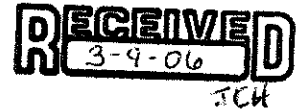




CONSERVATION COMMISSION



TOWN OF BECKET

557 Main Street, Becket, MA 01223

TOWN HALL – (413) 623-8934

FAX – (413) 623-6036

March 6, 2006

Housatonic River NRD Fund – Project Proposal
c/o Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.
30 Park Drive
Topsham, ME 04086

RE: Berkshire Conservation Agent Proposal

Dear Members of the Massachusetts SubCouncil and Proposal Reviewers:

The Town of Becket Conservation Commission supports the grant application submitted by Berkshire Regional Planning Commission (BRPC) for funding of the Berkshire county conservation Agent Program (BCAP). BCAP is a valuable resource to the Becket Conservation Commission. At this time, Becket does not have a paid Conservation Agent. The work is being done primarily by volunteers. We feel strongly that BCAP is necessary to support the work of these volunteers as they seek to protect the watershed of the town.

BCAP has served Conservation Commissions in Berkshire County since 2002. BCAP has provided useful trainings throughout the county. It has also provided technical assistance to our Commission, most especially in the area of dam repairs, and to numerous other Commissions in Berkshire Country. This technical assistance has resulted in substantial benefits to the environment by identifying significant acreages of wetland resource areas that were incorrectly delineated; by requiring project changes to protect wetland resource areas; through writing of Orders of Conditions; monitoring wetland resource areas during construction; thoroughly reviewing projects for compliance with permits; and by restoring wetland resource areas under enforcement actions. In addition, this work has resulted in reduced appeals, affirmed Orders of Conditions by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), provided cost benefits to applicants through a thorough local review ensuring that their project would not be denied, appealed or intervened by DEP, and has provided a much needed buffer between the Commission and applicants.

This grant application will restore, rehabilitate, protect and preserve wetland resource areas and the valuable services they provide through building local capacity and empowering Conservation Commissions. This will be accomplished in three ways. First, BCAP will provide continued training to Commissions on issues such as applicable state and federal laws and regulations; wetland, floodplain and riverfront boundary delineation; wildlife habitat evaluation; stormwater management; construction monitoring; enforcement; understanding construction plans; protecting the public's rights; and file management. Free, or low cost training sessions in Berkshire County are much needed because most Commission budgets are severely limited, re-training is necessary for ever-changing members, and the information needed to implement the increasingly complex Wetlands Protection Act is increasing. Second, BCAP will provide continued technical assistance to Commissions through review of permit applications, plans and including stormwater review, preparation of Orders of Conditions, project construction monitoring for permit compliance, inspections for Certificates of compliance, and assistance with enforcement. Through this proposal BCAP will be able to continue to provide affordable technical assistance. Finally, BCAP will develop a county wide Conservation Commission association to provide members with networking and support opportunities. Commission members would benefit from such as association by gaining access to a network of other commission members to exchange ideas and experiences, and for support.

Please consider this letter as our full support for the Berkshire Conservation Agent Program proposal. The work we do as volunteers in protecting our wetland resources in the Housatonic River watershed would be more difficult without this program.

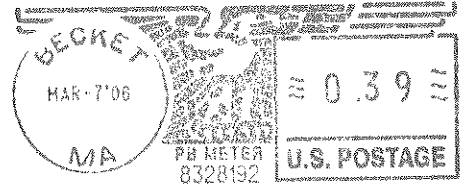
Sincerely,

Kathleen A. Betel
Chair, Becket Conservation Commission

Conservation Commission

Town of Becket
557 Main Street
Becket, MA 01223

ARRIVED 3/9/06
@ 10:20 AM
MRC



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