

Our mission is to
improve the quality
of life through
philanthropy in the
Berkshire Taconic region.

Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

is a nonprofit
organization serving
Berkshire, MA; Columbia
and northeast Dutchess, NY;
and northwest Litchfield, CT, counties.

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October 6, 2006

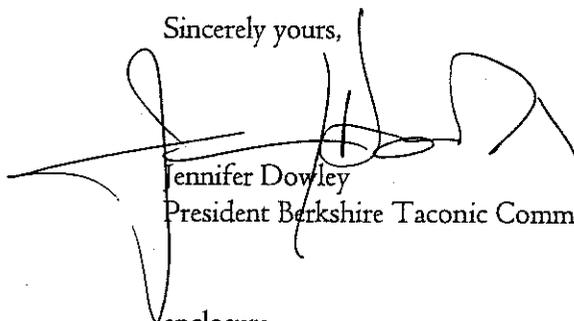
Ms. Dale Young, Lead Trustee
Massachusetts Sub Council,
Housatonic River Natural Resources Trustees
C/O Massachusetts Office of Environmental Affairs
100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114-2524

Dear Ms. Young,

I am pleased to submit to you a report commenting on proposals that have been submitted to the Trustees of the Natural Resources Damages Fund (NRDF) for funding. This report was prepared by a volunteer task force chaired by Peter Berle and George S. Wislocki.

The Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF) has served all of the communities within the upper reaches of the Housatonic River since 1987. Given that the Housatonic River is a defining characteristic of these communities in all respects – economically, environmentally and geographically – Berkshire Taconic is keenly interested in the efforts to repair the Housatonic River. Since the founding of Housatonic River Restoration in 1998, BTCF has contributed toward the preparation of the Housatonic River restoration plan that has been accepted by the Trustees of the NRDF as a guide to their distribution of funds. One of Berkshire Taconic's own funds has supported the preparation of this report. I urge your considered attention to it in your deliberations.

Sincerely yours,



Jennifer Dowley
President Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

enclosure

cc: Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.
Volunteer Review Committee

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Report by the Citizen Review Committee of the 21 proposals submitted to the Massachusetts SubCouncil of the Housatonic River Natural Resources Trustees

October 6, 2006

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We, a task force of volunteer citizens, are writing to add our voices to those in the Housatonic River Restoration Plan (HRRP). In doing so, it is our hope that the voices of citizens who know the river best will closely guide your decisions in allocating natural resource damage funds. To have a committee of citizens reviewing the 21 submitted natural resource damage fund proposals is the logical outgrowth of the HRRP.

In December, 2005 when the Trustees announced that they would be seeking requests for proposals for projects to “restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of natural resources” that were injured or lost as a result of the release of hazardous materials into the Housatonic watershed, the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation (BTCF) realized that it would be useful to the trustees to hear again from those who shared in the production of the Housatonic River Restoration Plan about their thoughts concerning the relevance of the proposals received. With this in mind, BTCF agreed to sponsor a small taskforce that would independently review these proposals, chaired by George Wislocki of Pittsfield and Peter Berle of Stockbridge. In addition to convening the group, the BTCF also provided administrative services, staff involvement, and meeting space for this initiative. Peter Berle, George Wislocki, and Maeve O’Dea (program director for BTCF) invited local citizens and environmental advocates to participate.

We would like to thank the trustees for establishing a review and evaluation that is both transparent and welcoming of public commentary. In our review process, great pain was taken to ensure that not one of the task force members have any direct financial connection or alliance to any of the proposals that they have reviewed.

Citizen Review Committee Members:

Peter Berle has been a lifelong resident of the Berkshires. He is former New York State Commissioner of Environmental Conservation, past President of National Audubon Society, as well as a familiar voice on National Public Radio. He is president of the Stockbridge Land Trust. Today he and his wife Lila are active farmers raising cattle and sheep.

George S. Wislocki is president emeritus and founder of the Berkshire Natural Resource Council on which he served for 34 years. He also served on many statutory boards as well as boards of environmental organizations. For the past 40 years, he and his wife Alice have lived in Pittsfield.

Karen Advokaat moved to the Berkshires in 2001. She has interned at and coordinated The Orion Society’s Grassroots Network program. Currently she works in the Office of Academic Affairs at Simon’s Rock College of Bard and also provides freelance staff support to a variety of local nonprofit organizations

Warren Archey has lived in the Berkshires for 34 years. He has worked for decades in forest management, including 11 years as chief of the Massachusetts Bureau of Forestry. He has written over 50 publications related to forest-water relations in state and national journals. He serves on Lenox Planning Board, Zoning Board of Appeals, Infrastructure Committee, Conservation Commission, and the Lenox Land Trust. He also serves on numerous forest and water oriented statewide, regional and national committees. He is a Massachusetts licensed forester.

Deborah Ferro Burke has lived in the Berkshires since 1984. She is a management consultant who works internationally with Fortune 50 companies and entrepreneurs, and locally with non-profits. She also teaches at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and the Leven Institute for International Relations and Commerce.

Dicken Crane, of Dalton, is a logger, farmer, and large landholder. He is president and manager of Holiday Farm, Inc. He also serves on the board of the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, Windsor Conservation Commission, Dalton Open Space committee, and is president of the Massachusetts Forestry Association.

Shepley W. Evans has lived in southern Berkshire County since 1980. He is the founder and managing partner of FRIDAY & Co. Real Estate, a southern Berkshire real estate firm. Shep is a former chairman of the Stockbridge Conservation Commission, director of the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions and trustee and treasurer of the Berkshire Environmental Fund. He continues to serve on numerous boards and citizen groups, and is a lifelong outdoorsman and amateur naturalist.

Paul Ivory has worked for 30 years for the National Trust for Historic Preservation as director of Chesterwood, in Stockbridge. He has served on many boards. Paul is currently a grant writer and event organizer for the Congregation of Marians in Stockbridge.

Mercedes Pour worked as regional programs coordinator for the Appalachian Mountain Club at Mt. Greylock. She has consulted or taught for NEMBA, the Mahican-Mohawk trail, the National Park Service, and the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife. She is currently athletic director and teaches history at Miss Hall's School in Pittsfield, MA.

Leslie Reed-Evans has been the executive director of the Williamstown Rural Lands Foundation, a land conservation trust serving the north Berkshire area, since 1995. In addition to developing natural and cultural history programs for the public at the WRLF's headquarters, Sheep Hill, Leslie leads nature hikes and walks throughout the year, and volunteers with local conservation groups doing bird, insect and herpetological surveys.

Judy Spencer is retired from a lifetime of work in nonprofit organizations. She is currently the co-chair of the Kamposa Steward Committee, volunteer representatives dedicated to the maintenance and restoration of this fragile wetland designated an Area of Critical Environmental Concern by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. She is member of the Western Regional

Advisory Council of The Trustees of Reservation as well a member of its advisory council to the board of directors and a corporator of the organization. She was the founding president of the Stockbridge Land Trust.

The review process

We set as our goal to conduct our review so as to represent interests that were incorporated into the Housatonic River Restoration Plan, prepared by the citizens of Berkshire County and published by Housatonic River Restoration in December of 1999. The report is the culmination of more than 5,000 hours of work by hundreds of citizens of Berkshire County. The report is fully justified to claim to “have set a new standard in river and watershed planning by incorporating and balancing these manifold interests in the report’s recommendations.” This report has been accepted by the NRD Trustees as one of the cornerstones to guide the allocation of NRD funds.

The task force has convened on four occasions at the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, with subgroups of reviewers meeting independently. The committee was organized into four subgroups, corresponding to the proposal categories. These are: Aquatic Biological Resources and Habitat, Wildlife Resources and Habitat, Recreational Use, and Environmental Education and Outreach. Particular care was taken so as to avoid any reviewer having a connection or alliance with any of the proposals that they reviewed.

In addition to receiving the NRD website to allow online viewing of proposals, and copies of the review forms and materials used by the state’s NRD Fund reviewers, we chose to compose our own review criteria. The locally derived evaluation criteria (Attachment 1), use criteria taken directly from the recommendations put forward in the Housatonic River Restoration Plan (p. 5). Some recommendations were omitted because they were deemed either too specific (e.g., land acquisition) or too broad (entity to oversee a comprehensive approach). These criteria address water quality, education, canoe access, concentration of recreational use, ecological restoration, and community-based stewardship programs, and the use of a holistic approach.

Each reviewer received the locally derived evaluation criteria, and was asked to complete it for each proposal reviewed by them. Reviewers were asked to also fill out the state review forms if possible. Individual reviewers shared their ratings and comments with the group and there was an opportunity for questions and discussion.

After the initial meeting, subcommittees conferred to compare their individual rankings of proposals, and worked to create consensus rankings for the proposals within their categories. Subcommittees then reported back to the entire group their rankings. Each subgroup shared with the larger group the proposals they recommended for funding, their ratings of these proposals on state criteria (in the cases when the state review forms were completed), and on the locally derived evaluation criteria. At this point we came to consensus regarding which proposals we recommended for funding. Our assignment of dollar values for proposal funding was brought forward served to “grade” the proposals so as to meet the allotment of funds to be awarded by Trustees in this round of funding rather than a detailed review of proposed project budgets.

At our final meeting, reviewers shared their comments in response to the recommendations made by the state reviewers of NRD proposals. We were pleased that most of our numerical ratings were similar in comparison to those provided by your reviewers. In our recommendations below, we thought it was most important to emphasize not numerical ratings, but how we felt about proposals and in particular our local reviewers' assessment of how each of the proposals succeed or fail to meet recommendations put forward in the restoration plan.

Task force recommendations

Below is a narrative that includes project summaries derived from the proposal abstracts, followed by reviewers' comments and funding recommendations for each of the proposals. The reviews are presented in numerical order based on the proposal numbers.

Proposal No. 1 - Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk, Great Barrington Land Conservancy \$133,308

Project summary: Housatonic River Walk reclaims a severely abused section of Housatonic Riverbank in south Berkshire County, secures public access, and provides a ½ mile riverside walking trail and boat launch. River Walk is located adjacent to Great Barrington’s Main Street, yet offers a rare nature experience of river and wildlife views. Two thousand volunteers have contributed to this 18-year effort, attracting approximately 5,000 visitors a year. The proposed three-year program seeks funds for riparian reclamation, trailway management, environmental education and outreach, production and distribution of a revised River Walk Guide, and monitoring of native plants.

Reviewers’ comments: This proposal received the highest ratings of all proposals in the recreational use category using both the locally derived and the NRD provided review criteria. The project is well planned, building on an existing successful and community-supported initiative and the involvement of diverse members of the community. It conforms elegantly to the stated goals of the HRRP. Adding an additional half-mile to the walk, doing riparian reclamation on 2.63 acres, performing river bottom cleanups, doing environmental education outreach, and monitoring growth of native plantings will serve as a model for other communities. The HRRP clearly asks for outdoor recreational opportunities, water quality enhancements, and wildlife resource enhancements; all three are present in this proposal. The concrete nature of this project assures that people will see the benefits of NRD funds. The fact that this project will touch a large number of people through a relatively short section of river is noteworthy. This project will combine a good use of matching funds with a relatively low cost. The recreational, educational, and ecological repairs combined with the community-based partnerships elicit unanimous support.

Amount requested: \$133,308

Recommended funding: \$133,308

Proposal No. 2 - Rising Pond Land Acquisition, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Inc. \$346,750

Project summary: This proposal seeks to acquire and permanently protect three parcels of land totaling 161 acres including 60 acres of floodplain and 80 acres that fall within the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs BioMap as “Core Habitat” and the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program as “Estimated Habitat.”. The land is abutting the Housatonic River in the municipality of Great Barrington, Village of Housatonic. It is currently owned by Fox River Paper Company LLC and is the land surrounding the Rising Paper Mill. The land acquisition will result in permanent protection and management for conservation purposes, of these tracts along the river and its floodplain.

Berkshire Natural Resources Council will complete all due diligence associated with the purchase of the property. BNRC will take fee ownership of the parcels and complete a natural resource inventory and a management plan. Said plan will include baseline documentation to verify the current condition of the parcels and provide recommendations to improve the wildlife resources and opportunities for public access BNRC will maintain a presence on the property and work to improve habitat and recreational value. BNRC will actively manage the property and foster partnerships with state agencies, town officials, environmental groups, education groups and other organizations to maximize wildlife habitat value and the public benefit.

Reviewers’ comments: There was consensus among reviewers that this proposal well satisfied both the locally derived review criteria and those provided to NRD reviewers. In addition to noting the value of this particular parcel as a land acquisition for habitat protection, we were encouraged by the project’s comprehensive approach that includes not only land acquisition but also the development of a natural resources inventory, and development and implementation of a land management plan.

The potential to reconnect residents to the river, a central tenet of the HRRP is evident in the creation of canoe access sites and woodland trails. This potential is strengthened by the planned use of partnerships to enhance the environmental, educational, and recreational value of the acquired parcels. The removal of exotic and invasive species from the floodplain, opportunity for wetlands restoration, and the long term protection of riparian functions and values by a local, experienced and well established regional land conservation non-profit were also noted strengths of the proposal. The proposal well documents the numerous benefits of this project for environmental, social, and economic impacts.

Amount requested: \$346,750

Recommended funding: \$346,750

Proposal No. 3 - Housatonic Environmental Literacy Program (HELP) for the River, Massachusetts Audubon Society \$874,842

Project summary: The goal of the proposed “Housatonic Environmental Leadership Program (HELP) for the River is to restore and repair the relationship of Berkshire County’s children, families and the public to their river and its watershed through educational and active involvement. Our objectives are to offer a comprehensive river education experience to all students in the Housatonic watershed by providing multi-unit, experiential programs for students when they are in fourth and sixth grades, and to make an optional Envirothon program available to interested high school students in the area. An “on the water” free canoe program in the summer season will extend educational benefits to families and the general public, serving to connect them to the river. The sixth grade program also includes a field trip and canoe component.

HELP will serve 5,700 to 7,500 children, families, teachers and the public. The aim is to give people back their river-to connect them with it emotionally as well as physically, and to foster an understanding and appreciation that leads naturally to stewardship. Students must feel that they own the river. The school students of today will be the stewards, directly and indirectly, of the river and its watershed tomorrow.

Reviewers’ comments: This proposal is a good one. To protect a river requires an informed public who is willing to reach out and protect the river’s watershed, and this proposal will insure today’s young people will be the citizen advocates of the future. The Massachusetts Audubon Society, with its Berkshire sanctuaries, has proved to be for several generations one of the most important institutions to assure that Berkshire schoolchildren understand and appreciate the river. We heartily support this initiative. However we observed that today schools are under great stress to comply with state mandates. We were surprised that there was no discussion in regard to this new educational environment in this proposal or discussion of greater integration of the river and its watershed into the classroom curriculum.

Amount requested: \$874,842

Recommended funding: \$874,842

Proposal No. 4 - Housatonic River Museum, City of Pittsfield \$298,100

Project summary: The Housatonic River Museum is being developed as a dynamic center for exploring the natural science of the Housatonic River watershed and examining the historical and ongoing relationships between humankind and the river. The museum will join existing environmental and educational organizations as we celebrate the role of rivers in our landscape.

The proposal seeks funding for the development and construction of museum exhibits totaling 1,500 square feet or 1/3 of the complete exhibit space. Through these exhibits, the public will have an immersive, hands-on experience as they develop a greater understanding of the impact of human behaviors on the sustainability of a healthy Housatonic River watershed. The proposal includes on-site and off-site programs.

The museum's location will tie in with the City of Pittsfield's proposed West Brach Greenway plans and the West Side Initiative.

Reviewers' comments: We believe there should be many educational centers within the Housatonic watershed that speak to the river and its values. Such centers could take the form of information kiosks, a trailer or van that passes from one town to another, or trails with interpretive signs. We do not, however, think that a museum of the Housatonic River located in Pittsfield would be the most effective way to serve the needs of all the communities in the Housatonic watershed, or in fact would be a very effective educational center for a river that extends from the Berkshires to Long Island Sound. We would rather that support be given to existing educational programs or institutions.

Amount requested: \$298,100

Recommended funding: \$0

Proposal No. 5 - Lee River Walk, the Lee Land Trust \$62,000

Project summary: The proposed Riverwalk, a short distance from the Village green on lower Main St. in Lee will provide a recreational and educational pathway along the riverbank in a scenic and tranquil location. This project will not infringe upon natural habitat, and will provide an opportunity to remove the invasive growth and debris from the river. While proposed by the Lee Land Trust, a wide variety of partners have participated and will participate in this project.

Phase One will be continuing cooperation of landowners in trail design and permitting, and Phase Two will be construction including the use of volunteer labor and donations.

This walk will be part of the “beaded necklace” envisioned in the HRRP, which provides a location for recreational access in each town along the river.

Reviewers’ comments: The planning for this project was well begun in 2000, and the planning has only moved forward since. The Lee Land Trust recently received support of the landowner on the downstream terminus of the project, Lee Bank. While the project only benefits one town, it does so at a reasonable cost. It is an example of what one town can do and may serve as a model to other towns. This is a grassroots environmental program and we feel encouraged that if handled appropriately, it would be successfully accomplished. Local evaluation criteria are well satisfied by this project through education, a holistic approach to the project, concentration of uses to minimize impact on the river, ecological restoration of the river, and community-based stewardship programs.

Amount requested: \$62,000

Recommended funding: \$62,000

Proposal No. 6 - Proposal for a Beaded Necklace Housatonic River Greenway, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. in association with Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and Berkshire Bike Path Council \$665,000

Project summary: Inspired by the “Beaded Necklace” vision that emerged from the extensive community planning process led by the Housatonic River Restoration (HRR), this project seeks NRD funding for the master planning, feasibility study, conceptual design, and development of a detailed implementation plan for a combined bikeway/greenway. With the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) and the Berkshire Bike Path Council (BBPC) as project partners, Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) will manage the project and provide technical support, based on experience planning and completing over 70 bikeway/greenway projects over the past 20 years. BRPC will coordinate the community collaboration and consensus building, and BBPC will provide advice and local grassroots organizing.

The Beaded Necklace will create linkages between existing and proposed bike paths, trails, boat launches, and parks within watershed communities to restore public interest in, enjoyment of, and accessibility to the exceptional natural resources of the Berkshires. The result will weave the many local projects, from the Vermont to Connecticut borders, into a connected whole.

Over two years, our implementation plan will identify project feasibility, phasing, budgets, and most importantly, potential sources of funding. Congressman John W. Olver has been a staunch supporter of bikeway/greenway projects in the Berkshires, and with a comprehensive plan, additional federal, state, local, and private sector funding can be sought for further design, permitting, and construction, greatly leveraging the requested \$665,000 of NRD funds. Restoring the injured and impaired natural resource services through a significant recreational bikeway/greenway project will bring immediate, long-lasting, and widespread benefits to watershed residents.

Reviewers’ comments: As with other proposals, the reviewers noted that this initiative would expend a large amount of funds for only a plan rather than a tangible project. There are no assurances of the extent to which the plan would be implemented. The idea is very ambitious, and it is positive that, if implemented, this would address the entire Housatonic River valley. The presence of a bike path was a strength as it addresses a community need. The fact that this project will take two years to create a plan whereas we have confidence that other proposed projects in this category will create high quality deliverables that the public can begin to utilize within that time frame worked against this proposal.

Amount requested: \$665,000

Recommended funding: \$ 0

Proposal No. 7 - West Branch of the Housatonic Revitalization Project, City of Pittsfield \$2,057,000

Project summary: In this proposal, the City of Pittsfield, in partnership with the Massachusetts Riverways Program and the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, is seeking to develop an integrated river restoration plan for the downtown portion of the Housatonic River. This multi-year, multi-phase project has two main areas of focus which include (1) the development of a greenway plan for the river corridor from Wahconah Park to Clapp park; and (2) the removal of the Mill Street Dam which is located within the corridor.

Reviewers' comments: The first phase of this project strongly addresses many of the socioeconomic and recreational issues brought about by decades of neglect along the Housatonic corridor in Pittsfield. The reviewers felt that Pittsfield has put together a partnership that should succeed in reaching its main goals, and that the opportunity to engage neighborhoods in becoming stewards of this section of the river is a strength of the proposal. With a budget of \$100,000, there was consensus support for funding the greenway portion of this project.

The removal of the Mill Street Dam would be an immense project, and one that has been discussed for generations. In the "best of possible worlds" the removal of this dam would most certainly improve the aquatic biological resources of this river. However, the cost of this project is substantial. It is not clear to us that the presumed benefit of removing the dam relative to partially breaching it has been explored. The inability to anticipate sediment contamination remediation methods and the various costs associated with those alternatives makes the true cost of the project unknowable. Other concerns included the limited downstream focus on 4,700 linear feet of river frontage, with proposed habitat improvement to take place only on 2,500 linear feet. Further, we would observe that the proposal to remove this dam has been put forward for the past 30 years and we have yet to see any great support on the part of citizens or neighborhoods.

Amount requested: \$2,057,000
\$100,000

Recommended funding: Greenway portion of project:

Proposal No. 8 - Proposal to Provide Enhanced Public Access to the Housatonic River in Massachusetts, ESS Group, Inc. in association with Housatonic Valley Association \$460,000

Project summary: This public access project is needed to increase people’s awareness of this resource and encourage their re-acceptance of it as a viable recreational asset. The river lacks sufficient public access, particularly locations accessible to handicap, elderly, small children, and others that may not be able to manage the rigors or safety issues associated with unimproved access points. The Housatonic River will benefit from this project since the access points created will be safe, approved locations that can be managed for issues such as litter, river bank or soil erosion, invasive species, etc. which commonly plague unimproved access points.

The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and ESS Group, Inc. (ESS) will perform an initial screening of 37 potential sites based on land availability, and the physical, hydrological, and natural resources. Once the list has been refined, we will select 6 to 8 sites as new public access locations, develop conceptual designs for each for review by watershed stakeholders, and obtain necessary permits. The new access sites will be constructed under this project and will include a range of access improvements from limited access (i.e. “primitive” access), to canoe access, up to full handicap accessibility. Educational information will be included at each access facility. A monitoring program will be designed and implemented to minimize the potential for invasive species to become established at new access points.

Reviewers’ comments: This proposal has potential to make the “beaded necklace” concept advocated in the HRRP come about most readily. Adding the six to eight canoe access sites specified in this proposal will ultimately benefit the river by concentrating the use of these designated and designed sites, and eliminating the contamination and safety issues arising from the current practice of multiple un-stewarded current access points. The volunteer following and proven track records of the proposing organizations are strengths. The budget is substantial, but the presence of in-kind funds and the likelihood that the project will be completed within 20 months of funding, with the first new access site available for use within 16 months of funding, is encouraging. Eight communities will be enhanced with river accesses. The concrete nature of results and the fit with HRRP recommendations are strengths of this proposal.

Amount requested: \$460,000

Recommended funding: \$460,000

Proposal No. 9 - Proposal to Perform Aquatic Habitat Restoration of the Housatonic River, ENSR Corporation \$1,308,980

Project summary: The objective of this project is to mitigate impairment of aquatic biota by enhancing river habitat quality, diversity and connectivity within the Massachusetts portion of the Housatonic River system. Data on existing river habitat will be efficiently collected, mapped and assessed to select projects that will significantly improve communities of fish and related aquatic biota. Benefits would also accrue to wildlife using the river and recreational users of improved fisheries. Demonstrating aquatic restoration also represents an environmental educational opportunity.

Project tasks include:

- Phase 1 – Data Collection and Mapping. Housatonic River habitat will be assessed. Geographical Information System (GIS)-based mapping will be developed to indicate overall conditions and improvement opportunities.
- Phase 2 – Project Selection. Impairments will be identified and logistically feasible projects will be prioritized.
- Phase 3 – Design and Permitting. Potential projects include instream physical alterations to enhance habitat for target species, obstruction removal to improve fish passage, and streambank modification to control erosion or reconnect floodplains with the river.
- Phase 4 – Implementation and Monitoring. Up to ten (10) projects from the prioritized list will be implemented, based on available funding. Project results will be monitored to track success.

Reviewers' comments: The impact of this project on the river basin is favorable, as well as the use of contemporary technology and methodology in aquatic habitat assessment. The ability to list priority areas and identify possible restoration activities is valuable. The use of modeling to simulate the effects of restoration measures is intriguing, but comes at a very high monetary cost. No actual river improvements would be made with the any of the funding.

In our deliberations, we made direct comparisons between this project and proposal 18 ([Rare Species Recovery on the Housatonic River](#), submitted by Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife in association with the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program). It was agreed that these proposed projects would accomplish substantially similar work. In making our recommendation, we were swayed by the fact that proposal 18 would be implemented by the statutory agency responsible for oversight, and by the substantial overhead costs of 30% of this proposal (which is one of the reasons citizen groups tend not to be invited to review proposals like this).

Amount requested: \$1,308,980

Recommended funding: \$ 0

Proposal No. 10 - Proposal to Perform Bartholomew's Cobble Restoration, ENSR Corporation \$17,700

Project summary: The Trustees of Reservations owns, protects, and maintains a 329-acre publicly accessible property in Sheffield on the banks of the Housatonic River known as Bartholomew's Cobble. The area contains a variety of interesting and rare plants, including assemblages of rare ferns. A significant natural element at the reservation is the Housatonic River, an oxbow known as Half River, and adjacent floodplain fields and forests, all of which contain rare species habitats. These habitats are impacted by sediment-laden runoff from Weatogue Road. The Trustees of Reservations and ENSR propose to investigate the sources of siltation, evaluate the feasibility of erosion and sediment control options, evaluate the potential range of ecological restoration options, and work with the Town of Sheffield to implement source control and ecological restoration.

The Trustees of Reservations' Management Plan identified needs and opportunities throughout the reservation and provided a framework for prioritizing projects. The goals of this project are to:

1. Identify the sources and pathways of sedimentation into Half River and the Housatonic River
2. Quantify the level of impact in these resource areas
3. Investigate both remedial and restoration actions to help prevent the continuation of impact and to restore impacted areas
4. Establish a scope and budget for the implementation phase and to form partnerships for that phase
5. Develop a systematic approach that can be applied to other similar situations in the Housatonic River watershed

Staff from The Trustees of Reservations will lead fieldwork, with assistance from ENSR and an active group of volunteers at Bartholomew's Cobble.

Reviewers' comments:

This project is important and potentially useful in helping to provide a framework for prioritizing future projects. The lack of assurances that any remediation would be accomplished or of any positive NRD impacts to benefit either the community or the river as a result of this work call into question the lasting impact of the project.

Amount requested: \$17,700

Recommended funding: \$0

Proposal No. 11 - Housatonic Watershed Fisheries Assessment, Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife \$220,000

Project summary: The proposed project has two primary components. The first component will address the fisheries resources in the watershed by conducting surveys of fisheries resources and the production of maps for distribution to conservation commissions, municipalities, watershed organizations and other local level conservation groups. These maps will guide conservation, restoration and land use planning in the watershed.

The second project will address recreational fishing. A study of the movement of the brown trout population in the main-stem is proposed, along with the development and production of recreational fishing guides. The brown trout population of the river is identified as of particular recreational importance, but poorly understood. The project will track movements of these fish using radio-telemetry techniques. The information will help identify the key habitat components necessary for the survival of these important recreational fish. It can also be used to identify barriers to fish movement and potential limiting factors for the population. Existing and newly collected information will be used to create and distribute recreational fishing guides to the public.

Reviewers' comments: Fish population sampling and habitat assessment will be of clear value especially in terms of "thermal refuge areas" and development represents an obvious threat to the integrity of those areas, so that mapping these sensitive areas can be of value. Though it is noted that recreational fishing is an important component of normal river usage, it is however, unclear about the importance of "catch and release" fishing as DFW has recommended that brown trout not be consumed by anglers. The proposal states, "Because trout are among the most environmentally sensitive fish, the data can be used along with other work in the river to prioritize areas for restoration activities." In this instance, it is unclear as to the value of brown trout as an indicator species; a species that survives in PCB contaminated waters. Would not the choice of brook trout, caddis fly larvae or watercress be a far superior indicator and the restoration of the habitats favorable to those species be a reasonable goal?

Amount requested: \$220,000

Recommended funding: \$0

Proposal No. 12 - The River Institute, Housatonic River Initiative \$217,888

Project summary: The proposed project, The River Institute of the Housatonic (TRI) is dedicated to the on-going restoration and preservation of the Housatonic River. TRI will be a joint project of the Housatonic River Institute/Housatonic Riverkeeper™, scientists active in the fields of river chemistry, biology, and the ecological and human consequences of polychlorinated biphenyles (PCBs), the sportsmen and women of Berkshire County, all environmental and stakeholders groups, educators, and any other interested parties.

The River Institute will be a multi-disciplinary organization dedicated to the restoration of the Housatonic River. The long-term goal of The River Institute intends to site a permanent river center along the Housatonic River in Berkshire County. With an advisory board that reflects all of the affected user groups of the Housatonic Watershed, and a commitment to community participation, TRI will provide an on-going forum for higher education research, training, public and secondary education, and information dissemination related to natural resource protection and awareness. The institute will create a research environment to train students and citizens in scientific approaches to river issue and foster recreational/educational opportunities through public use to aid in restoration from lost use of the river and its watershed.

Reviewer comments: The proposer is a successful advocate for river cleanup who has built a constituency for environmental action and specifically advocacy for cleaning up the Housatonic. The goals of the proposed project are ambitious – clean up the river AND educate people about it -- but the proposal lacks a comprehensive plan for achieving these goals. It lacks the clarity and detail of other proposals in this category.

We see this proposal as more of a concept at this point. It would be better if the proposer focused very specifically on how the institute would be developed – perhaps through application for a planning grant. This grant can facilitate a more detailed exploration of what The River Institute would do, and how it would be operated and maintained.

We recommend that a proposal for a planning grant be submitted with the next round of NRD funding. A more elaborately detailed vision and planning process could produce a proposal for a River Institute that would engender greater confidence.

Amount requested: \$217,888

Recommended funding: \$ 0

Proposal No. 13 - Berkshire Conservation Agent Program, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission \$248,555

Project summary: The Berkshire Conservation Agent Program would empower municipal Conservation Commissions, front line defenders of water related natural resources, to better protect, maintain, and preserve wetlands and related water based resources in the Housatonic watershed and connected Berkshire County habitats. Wetlands, floodplains, riverfront and aquatic habitat, resources which are under the jurisdiction of Conservation Commissions, were severely compromised by the release of hazardous substances. This Program would halt further degradation of those important natural resources.

Building on the successful, established 3-year track record, this Program would provide flexible technical assistance, including fieldwork, application review, permit preparation, monitoring and enforcement activities to administer projects proposed for Wetlands Protection Act permits. Commissions would also receive highly individualized training on the increasingly complex law and practices associated with the Wetlands Protection Act. In addition, Conservation Commissions would receive training, assistance and support to expand their role and influence as resource protectors as well as to adopt local wetlands bylaws, wildlife habitat management plans, and provisions of the Scenic Mountain Act. This Program would also build capacity through coordination of peer to peer networking of commission members.

Reviewers' recommendations: There is both value and need in strengthening the expertise and strategic knowledge of municipal conservation commissions. Many have already benefited from this program resulting in improved informational, decision-making, and communication skills. Many more will benefit from the proposed program expansion, with the wetlands and rivers and the communities in which they are located being the ultimate beneficiaries. This proposal ensures the provision of a sorely needed service, one not provided by the state to towns in Berkshire County. It does so by providing funding to ensure that a highly celebrated and proven successful program has funding to continue and expand. This proposal will provide a high leverage impact on the health of the river and its habitat.

Amount requested: \$248,555 Recommended funding: \$248,555

Proposal No. 14 - Less Toxic Landscapes: A Healthier Housatonic River, Center for Ecological Technology \$216,540

Project summary: The proposed project will adapt successful strategies used by the Town of Wellesley MA and King County, Washington to address the water pollution caused by outdoor pesticide use. The Center for Ecological Technology (CET) will target the public; garden centers, hardware stores, landscape contractors, facility managers; and municipalities in the watershed. Education will reach specific audiences when they are most receptive to change. Training landscapers will take place in the winter months when they have time to attend a workshop. Workshops for homeowners will be scheduled before and during the growing season when they are thinking about their lawns and gardens. Workshops, trainings, media, retail displays and social marketing techniques will stimulate behavior changes so less chemical pesticides reach the Housatonic River. This multi-year effort will reduce the quantity of pesticides used on lawns and protect the environment and public health.

Reviewers' comments: This is a well-planned project by a respected local organization with a proven track record. It is consistent with at least 3 of the local evaluation criteria derived from the HRRP. However some concerns that were identified include:

- Questions about the level of chemical use by the targeted population
- Questions surrounding the toxicity and persistence of most chemicals used on residential lawns
- Observation that behavior changes in chemical use will be difficult to monitor

Amount requested: \$216,540

Recommended funding: \$216,540

Proposal No. 15 - Clapp Park to Wild Acres Greenway Project, City of Pittsfield
\$450,000

Project summary: The City of Pittsfield, through their conservation Commission, proposes to acquire two land parcels located on the Southwest Branch of the Housatonic River, and containing portions of the river and its associated floodplain. The acquisition will protect the parcels from development while contributing to the eventual formation of a public-use greenway extending from Clapp Park to the Wild Acres Conservation Area. The greenway will be maintained as a natural area to promote recreational and educational opportunities along the river and its tributaries, partially by teaming with the Berkshire Museum. Eventually, the City will create a path within the Greenway once all necessary acquisitions are completed. The NRD funding is specific to the acquisition portion of the overall projects. These acquisitions are expected to take one year to complete.

The two parcels comprise approximately 31 acres of mature forest and scrub-shrub habitat located within the R-12 zoning district of the City of Pittsfield. Both parcels are near the City center, and contain some developable uplands that could be developed according to present zoning. Acquisition will provide permanent protection of the existing vegetative cover types, will preserve open water, bank and floodplain habitat of the river in close proximity to the city center, and will provide a key piece of the proposed greenway that will promote recreational and educational opportunities along the river and its' tributaries.

Reviewers' comments: This project received high scores for relevance and for technical merit, and low scores for socioeconomic merit. The concept and implementation plan for the greenway needs to be more fully laid out, including indications of the applicant's ability to acquire or otherwise insure access and use of other undeveloped acreage along the greenway route. Important background work such as appraisals was not conducted. We recommend that applications involving land acquisition not be accepted in the future unless the land is secured by option agreements.

The maintenance and stewardship of the greenway is also not addressed. A clear plan for how the greenway would function and how these functions would be achieved is missing from the proposal.

Amount requested: \$450,000

Recommended funding: \$0

Proposal No. 16 - Old Mill Trail, Housatonic Valley Association \$244,046

Project summary: The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) and Crane and Co. began the long planned construction of a low-impact pedestrian trail, about three miles long, along the East Branch of the Housatonic River to connect the Hinsdale and Dalton communities. HVA, Crane, and the two communities are project partners, and the project has attracted many volunteer workers.

The Old Mill Trail will provide:

1. Environmentally sound access to the river (as opposed to a few constantly eroding bootleg trails).
2. A window on the history of the 18th and 19th-century mills built on the river.

Phase 1, from Old Dalton Road in Hinsdale to the old dam and Section 2, from the dam to Route 8. Phase I construction began on Section 2, because bridge and boardwalks are necessary to access section 1. Approximately 70% of Section 2 is complete.

Phase II, not yet begun, comprises Section 3, from Route 8 downstream to the Old Stone Condominium in Dalton, and Section 4, from the Condominium to East Housatonic Street.

Modest private and state grants supported the early work. Installation of bridges and boardwalks require significant grants.

Reviewers' comments: This project addresses the unmet need for remediation in Dalton and Hinsdale. While it seems a lot of money for a small project, it is a project worth doing and the money is well spent, funding the construction of two footbridges as well as other costs. We believe the trail is a resource that the local communities will really utilize. The historical component of this plan is laudable. Use of matching funds is notable, as is the high level of local involvement. The project will be implemented using a blend of volunteer and professional labor.

Amount requested: \$244,046

Recommended funding: \$244,046

Proposal No. 17 - (Project Idea) Integrated Habitat Acquisition Strategy,
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife \$3,000,000

Project summary: It is proposed that the Trustees specifically earmark a significant percentage (75%) OF NRD funds available for habitat acquisition and implement a more integrated approach to habitat protection. The Trustees should fund the development of a cooperative and integrated acquisition program that takes advantage of the long-term acquisition programs of state agencies and NGO's. The division would apply a number of mapping and assessment tools to create a framework to guide acquisition. The proposed approach would build on successful acquisition programs and use past experience with a refined focus on the Housatonic watershed. This would present an opportunity for agencies and NGO's to bring significant knowledge and experience to developing an integrated approach to acquisition.

Reviewers' comments: After the release of the reviewer rankings at the public meeting on September 21, our group convened and agreed we were highly satisfied with the transparent and inclusive review process established by the Trustees. Even when we were not in agreement with the rankings of NRD reviewers, we agreed that the process of using thoughtful criteria to carefully assess each proposal and create consensus rankings, and allow for public comment on the reviewers' conclusions was most constructive and effective. Because proposal 17 was not reviewed with the other proposals, and subject to a public comment period that included reviewer rankings, this transparency is lost.

Proposal 17 puts forward a process that allows NRD funds to be allocated by an entity other than the Trustees, using guidelines other than those established by the NRD process. It is unclear, for example, which projects that we have recommended from the pool of proposals would receive funding under the restrictive guidelines put forward in proposal 17. The official process offers a broader range of criteria, more in keeping with the original interests of the NRD funds. The funding of proposal 17 would be, we believe, inconsistent with the statute establishing the process for awarding NRD funds which specifies that the Trustees are responsible for identifying which projects receive funding.

To allocate 75% of the monies dispersed in this round for public land acquisition or protection simply does not make sense, particularly in light of the extraordinarily fine proposals that the Trustees have received. This proposal clearly and profoundly fails to address the spirit of the Housatonic River Restoration Plan. We urge that any future discussion of this proposal be undertaken in an open and transparent environment.

In addition to the above expressed concerns with the review process, it is apparent that by allocating \$3,000,000 to land acquisition, funding of proposals in other project areas will be diminished. In addition, it has come to our attention that some of the signatories to the letter of support accompanying this application were unaware that the proposal would be accompanied by a request for \$3,000,000, thus depriving many alternative proposals that accomplish important ends including education and land acquisition of consideration for funding.

Amount requested: \$3,000,000

Recommended funding: \$0

Proposal No. 18 - Rare Species Recovery on the Housatonic River, Massachusetts
Division of Fisheries and Wildlife in association with the Natural Heritage &
Endangered Species Program \$556,950

Project summary: The proposed two-year project would aid in the recovery of rare species injured or potentially injured by PCB contamination in the Housatonic watershed including mussels, fish, dragonflies, damselflies, amphibians, turtles, mammals, marsh-birds, and aquatic and flood plane plants. The project goals are to 1. Identify and protect rare species populations and their habitats to ensure their survival and to protect potential sources for re-colonization to the impacted populations of the main-stem of the Housatonic, 2. Identify and prioritize sites for active restoration and land acquisition projects to be proposed in Phase II, Request for Proposals, and 3. Provide updated conservation planning materials for a subset of towns within the Housatonic watershed.

Reviewers' comments: The studies and methodologies proposed should provide a basis for sound restoration efforts including identifying sites for Massachusetts Endangered Species Act protection and acquisition of critical parcels. Understanding the Housatonic corridor biota, including invasive non-native species, is a required element of determining a restoration plan. A strength of this proposal is that it will be implemented by the statutory agency responsible for oversight. This project should yield sound information at a cost vastly less than proposal 9.

Amount requested: \$556,950

Recommended funding: \$556,950

Proposal No. 19 – Housatonic River Floodplain Forest Restoration Project, Project Native \$587,256

Project summary: The Housatonic River Floodplain Restoration Project will restore and enhance the integrity of critically important floodplain forests along the Housatonic River through a collaborative, long-term and sustainable initiative. A grassroots partnership involving several organizations and constituencies will accomplish this through a series of coordinated and phased projects to:

- Restore the native habitat of a critical six-acre buffer zone at Kampoosa Bog.
- Place 100 acres of floodplain forest habitat and buffer zone under conservation easements along a prioritized riparian corridor in Sheffield.
- Mitigate non-native invasives in three Sheffield floodplain forest communities totaling 30 acres.
- Restore 20 acres of farmland abutting the Housatonic River into floodplain forest habitats.
- Structure the capacity of Project Native to implement active restoration projects and to increase its capacity to oversee projects in the long term.
- Expand regional outreach programs to increase public participation in the restoration and protection of native habitats.

This three-year proposal enlists a wide range of partners including The Nature Conservancy, Sheffield Land trust, Kampoosa Bog Committee, project Native, Southern Berkshire Regional School District, area conservation commissions, and individuals farmers to help restore priority natural communities in the watershed, increase public consciousness of native habitats, and provide the resources and capacity for local communities to act on that knowledge. The project is part of a 10-year plan to restore the natural habitat of the entire Sheffield floodplain forest riparian corridor.

Reviewers' comments:

This is a strong proposal and project for habitat renewal combined with excellent educational opportunities about the river's wildlife, habitat, and history. It received a high ranking in four of the seven locally derived evaluation criteria. We view it as a benchmark for riparian NRD restoration. The project is admirable also for its comprehensiveness and creativity and is the product of a consistent 5 – 6 year effort to incubate local, operational environmental talent. The holistic approach of this project is a strength, embodied by an emphasis on public safety, river navigability, habitat preservation, contamination remediation and broad and active community participation in decision-making and in carrying out restoration plans. It is reassuring that this project is being proposed and implemented by local organizations with a proven track record.

Amount requested: \$587,256

Recommended funding: \$587,256

Proposal No. 20 - The Rehabilitation of Forest Roads and Trails in the Housatonic River Watershed, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation \$2,000,000

Project summary: The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation manages 67,000 acres on 22 different properties within the Housatonic River watershed. This state-owned land has the potential to supply many of the natural resource and environmental services that were damaged by the release of hazardous materials into the Housatonic River watershed. However, many miles of roads and trails within these state parks and forests are in poor condition after years of neglect and overuse. Today, severe erosion has rendered many roads impassible, compromised public access opportunities, and degraded regional surface water quality/ecological habitat.

There are at least 118 miles of road and 226 miles of trail on DCR land within the Housatonic River watershed. A preliminary analysis of the largest state forests within this region indicates that 32% of all roads and trails are in “poor” condition. A complete GIS-based road and trail assessment of all DCR properties within the Berkshire Mountain will be conducted during the summer and fall. This data will be used to guide and focus rehabilitation efforts. Over the next two years, this rehabilitation project would selectively close, abandon and reconstruct specific roads and trails to improve regional aquatic biological resources and enhance safe and environmentally sound opportunities for recreational use.

Reviewers’ comments: Repair of roads and trails is not a project that is consistent with the priorities of the HRRP. This project is removed from the river in a way that will minimize its impact on water quality and ecological habitat. The idea of using NRD funds for road repair in particular seems to set a dangerous precedent, as this is an ongoing maintenance need more appropriately funded by tax revenue.

Amount requested: \$ 2,000,000

Recommended funding: \$0

Proposal No. 21 - Hazard and Debris Removal from the Housatonic River, Gloria Wesley \$9,238

Project summary: This project seeks to support Gloria Wesley's effort to remove hazards and debris from the waterways of the Housatonic River from Fred Garner park to Woods Pond for a one-year period. Follow-up to the cleanup work will include sending flyers to local stores showing the progress and asking for the public's support in keeping the river clean.

The removal of manmade debris from the river would be going on during the year, with Gloria and a crew. The clean up sessions would involve local paddlers and other interested parties including MASS PIRG. The Public Works Department from the town or city from which garbage was collected would then pick it up.

The removal of natural hazards within the waterways of the Housatonic River would be done as needed. Gloria would paddle the stretch of river from Fred Garner Park to Woods Pond at least once a month when the river is free of ice. Any hazards would be cut or pulled from the river to create a safe opening for canoes and kayaks. The woody debris would be left either in the river or on the bank.

Reviewers' comments: It is encouraging that there is an individual willing to take the time and effort to submit and implement a proposal for a river cleanup. However, this is something that must be done in all rivers everywhere and that local paddlers usually handle. While we do not support funding this project, a proposal to train paddlers as cleanup volunteers would be looked on favorably and would be in keeping with the recommendations of the HRRP for education, restoration, and community-based stewardship programs.

Amount requested: \$ 9,238

Recommended funding: \$0

We are pleased to submit this report and would welcome the opportunity to gather again as a citizen task force to bring a local voice to future allocation of NRD money for the Housatonic River.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Berle Co-chair

George Wislocki Co-chair

Karen Advokaat

Warren Archey

Deborah Ferro Burke

Dicken Crane

Shepley W. Evans

Paul Ivory Mercedes Pour

Leslie Reed-Evans

Judy Spencer

Maeve O'Dea Program Director, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation

Attachment 1

Evaluation and scoring guide based on Housatonic River Restoration Plan

For use by local, non-binding “courtesy” reviewers

The following evaluation criteria were used by local reviewers in evaluating applications for the Housatonic River NRD fund, Round 1. The criteria are derived directly from recommendations made in The Housatonic River Restoration Plan.

LOCALLY DERIVED EVALUATION CRITERIA				
	High	Medium	Low	Not Addressed
Water quality to be monitored, controlled and remediated				
Educational programs about river’s wildlife, habitat, and history				
Canoe access sites				
Holistic approach with emphasis on: public safety, river navigability, habitat preservation & contamination remediation				
Recreation use concentrated in specific geographical areas in order to minimize impact on natural qualities of river				
Ecological restoration through land acquisition, removal of unwanted developments, enforcement of existing regulations, River Guardian monitoring program, nurture wildlife, & stunt invasive non-native vegetation				
Community-based stewardship programs to allow local authorities/residents to participate in river preservation efforts				
Total Checks				