered of impurities and joins the saturated underground layer called the water table. The visible surface of the water table is the water level in the riverbed. If a large amount of water is absorbed into the ground, the water table rises. In this way, rivers can fill up even without water flowing into them from the land's surface.

When there is too much rain for the ground and vegetation to absorb, or when the water falls on an impermeable roof or a parking lot, it rushes to the lowest spot. It races down gutters, along streets, and into drains, where it is channeled and picks up speed and power. Upon ultimately reaching the river, it splashes down, carrying anything picked up along the way. The water can carry eroded particles of soil and stone. It can carry cigarette butts and Styrofoam coffee cups. It can also carry pesticides, herbicides, and toxins from lawns, fields, and roads. Called nonpoint source pollution, this material entering the river by runoff is difficult to control or mitigate.

NATURE TRAIL AND CANOE ACCESS *CONTINUED*

River Walk uses a number of techniques to prevent nonpoint source pollution from entering the river. Storm drains are fitted with drop inlets to trap oil and toxin-laden sediment from storm runoff emanating from streets, rooftops, and parking lots. The town empties the drains as needed. The trail surface is water permeable, but it remains hard enough for heavy pedestrian use. The rain garden in the W. E. B. Du Bois Park slows the velocity of street runoff. Its dense plantings absorb and cleanse the water before releasing it to the water table. In time, native plantings along the river will produce a continuous layered cover over the river and its banks, prevent soil erosion, and lower water temperature.

M | BRIDGE STREET

The stone marker at Bridge Street commemorates an important episode of King Philip's War that took place by a nearby Mahican ford. In August 1676, Major John Talcott and a group of militiamen from Westfield, Massachusetts, overtook and killed a fleeing band of Narragansett Indians led by Metacomet ("King Philip"), who had fought the encroachment of European settlers on their traditional lands.

From here, you can see the Bridge Street bridge and the land downstream, where plans for an expanded greenway and bikeway to the Senior Center may be realized in the future. Already, river frontage immediately across Bridge Street is being developed into a town recreation area.

In 2003, the Thursday Morning Club sponsored a bench in memory of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The bench is located near the entrance to the Bridge Street canoe launch. From here, the Housatonic River meanders through oxbows and flats to another canoe access off of Brookside Road, Great Barrington, near Eisner Camp.

NATIVE PLANTS FOUND ALONG THE RIVER WALK

Plants with local provenance possess adaptations accumulated over eons, making them uniquely suited to the local environment.

We use *The Vascular Plants of Massachusetts: A County Checklist* and Pamela Weatherbee's *Flora of Berkshire County, Massachusetts* as our references for native plants. The following native plants can be found along the River Walk:

TREES

Box elder
Striped maple
Red maple
Silver maple
Sugar maple
Speckled alder
Shadblow
Shadblow
Sweet birch
River birch
Musclewood
Catalpa
Hackberry
American filbert
Washington hawthorne
Beech
Butternut
Tulip poplar
White pine
Sycamore
Cottonwood
Pin cherry
Black cherry
Swamp white oak
Bur oak
Pin oak
Black willow
American linden
Hemlock
American elm

Acer negundo
Acer pensylvanicum
Acer rubrum
Acer saccharinum
Acer saccharum
Alnus incana
Amelanchier canadense
Amelanchier laevis
Betula lenta
Betula nigra
Carpinus caroliniana
Catalpa bignonioides
Celtis occidentalis
Corylus americana
Crataegus phaenopyrum
Fagus grandifolia
Juglans cinerea
Liriodendron tulipifera
Pinus strobus
Platanus occidentalis
Populus deltoides
Prunus pensylvanica
Prunus serotina
Quercus bicolor
Quercus macrocarpa
Quercus palustris
Salix nigra
Tilia americana
Tsuga canadensis
Ulmus americana

SHRUBS AND VINES

Bearberry
American bittersweet
Sweet pepperbush
Sweet pepperbush
Sweet fern
Flowering dogwood
Witch-hazel
Winterberry
Mountain laurel
Spicebush
Moonseed vine
Virginia creeper
Sumac
Brambles
Elderberry
Pussy-willow
Native willow
Meadowsweet
Silky dogwood
Gray dogwood
Red twigged dogwood
Mapleleaf viburnum
Witherod viburnum
Nannyberry viburnum
Black-haw viburnum
Northern arrowwood viburnum
Cranberry viburnum
Grapevines

Arctostaphylos uva-ursi
Celastrus scandens
Clethra acuminata
Clethra alnifolia
Comptonia peregrina
Cornus florida 'Cherokee Princess'
Hamamelis virginiana
Ilex verticillata
Kalmia latifolia
Lindera benzoin
Menispermum canadense
Parthenocissus quinquefolia
Rhus typhina
Rubus allegheniensis
Sambucus nigra ssp. *canadensis*
Salix discolor
Salix sp.
Spiraea latifolia
Swida amomum
Swida racemosa
Swida sericea
Viburnum acerifolium
Viburnum cassinoides
Viburnum lentago
Viburnum prunifolium
Viburnum recognitum
Viburnum trilobum
Vitis sp.

HERBACEOUS PLANTS

Three-seeded Mercury
Doll's eyes
Red baneberry
Maidenhair fern
White snakeroot
Agrimony
Agrimony
Wild leek
Common ragweed
Canada anemone

Acalypha virginica
Actaea pachypoda
Actaea rubra
Adiantum pedatum
Ageratina altissima
Agrimonia gryposepala
Agrimonia sp.
Allium tricoccum
Ambrosia artemisiifolia
Anemone canadensis

NATIVE PLANTS FOUND ALONG THE RIVERWALK CONTINUED

Thimbleweed
Rue anemone
Wild columbine
Jack-in-the-pulpit
Canadian ginger
European ginger
Swamp milkweed
Common milkweed
Butterfly weed
Lady fern
Marsh marigold
Pennsylvania sedge
Plantain-leaved sedge
Various sedges
Blue cohosh
Honewort
Hay-scented fern
Dutchman's breeches
Tall flat-topped white aster
Spinulose wood fern
Marginal wood fern
Wood fern
Canadian wild rye
Riverbank wild rye
Virginia wild rye
Purple lovegrass
Daisy fleabane
Horseweed
'Gateway' Joe-Pye weed
Joe-Pye weed
White wood aster
Shreber's aster
Sweet woodruff
Winterberry
Andrew's bottle gentian
Wild geranium
Herb Robert
White avens
Thin-leaved sunflower
Jerusalem artichoke
Waterleaf
Blue flag iris

Anemone virginica
Anemonella thalictroides
Aquilegia canadensis
Arisaema triphyllum
Asarum canadense
Asarum europaeum
Asclepias incarnata
Asclepias syriaca
Asclepias tuberosa
Athyrium filix-femina
Caltha palustris
Carex pennsylvanica
Carex plantaginea
Carex sp.
Caulophyllum thalictroides
Cryptotaenia canadensis
Dennstaedtia punctilobula
Dicentra cucullaria
Doellingeria umbellata
Dryopteris carthusiana
Dryopteris marginalis
Dryopteris sp.
Elymus canadense
Elymus riparius
Elymus virginicus
Eragrostis spectabilis
Erigeron annuus
Erigeron canadensis
Eutrochium maculatum
Eutrochium purpureum
Eurybia divaricata
Eurybia schreberi Nees
Galium odoratum
Gaultheria procumbens
Gentiana andrewsii
Geranium maculatum
Geranium robertianum
Geum canadense
Helianthus decapetalus
Helianthus tuberosus
Hydrophyllum virginianum
Iris versicolor

Twinleaf
Canada rush
Twinflower
Cardinal flower
Great blue lobelia
Wild lupine
Mayflower
Ostrich fern
Black medick
Mitrewort
Mitrewort
Wild bergamot
Common evening primrose
Sensitive fern
Cinnamon fern
Interrupted fern
Royal fern
Pachysandra
Allegheny spurge
Hairy beard-tongue
Wild blue phlox
Pokeweed
Common plantain
May apple
Jacob's ladder
Giant Solomon's seal
Solomon's seal
Pennsylvania smartweed
Christmas fern
Braun's holly fern
Mountain mint
Thimbleberry
Brambles
Tall coneflower
Bloodroot
Little bluestem
Bur cucumber
Cup-plant
False Solomon's seal
Starry false Solomon's seal
Wreath goldenrod
Canada goldenrod

Jeffersonia diphylla
Juncus canadensis
Linnaea borealis
Lobelia cardinalis
Lobelia siphilitica
Lupinus perennis
Maianthemum canadense
Matteuccia struthiopteris
Medicago lupulina
Mitella breweri
Mitella diphylla
Monarda fistulosa
Oenothera biennis
Onoclea sensibilis
Osmunda cinnamomea
Osmunda claytoniana
Osmunda regalis
Pachysandra allegheniensis
Pachysandra procumbens
Penstemon hirsutus
Phlox divaricata
Phytolacca americana
Plantago major
Podophyllum peltatum
Polemonium reptans
Polygonatum biflorum
Polygonatum pubescens
Polygonum pennsylvanica
Polystichum acrostichoides
Polystichum braunii
Pycnanthemum muticum
Rubus odoratus
Rubus sp.
Rudbeckia laciniata
Sanguinaria canadensis
Schizachyrium scoparium
Sicyos angulatus
Silphium perfoliatum
Smilacina racemosa
Smilacina stellata
Solidago caesia
Solidago canadensis

NATIVE PLANTS FOUND ALONG THE RIVERWALK CONTINUED

Early goldenrod
Indian grass
Blue heart-leaf aster
Heath aster
Smooth aster
Calico aster
New England aster
Early meadow rue
Foamflower
Virginia knotweed
Clover
Trillium
Stinging nettle
Large-flowered bellwort
Blue vervain
Culver's root
Fringed violet
Labrador violet
Barren strawberry
Golden Alexanders

Solidago juncea
Sorghastrum nutans
Symphyotrichum cordifolium
Symphyotrichum ericoides
Symphyotrichum laeve
Symphyotrichum lateriflorum
Symphyotrichum novae-angliae
Thalictrum dioicum
Tiarella cordifolia
Tovara virginiana
Trifolium
Trillium erectum
Urtica dioica
Uvularia grandiflora
Verbena hastata
Veronicastrum virginicum
Viola fimbriatula
Viola labradorica
Waldsteinia ternata
Zizia aurea

Purple-stem angelica (Fadding-West Stockbridge)
Striped maple (Brock-Monterey)
Red maple (Fadding-Glendale)
Mountain maple (Fernside Rd.-Tyringham)
White snakeroot (Fadding-Glendale, Rose-Alford)
Agrimony (Ben's Spring-Alford)
Thimbleweed (Lord/Douillet-Housatonic)
Wild columbine (Sayman-Richmond)
Wild sarsaparilla (Fowle/Schroeder-Housatonic)
Jack-in-the-pulpit (Fadding-Glendale, Feick-Richmond)
Black chokeberry (Fadding-West Stockbridge)
American ginger (River Walk)
Butterfly weed (River Walk)
Calico aster (Fadding-Glendale, Rose-Alford)
Aster (Fadding-Glendale)
Sweet birch (Laurel Hill)
Bur marigold (Route 7-Stockbridge)
Marsh marigold (Glendale)
Plaintain-leaved sedge (Weatherbee-Williamstown)
Shagbark hickory (Chesterwood-Glendale)
Blue cohosh (Rose-Alford)
Clematis (Division St-Alford)
Honestwort (Rose-Alford)
Hay-scented fern (Rose-Alford)
Riverbank wild rye (Weatherbee-Williamstown)
Fleabane (Rose-Alford)
Boneset (Fadding-West Stockbridge, Palumbo-Sheffield)
White wood aster (Rose-Alford)
Big-leaved aster (Lahey Cross Rd.-Glendale)
Schreber's aster (Lahey Cross Rd.-Glendale)
Wild geranium (Rose-Alford)
White avens (Fadding-Glendale, River Walk)
Thin-leaved sunflower (Fadding-Glendale)
Waterleaf (Fadding-Glendale, River Walk)
Waterleaf (Poole-Alford)
Bottle brush grass (Simon's Dike-Sheffield)
Blue flag iris (Fadding-West Stockbridge)
Cardinal flower (Fadding-West Stockbridge)
Wild bergamot (West Center Rd.-West Stockbridge)
Whorled wood aster (Douillet-Housatonic, Fadding-Glendale)
Sweet cicely (Rose-Alford)

A. atropurpurea
Acer pensylvanicum
Acer rubrum
Acer spicatum
Ageratina altissima
Agrimonia gryposepala
Anemone virginica
Aquilegia canadensis
Aralia nudicaulis
Arisaema triphyllum
Aronia melanocarpa
Asarum canadense
Asclepias tuberosa
Aster lateriflorum
Aster sp.
Betula lenta
Bidens cernua
Caltha palustris
Carex plantaginea
Carya ovata
Caulophyllum thalictroides
Clematis virginiana
Cryptotaenia canadensis
Dennstaedtia punctilobula
Elymus riparius
Erigeron pulchellus
Eupatorium perfoliatum
Eurybia divaricate
Eurybia macrophylla
Eurybia schreberi Nees
Geranium maculatum
Geum canadense
Helianthus decapetalus
Hydrophyllum canadense
Hydrophyllum virginianum
Hystrix patula
Iris versicolor
Lobelia cardinalis
Monarda fistulosa

Oclemena acuminata
Osmorhiza claytonii

NATIVE NATIVES (BERKSHIRE COUNTY PROVENANCE)

Since 1999, River Walk volunteers have collected seed and propagated plants with Berkshire County provenance. River Walk itself has become a seed source for these plants. We call these plants Native Natives and identify their property owners and towns of origin. By choosing local source material for propagation, we take advantage of any adaptations that time and natural selection have developed in these species.

NATIVE NATIVES (BERKSHIRE COUNTY PROVENANCE) *CONTINUED*

Virginia creeper (Fadding-Glendale)
Hairy beard-tongue (Rose-Alford)
Pokeweed (Fadding-Glendale)
Clearweed (Fadding-Glendale, Sayman-Richmond)
Giant Solomon's seal (Fowle/Schroeder-Housatonic)
Cottonwood (Fadding-Glendale)
Gall-of-the-earth (Fowle/Schroeder-Housatonic,
Mary Flynn Trail-Stockbridge)
Bracken fern (Mary Flynn Trail-Stockbridge)
Thimbleberry (Fadding-Glendale)
Dwarf raspberry (Fadding swamp-Glendale)
Peach-leaved willow (Fadding-West Stockbridge)
Heart-leaved willow (Fadding-West Stockbridge)
Elderberry (Rose-Alford)
Purple oats (Weatherbee-Williamstown)
Carpenter's square (Berkshire County)
False Solomon's seal (Fowle/Schroeder-Housatonic,
Rose-Alford)
Wreath goldenrod (Rt. 183-Housatonic)
Zig-zag goldenrod (Mary Flynn Trail-Stockbridge)
Early goldenrod (Rose-Alford, Dugway Rd.-Housatonic)
Rough goldenrod (Shmulsky-Sheffield)
Grey dogwood (Fadding-Glendale)
Red-twigged dogwood (Fadding-Glendale)
Blue heart-leaved aster (Fadding-Glendale,
Rose-Alford)
Heath aster (Lanes Quarry-West Stockbridge)
Tall meadow rue (Pleasant Valley-Lenox,
Rt.7-Stockbridge)
Jumpseed (Berkshire County)
Starflower (Fowle/Schroeder-Housatonic)
Common cattail (Fadding-West Stockbridge)
Elm (Fadding-Glendale)
Vervain (River Walk)
Ovate-leaved violet (Fowle/Schroeder-Housatonic)
Golden Alexanders (Fadding-Glendale)

Parthenocissus quinquefolia
Penstemon hirsutus
Phytolacca americana
Pilea pumila
Polygonatum canaliculatum
Populus deltoides

Prenanthes trifoliata
Pteridium aquilinum
Rubus odoratus
Rubus pubescens
Salix amygdaloides
Salix eriocephala
Sambucus nigra ssp. canadensis
Schizachne purpurascens
Scrophularia marylandica

Smilacina racemosa
Solidago caesia
Solidago flexicaulis
Solidago juncea
Solidago rugosa
Swida racemosa
Swida sericea

Symphyotrichum cordifolium
Symphyotrichum ericoides

Thalictrum pubescens
Tovara virginianum
Trientalis borealis
Typha latifolia
Ulmus sp.
Verbena hastata
Viola fimbriatula
Zizia aurea

THE HOUSATONIC RIVER

The Housatonic River flows 150 miles from four sources in western Massachusetts, passing through the Berkshires and western Connecticut before it empties into Long Island Sound. The watershed, or land area that drains into the river, encompasses 1,948 square miles and includes hundreds of rivers and streams.

VOLUNTEERS AND PERSONNEL

River Walk is a community designed and created trail founded by Rachel Fletcher and created by more than 2800 volunteers.

The riverside railway was designed and engineered by Peter Jensen of Peter S. Jensen & Associates, LLC. The native habitat reclamation is the work of horticulturalist Heather Cupo, B.S.L.A. of Plant Euphoria, biologist Suzanne Fowle, and the late Monica Fadding. Greenagers, directed by Will Conklin and Elia Del Molino, maintain the trail and oversee site work.

Volunteers with more than 100 hours in the field include Peter Barrett, Gail Berneike, Don Bernier, Glen Chamberlin, Peter Ghani Champoux, Ann Condon, Will Conklin, Dana Cummings, Heather Cupo, Bernard Drew, Monica Schultz Fadding, Rachel Fletcher, Erik Hans Jensen, Peter Jensen, Alden Johnson, Bernard Kirchner, John Mallory, Tony Manzon, Will Marsh, Bob Mills, Mark Pieropan, Judd Reiss, and Comstock Small.

Student volunteers with more than 50 hours in the field include Andrew Baxter, Jessie Drew, Jenifer Fuore, Willa Johnson, Ben Kalish, Hannah Kirchner, Ben Passmore, Andy Ritter, Aaron Seymour, and Matt Willig.

Interns as of 2016 include Ryan Caruso, Brian Eddy, Jenifer Fuore, Jennifer Goodwillie, Dan Hassett, Todd Johnson, Hilary Kirchner, Julius Kyagaba, Katherine Lister, Mac Litishin, Penelope Lord, Zachary Mino, Phyu Hninn Nyein, Kevin Pieropan, William Powell, Kristin Sanzone, Peter Tiso, Jenna Lee Turner, Trevor Turner, and Lukas Wheeler.

ORIGINAL PROPERTY OWNERS ALONG THE RIVER WALK

The Community Land Trust in the Southern Berkshires, presently Peter Hill, Pink Cloud

Melvin J. Katsh, presently Rite Aid Pharmacy

Roman Catholic Bishop of Springfield (St. Peters Parish)

Lucien and Steven Aigner, presently Carla and Ruairi Collins

Nion Robert Thieriot and Roger C. Tryon, presently Josh and Margaret Minges

Dale Culleton, presently Kate and Joel Millonzi

Berkshire Corporation

Town of Great Barrington, presently 79 Bridge Street Realty LLC
(The Berkshire)

CONTRIBUTIONS

Donations are tax-deductible and may be sent to:

Housatonic River Walk

PO Box 1018

Great Barrington, MA 01230

Contributors to the *River Walk Guide* include Heather Cupo, Monica Fadding, Rachel Fletcher, Suzanne Fowle, and Comstock Small.

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A FEW NOTES ABOUT TRAIL ETIQUETTE

Please remember that you are passing through private property and are here as a guest.

Please remember that it is unsafe to use the trail during icy conditions, and therefore the trail is closed during the winter months.

Please curb your dog. Waste bags are provided on both trail sections. Our volunteers appreciate their use.

Please remember that the path is constructed for walking and nature viewing only.
No bicycles.

Please use the proper entrances and exits.
Stay on the delineated trail where it is safe to travel.

Riverbank slopes are sensitive to erosion.
Please do not climb on the bank.

Please respect the desire of others for a smoke-free environment.
Cigarette butts are not biodegradable.

Please help us to keep River Walk clean.
Carry out what you carried in.

Please consider picking up any litter you see along the trail.

Please leave the flowers for all to enjoy.

TRAIL PLAN STANDARDS

The River Walk area should comply with sound ecological practices, provide safe public access, and educate the public in river stewardship.

Design of the trail system is intended to create minimal impact on existing site conditions.

Some trees will be removed to allow for trail route.

Some trees will be pruned to enhance views of the river. Pruning will be responsive to maintenance of existing shade conditions and erosion control along the steep slopes.

Any new landscaping introduced to the site must use native trees, shrubs, groundcovers, etc. Planting may be done for purposes of habitat enhancement, nonpoint source pollution control, erosion control, aesthetics, and view control. Existing invasive plantings shall be removed or cut back to the extent feasible. Existing exotic invasive trees may be cut back. Tree removal must promote maintenance of existing shade conditions and erosion control along the steep slopes.

The design of all materials (wood, soil, landscape, etc.) introduced into the River Walk area must be appropriate to the natural site (i.e., native), while also ensuring safety and durability.

Permeable trail surfaces will be used when possible.

Non-chemically treated wood or metal or ecologically consistent recycled building materials will be used for structural supports (both buried and exposed) and finish surfaces where possible.

Disability access shall be maintained to the extent that the site allows.

There shall be no use of chemical pesticides, insecticides, or other toxins within the River Walk area.

Except in cases of emergency, the public shall have free access to River Walk for passive and active recreation in the spring, summer, and autumn seasons. Access may be limited to ensure public health and safety, and ecological integrity. Restrictions may include, but are not limited to, prohibiting trespass on fragile slopes and requiring that dogs be properly leashed and managed.

TO LEARN MORE AND GET INVOLVED

River Walk is a project of the Great Barrington Land Conservancy. The Conservancy administers the trail and manages our conservation easements on behalf of the public. The Conservancy is dedicated to conservation and stewardship of our community's natural resources and special places.

Responsible for River Walk's daily care are local Berkshire Greenagers, who are nurtured to be the next generation of environmental stewards. This youth environmental organization is dedicated to community engagement and raising awareness of environmental issues through productive labor in local agricultural and conservation work.



In addition to its volunteers, River Walk benefits from the efforts of interns, who assist with all aspects of site development and maintenance. Our interns learn about riverine ecology and the practicalities of maintaining a public space.

River Walk provides a laboratory for on-site education and offers lectures, tours, and other educational programs about native plants, riparian ecology, and local history.

For more information about volunteer workdays, internships, educational programs or tours, email river@gbriverwalk.org

Or visit our website at www.gbriverwalk.org

*It was a way for people in the neighborhood
to give days of their labor to one another,
to give one another shares in their mutual place...*

— WENDELL BERRY ABOUT THE RIVER WALK