

13 October 2006

Citizen Review Committee
c/o Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
271 Main Street–Suite 3
Great Barrington, Massachusetts 01230-1972

Dear Committee Members:

We are writing to thank you for the careful consideration, review, and support you have given our proposal, *Housatonic Environmental Literacy Program (HELP) for the River*, currently pending with the Housatonic River Natural Resources Trustees. We appreciate the time and effort your committee exerted to read and evaluate all 21 proposals. We also would like to address your justifiable concerns about state mandates and curriculum content.

All Mass Audubon lessons are constructed using the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) Frameworks in Science, Technology or Social Studies. These frameworks are the basis for the content areas assessed by the MCAS (state achievement) tests. Additionally, we are mindful of the Benchmarks for Environmental Literacy promulgated by the Commonwealth's Secretary's Advisory Group for Environmental Education when developing curriculum to be presented in the schools. Housatonic Valley Association lessons are also developed to integrate with the content required by the DOE frameworks and the schools.

In this proposal, a core curriculum will be developed jointly by Mass Audubon and Housatonic Valley Association for HELP that will meld existing environmental and river education curricula and MCAS requirements with updated content specific to the Housatonic watershed, its students, and the community. Our curriculum, with lesson plans and reference materials, will be used in the implementation of the program by environmental educators hired to teach in the schools (along with our existing staff). Each unit in the curriculum will be presented in the following format: Topic of Unit, Targeted Age Group, Overall Objective, Essential Questions to be Covered, Unit Objectives, State Curriculum Standards to be Covered, Unit Assessments, and Prior Knowledge.

In the past, we have made many adjustments to both the scope and sequence of lessons to accommodate teacher requests and testing schedules. We, of course, plan to continue to adjust as necessary.

We know that the main reason Mass Audubon and the Housatonic Valley Association have built strong partnerships within the school communities is that we are always responding to the needs of those communities. As schools search for ways to provide students with constructive

knowledge about their environment, we search for ways to provide that knowledge in a quantifiable context. Basically, we speak the language of teachers, administrators, and most important, students. We want to assure the committee that we are always adapting to the needs of the schools.

We thank the Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation and its charitable funds for their continued support of environmental programs in the Berkshires. You are a valued component of the Berkshire community, and we welcome any further questions you may have about this or any other programs we offer.

Sincerely,

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cc: Massachusetts SubCouncil
via Todd Chadwell, Woodlot Alternatives