

## **Final Results of Round 1 Threshold Criteria Evaluation**

The following document summarizes the MA SubCouncil's final evaluation of Threshold Criteria as applied to all proposed projects. Threshold Criteria are listed and described below. A brief abstract of each proposed project, as provided by the applicant, is followed by the MA SubCouncil's response and brief rationale of whether this proposal passes the Threshold Criteria or not. If an abstract was not provided by the applicant, text summarizing the proposal from the project narrative is provided. Abstracts are categorized by each project's predominant restoration priority category, as provided by the applicant.

### ***Description of Threshold Criteria***

**1. Does the application contain the information necessary to proceed with an evaluation as described in this document?**

(A "NO" response may render the proposed project ineligible for further consideration.)

**2. Does the proposed project restore, rehabilitate, replace, and/or acquire the equivalent of natural resources or natural resource services that were injured by the release of PCBs or other hazardous substances?**

(A "NO" response renders the proposed project ineligible for further consideration.)

The MA SubCouncil will only fund a restoration project if the primary purpose of the project is to restore, rehabilitate, replace, or acquire the equivalent of natural resources and/or their services that were injured by the release of PCBs and/or other hazardous substances into the Housatonic River watershed. The MA SubCouncil will not select a proposed project for funding if the restoration benefit to the injured natural resource and/or its related services is incidental to the objective of the project. This criterion addresses the requirements of the Natural Resource Damage Assessment (NRDA) regulations at 43 C.F.R. § 11.81-82 and 11.93.

**3. Is the proposed project, or any portion of the proposed project, an action that is presently required under other federal, state, or local law?**

(A "YES" response renders the proposed project ineligible for further consideration.)

The MA SubCouncil will not fund a restoration project if there is an independent legal obligation to perform the project pursuant to statute, regulation, ordinance, consent decree (excluding the October 2000 Consent Decree regarding natural resource damages associated with the General Electric facility in Pittsfield, MA), judgment, court order, permit condition, or contract, or if otherwise required by federal, state, or local law. Regardless of whether a governmental body or agency has elected to exercise its discretion to enforce a provision of law, if any governmental body or agency has the authority to order a party to commence certain work or activities subject to enforcement actions, then the MA SubCouncil will consider the project "otherwise required" and not appropriate to be considered for funding. This Threshold Criterion is taken directly from the Trustee Memorandum of Agreement, Part 7, Section D (*see* Restoration Planning Strategy, Appendix 1).

**4. Is the proposed project, or any portion of the proposed project, inconsistent with any federal, state, or local law, regulation, or policy?**

(A “YES” response renders the proposed project ineligible for further consideration.)

The MA SubCouncil will consider the degree to which a proposed project is consistent with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and policies (to the extent the MA SubCouncil is aware of those laws and policies and believes them to be applicable and meritorious). The MA SubCouncil will not fund a restoration project that is inconsistent with any federal, state, or local law, regulation, or policy. This criterion addresses the direction provided to the Trustees in NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. § 11.82(d)(9).

As a related matter, all selected projects must be implemented in compliance with applicable laws, regulations, and policies, in accordance with NRDA regulations, 43 C.F.R. § 11.82(d)(10). Applicants are required to provide a list of permits and approvals that are necessary to implement the proposed project.

**5. Will the proposed project, in terms of its cost, be consistent with the stated goals of the MA SubCouncil to retain sufficient funds to 1) accomplish restoration over at least three rounds of proposal solicitations and 2) serve a wide geographic area that benefits the restoration priority categories?**

(A “No” response renders the proposed project ineligible for further consideration.)

In determining whether a proposed restoration project will be funded, the MA SubCouncil will consider whether the project fits, in terms of the project’s cost, with the MA SubCouncil plan to retain sufficient funds to accomplish meaningful and necessary restoration work after the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s cleanup is finished and to select a suite of projects that will accomplish restoration priorities. The MA SubCouncil has not established an explicit funding cap for each round of solicitations; however, the MA SubCouncil has decided that it will not expend an amount of funds that would impair its ability to accomplish meaningful restoration following the completion of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (USEPA) remediation.

**6. Will the proposed project, or any portion of the proposed project, be inconsistent with any ongoing or anticipated remedial actions (i.e., primary restoration) in the Housatonic River watershed?**

(A “YES” response renders the proposed project ineligible for further consideration.)

The MA SubCouncil will not fund a restoration project that will be undone or negatively impacted by, or that will interfere with, any remediation work, including completed, ongoing, and future actions. This criterion addresses direction given to the MA SubCouncil in the Trustee Memorandum of Agreement, Part 7, Section D (*see* Restoration Planning Strategy, Appendix 1).

## ***Restoration Priority Category - Aquatic Biological Resources and Habitat***

### **Proposal No. 7 – West Branch of the Housatonic Revitalization Project City of Pittsfield**

Abstract: 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 West Branch of the Housatonic River. This will be a multiyear, multi-phase project with two main focus areas that include (1) 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. The goal of the *West Branch Housatonic River Revitalization Project* is to restore the river corridor to a more natural setting that can be used and enjoyed by the general public. The future envisioned for this river corridor is a series of linked green spaces available for public use amidst a densely developed urban neighborhood. Improvements to the natural environment, primarily through riparian habitat improvements, improved water quality, and reduced flooding will in turn contribute to and stimulate ongoing neighborhood revitalization efforts in one of the City of Pittsfield’s most degraded neighborhoods. The project will require extensive neighborhood involvement and will detail an Action Strategy that will be implemented through the City of Pittsfield’s ongoing and future neighborhood revitalization efforts. The dam removal component will implement a recommendation of the MA Office of Dam Safety for the structurally unsound Mill Street Dam, removing a public health and safety hazard leading to improved natural stream conditions, facilitating movement of resident aquatic species, improving water quality, and enhancing public access along the West Branch.

Threshold Criteria Determination: Preliminary application of the Threshold Criteria to this proposal suggested that the Dam Removal component of the proposal passes Threshold Criteria; however, certain components of the proposal may have been “already required” under other federal, state, or local law (Threshold Criterion No. 3). Specifically, the “Stormwater Aspects” of the Greenway portion of the proposal appeared to be required by the City of Pittsfield’s National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Small MS4 Stormwater permit. The MA SubCouncil has established a policy that Natural Resource Damages recoveries should not be used as a source of funding for entities to meet their independent legal obligations (e.g., permit requirements pursuant to other environmental laws).

The MA SubCouncil, therefore, requested that the City of Pittsfield submit a revised budget that reflects the removal of budget items and costs for work associated with the City’s NPDES permit. The City was specifically requested to excise the costs associated with the portion of the Proposal’s Task 2 (Assessment of Existing Conditions): the entire portion titled “Stormwater Conditions.” In addition, the City was asked to adjust costs associated with portions of the other three tasks that may involve storm drainage related assessments and resubmit Tables 1 and 2 for the Greenway Component budget section, as well as a revised budget narrative reflecting the requested changes. After the City of Pittsfield provided the requested revisions excising the Stormwater Conditions, the MA SubCouncil determined that Proposal No. 7 passes Threshold Criteria.

**Proposal No. 9 – Proposal to Perform Aquatic Habitat Restoration of the Housatonic River  
ENSR Corporation**

Abstract: 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.

The project team will consist of ENSR and Mt. Holyoke College, with support from Trout Unlimited, Housatonic Valley Associates, and Trustees of the Reservations. The project schedule is Phase 1: November 2006 – April 2007; Phase 2: March – May 2007; Phase 3: June 2007 – April 2008; Phase 4: May 2008 – December 2009. The amount requested from NRD funds for this project is \$1,308,980.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Aquatic habitat restoration would benefit natural resources and services. However, to comply with Criterion 4, the following minor adjustments must be made to the proposal: (a) the criteria for prioritizing the specific aquatic habitat projects will be coordinated with and subject to final approval of the MA SubCouncil, and (b) final project selection will be coordinated with and subject to the approval of the MA SubCouncil.

**Proposal No. 11 – Housatonic Watershed Fisheries Assessment  
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife**

Abstract: Hazardous substances have had negative affects throughout the watershed. This has affected aquatic resources and impacted recreational opportunities. The Natural Resource Damage Fund offers a rare opportunity to mitigate these effects through science, management and outreach. We propose a project with two primary components. The first component will address the fisheries resources in the watershed. We will

conduct surveys of fisheries resources and produce 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 component will address recreational fishing. We propose to study of movement of the brown trout population in the mainstem and development and production of recreational fishing guides. The brown trout population in the river is of recreational importance, but is poorly understood. We intend to track movements of these fish using radiotelemetry techniques. This 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.

We also propose to use existing information, as well as newly collected fisheries data, to produce and distribute recreational fishing guides for the public. Awareness of the resource is a key component in determining recreational fishing access. No specific watershed based fishing guide currently exists.

[Threshold Criteria Determination:](#) This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Locating fisheries resources for purposes of conservation planning would benefit natural resources, while fishing guide books would facilitate recreational fishing.

### **Proposal No. 18 – Rare Species Recovery on the Housatonic River Massachusetts Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program**

Abstract: The Western New England Marble Valleys of the Housatonic and Hoosic Rivers are one of the most biologically rich and unique regions of the Commonwealth. The Housatonic watershed supports at least 117 species of plants and 33 species of animals that are considered rare and imperiled and are thus protected under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. The Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program, Division of Fisheries & Wildlife, is putting forward a project which would protect and 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-plain plants. Our project goals are to 1. identify and protect rare species populations and their habitats to ensure their survival and to protect potential sources for recolonization 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 for Phase II, Request For Proposals, and 3. provide updated conservation planning materials for a subset of towns within the Housatonic watershed. We are requesting \$556,950 in Natural Resource Damages funding. We estimate our project costs to be \$655,040, and will provide \$98,090 in kind. Our project spans two years, beginning survey in the spring of 2007 continuing through the fall of 2008. We will process data, generate conservation planning maps, and prioritize sites for land acquisition and restoration in late 2008, producing the final products in early 2009.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Locating currently unknown occurrences of rare species and updating known occurrences will enhance the capacity of the Commonwealth to protect these species, providing benefits to natural resources. At the April 27, 2006, public meeting announcing the preliminary results of applying the Threshold Criteria a member of the public asked whether the State was already required by law to protect Threatened and Endangered species. Protection of Threatened and Endangered species is part of the Natural Heritage Program's statutory mandate; however, the accomplishment of that mandate is subject to annual appropriation. There is no legal requirement that every effort in furtherance of that mandate be funded. The Trustees recognize a difference between a general statutory mandate like the Natural Heritage program has and specific, independent legal requirements, such as any federal requirements for the program. If Natural Heritage sought funding for specific activity required by federal law such as listing a new species, then the Trustees would respond that this is already required by law. In this case, this proposal is something that the Natural Heritage Program has determined to be in furtherance of its statutory mandate but for which it lacks the necessary funds; thus, the proposal.

## ***Restoration Priority Category – Wildlife Resources and Habitat***

### **Proposal No. 2 – Rising Pond Land Acquisition Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Inc.**

Abstract: Using a grant from the Housatonic River Natural Resource Damages Fund (NRD Fund) Berkshire Natural Resources Council Inc. (BNRC) will acquire and permanently protect three parcels of land totaling 161 acres. 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., of Appleton Wisconsin and is the land surrounding the Rising Paper Mill. The Rising Pond Land Acquisition will result in permanent protection and management for conservation purposes, of these important tracts along the river and its floodplain.

BNRC will complete all due diligence associated with the purchase of the property. Upon satisfactory completion of the due diligence, 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. Under current ownership the property is not being actively managed and is closed to the public. 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, educational groups and other organizations to maximize wildlife habitat value and the public benefit.

Threshold Criteria Determination: [This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Preserving natural habitat in the Housatonic River watershed should benefit natural resources and services.](#)

### **Proposal No. 10 – Proposal to Perform Bartholomew’s Cobble Restoration ENSR Corporation**

Abstract: 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

Fieldwork will be led by staff from The Trustees of Reservations, with assistance from ENSR and an active group of volunteers at Bartholomew's Cobble.

[Threshold Criteria Determination:](#) This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Correcting the sedimentation problem at Bartholomew's Cobble should benefit natural resources.

### **Proposal No. 15 – Clapp Park to Wild Acres Greenway Project City of Pittsfield**

Abstract: The City of Pittsfield, through their Conservation Commission, proposes the use of \$450,000 of NRD funds to acquire two land parcels located on the Southwest Branch of the Housatonic River, and containing portions of the river and its associated floodplain (see Figures 1, 2 and 3). 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 this overall project. The acquisitions are expected to take one year to complete.

The two parcels (G6-34 and Parcel G7-20 based on current tax map identifiers) comprise approximately 31 acres of mature forested and scrub-shrub habitat located within the R-12 zoning district of the City of Pittsfield (minimum 12,000 SF lots). 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.

[Threshold Criteria Determination:](#) This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Preserving natural habitat in the Housatonic River watershed should benefit natural resources and services. Establishing a Greenway should facilitate recreational and educational uses of Housatonic River natural resources.



**Proposal No. 17 – (Project Idea) Integrated Habitat Acquisition Strategy  
Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife**

Abstract: Please note – Project Idea forms did not request abstracts. The following text was excerpted from the project narrative.

We are proposing that the Trustees specifically earmark a significant percentage (75%) of the NRD funds available for habitat acquisition and implement a more integrated approach to habitat protection. Funding criteria should incorporate habitat assessment tools and takes advantage of developing mapping tools. This approach should rely on and benefit from the experience and knowledge of state agencies and NGO's such as the Nature Conservancy, Land Trusts and Berkshire Natural Resources Council.

Threshold Criteria Determination: The MA SubCouncil determined that the intent of the submitted Project Idea was to suggest changes to the overall restoration strategy adopted by the MA SubCouncil. Therefore, it was decided that because this Project Idea suggests changes to the overall restoration strategy and does not propose specific parcels to be considered for land acquisition, the proposal would not undergo review by the review team with other proposals. The Evaluation Criteria, which are the focus of the review team, were not designed to evaluate restoration planning strategy options but were designed to rank the merits of specific actions yielding natural resource benefits.

Nevertheless, Proposal No. 17 includes valuable suggestions relating to a process for planning land acquisition. The MA SubCouncil will consider the proposal's suggestions and whether a revision to its overall restoration planning strategy to accommodate the proposal is appropriate. If the MA SubCouncil revises its Restoration Planning Strategy a notice will be provided for public review and comment. Meanwhile, the public is encouraged to provide comments now on Proposal No. 17, which will be accepted as part of the public comments process for all Round 1 proposals.

**Proposal No. 19 – Housatonic River Floodplain Forest Restoration Project  
Project Native**

Abstract: The Housatonic River Floodplain Forest 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 Kamposoa Bog.
- Place 100 acres of floodplain forest habitat and buffer zone under conservation easements along a prioritized riparian corridor in Sheffield.
- Mitigate nonnative 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 and experience 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, \$963,181 proposal enlists a wide range of partners including The Nature Conservancy, Sheffield Land Trust, Kamposoa Bog Committee, Project Native, Southern Berkshire Regional School District, area conservation commissions, and individual 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. The project seeks \$587,256 in funding support from the NRD Fund.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Restoring and preserving natural habitat in the Housatonic River watershed should benefit natural resources and services.

## ***Restoration Priority Category – Recreational Use***

### **Proposal No. 1 – Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk Great Barrington Land Conservancy**

Abstract: 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 (2,000) volunteers have contributed to this 18-year effort, attracting approximately 5000 visitors/year. The Great Barrington Land Conservancy, partnering with Simon's Rock College and Flying Cloud Institute, requests \$133,308 for a three-year program (April 2007 – December 2009):

- Riparian reclamation (2.63 acres) (native plant propagation/planting, ecological management, invasive plant control, compost tea soil amendments) (NRD:\$73,719)
- Trailway management, riverbottom cleanups, trail amenities (0.5 linear mile) (signage, bulletin board/communication center) (NRD:\$26,967)
- Environmental education/outreach (9-18 interns, 15+ student programs or 225+ students, native and invasive plant workshops @ 60 participants) (NRD:\$13,071)
- Dissemination through revised/expanded 96-page River Walk Guide (3500 pieces) with card and map, and River Walk Website. (NRD:\$9,586)
- Measure native plant success by monitoring growth; test success of compost tea treatments (15/year) by monitoring plant growth and species composition (3 growing seasons) (NRD:\$9,965)

Injured natural resources and impaired resource services benefited:

- General outdoor recreational opportunities; passive use and aesthetic values of the river environment; wildlife viewing (trail amenities and enhancements).
- Surface water and aquatic biological resources (water quality enhancements).
- Wildlife resources (riparian habitat enhancements) by maintaining and improving the connection between state-designated rare species habitats.

Environmental education and outreach sustain the restoration of Housatonic River resources by altering behaviors of participating interns, students, volunteers and visitors and extending the River Walk experience throughout the watershed.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Riparian habitat restoration would benefit natural resources and services. Proposed activities should enhance recreational and educational uses of the Housatonic River natural resources.

### **Proposal No. 5 – Lee Riverwalk The Lee Land Trust**

Abstract: The Town of Lee, incorporated in 1777 and named in honor of General Charles Lee, Second in Command to George Washington during the American Revolution has progressed from a mill town along the Housatonic River to have its lower Main St.

designated as "genuine" historic New England Downtown in 1976, and placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The proposed Riverwalk, a short distance from the Village green on lower Main St. will provide a recreational and educational pathway along the river bank in a scenic and tranquil location.

This project will not infringe upon natural habitat will provide an opportunity to remove the invasive growth (Multiflora roses etc.) and debris from the river.

In Phase One we move from a concept plan (Peter Jensen 2001) with the continuing cooperation of landowners to trail design and permitting. Est. cost \$10,000.

The second Phase – construction. A supervisor will be needed (cost \$6,000) utilizing a contractor with volunteer labor and donations. Cost 30,000 – \$40,000

Support and encouragement for this project included Robert Nasson, Lee Town Administrator for post construction maintenance, and the Lee Board of Health. A local medical group has indicated financial support for signage. Lee students were involved in early landowner research and we anticipate their post-design and post construction monitoring support. Tim Gray, Past President of the Lee Land Trust and Executive Director of Housatonic River Initiative has volunteered to be project advisor.

This walk in its very special location will be part of the "beaded necklace" envisioned in the Housatonic River Restoration Plan, December, 1999. The vision of the H.R.R. plan is to have a location for recreational access in each town along the river.

[Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. The Riverwalk should enhance recreational and educational uses of the Housatonic River natural resources.](#)

**Proposal No. 6 – Proposal for a Beaded Necklace Housatonic River Greenway  
Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc.  
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission  
Berkshire Bike Path Council**

Abstract: 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.

[Threshold Criteria Determination:](#) This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. A bikeway/greenway could enhance the recreational uses of the Housatonic River natural resources.

**Proposal No. 8 - Proposal to Provide Enhanced Public Access to the Housatonic River in Massachusetts**  
**ESS Group, Inc.**  
**Housatonic Valley Association**

Abstract: 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.

The project will cost \$490,000 (including \$30,000 in-kind match) and will be completed within 20 months of funding. The first new access site should be available for use within 16 months of funding.

Tasks include:

- 1) Investigation of the physical, hydrological, and natural resources at each potential site
- 2) Selection of 6 to 8 priority sites
- 3) Meeting of watershed stakeholders to solicit input
- 4) Conceptual and final engineering design
- 5) Obtain necessary permits for construction
- 6) Prepare construction bid documents
- 7) Construction of each facility per bid documents and specifications
- 8) Construction monitoring
- 9) Revegetation of disturbed land with native vegetation along with follow-up monitoring
- 10) Develop educational materials to be posted at each new access point

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Improved public access to the Housatonic River could enhance recreational uses of the River's natural resources. However, to comply with Criterion 4, the following minor adjustments must be made to the proposal: (a) the criteria for prioritizing the specific access projects will be coordinated with and subject to final approval of the MA SubCouncil, and (b) final project selection will be coordinated with and subject to the approval of the MA SubCouncil.

### **Proposal No. 16 – Old Mill Trail Housatonic Valley Association**

Abstract: In 2003, 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). River access is a goal in both towns' strategic plans. Walkers, birders, cyclists, and anglers-tourists and residents-will use the trail;
2. A window on the history of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup>-century mills built on the river here. Schools view the trail as an educational resource, and other potential partners are interested in the history.

Phase I comprises Section 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% (~1700 feet) 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. Phase I, costing about \$97,000 (not counting the value of In Kind contributions) includes a major bridge, could be completed by the end of the first half of FY2008. Phase II, costing about \$147,000-also including a major bridge) could be begun in FY2008 and completed by the end of the first half of 2010.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. The trail should enhance the recreational uses of the Housatonic River natural resources, as well as benefit natural resources.

**Proposal No. 20 – The Rehabilitation of Forest Roads and Trails  
Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, Division of State Parks and Recreation, Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry**

Abstract: 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 three 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 Mountains will be conducted during this summer and fall. This data will be used to guide and focus rehabilitation efforts.

The total estimated cost of this rehabilitation project is \$2,725,000 dollars. \$2,000,000 of this amount is requested from the Housatonic River Natural Resource Damages Fund and \$75,000 has already been committed for this project in 2006 from the environmental capital bond program. Presently \$650,000 of environmental bond capital funding has been submitted for approval in the 2007 Massachusetts budget. 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 access opportunities for recreational use.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. Proposed road and trail maintenance should enhance recreational uses of Housatonic River natural resources, as well as benefit River natural resources. While maintenance of land and facilities under its management may be part of DCR's general statutory mandate, it is subject to annual appropriation. There is no legal requirement that every effort in furtherance of that mandate be funded. Further, the MA SubCouncil, in conjunction with its legal counsel, could not identify an independent legal reference in Commonwealth law

that requires a certain degree of maintenance for the roads and trails that are the subject of the proposal.

**Proposal No. 21 – Hazardous Debris Removal**  
**Gloria Wesley**

Abstract: Please note – Because the applicant did not provide an abstract, the following text was excerpted from the project narrative.

The primary goal of my project is to remove hazards and debris (man made and natural) from the waterways of the Housatonic River from Fred Garner Park to Woods Pond for a one-year period.

I plan on following up the clean up work done on the river by sending local stores flyers showing the progress and asking for the public's support in keeping the river clean.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal does not pass Threshold Criteria, because the application does not contain sufficient information necessary to proceed with an evaluation (Threshold Criterion 1). However, the MA SubCouncil saw some merit in the concepts of the proposal. This proposal will continue to be considered for future implementation as a Project Idea, so that the details of the project's budget, implementation, and environmental/socioeconomic impacts can be more fully developed.



## ***Restoration Priority Category – Environmental Education and Outreach***

### **Proposal No. 3 – Housatonic Environmental Literacy Program (HELP) for the River**

**Massachusetts Audubon Society, Inc.**

Abstract: The Berkshire Wildlife Sanctuaries and the Housatonic Valley Association are collaborating to create the "Housatonic Environmental Literacy Program (HELP) for the River." The goal of HELP is to restore and repair the relationship of Berkshire County's children, families, and the public to their river and its watershed through education 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 consist of an abbreviated Year One followed by three full years, spanning December 2006 through June 2010. Program costs total \$972,371, with a request amount of \$874,842. HELP will have a tremendous reach into the community, as we anticipate serving from 5,700 to 7,500 children, families, teachers, and the public. Our 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.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. The proposed activities could benefit the natural resources of the Housatonic River watershed by fostering an understanding and appreciation for the watershed's natural resources so that human behaviors are changed in a manner that facilitates the watershed's restoration.

### **Proposal No. 4 – Housatonic River Museum City of Pittsfield**

Abstract: 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 relationship between humankind and the river. The museum will join existing environmental and educational organizations as we celebrate the role of rivers in our landscape.

Museums serve communities educationally, socially, artistically and economically. We seek funding of \$298,100 for the development and construction of museum exhibits to be created by Roto Studio of Dublin, Ohio (totaling 1,500 sq.ft or 113 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.

Examples include: **Discovery Tree**- A giant structure that invites guests to embark on a physical exploration of the natural wonders found at the River's edge, **Fish Story**- Visitors create stop-motion animation with an underwater setting addressing the ecology and restoration of the Housatonic River, **Water Garden**- An interactive space showcasing the power and dynamics of water, and in partnership with the University of Massachusetts, their **Watershed Community Initiative** that uses modern information technology to enrich our knowledge of and appreciation for the natural communities in which we live. Off-site programs (e.g. **Community Boat Building**) are also included in this proposal.

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

Project timeframe: Exhibit Development and Construction- 18 months. Full Museum project- Three years.

Project stages: Planning, Schematic Design, Design Development, Construction and Exhibit Production, Installation and Opening.

[Threshold Criteria Determination:](#) This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. The proposed activities could benefit the natural resources of the Housatonic River watershed by fostering an understanding and appreciation for the watershed's natural resources so that human behaviors are changed in a manner that facilitates the watershed's restoration.

### **Proposal No. 12 – The River Institute Housatonic River Initiative**

Abstract: 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 Initiative/Housatonic Riverkeeper<sup>TM</sup>, scientists active in the fields of river chemistry, biology, and the ecological and human consequences of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), the sportsmen and women of Berkshire County, all environmental and stakeholder 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 relating to natural resource protection and awareness. The institute will create a research environment to train students and citizens in scientific approaches to river issues and foster recreational/ education opportunities through public use to aid in restoration from lost use of the river and its watershed.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. The proposed activities could benefit the natural resources of the Housatonic River watershed by fostering an understanding and appreciation for the watershed's natural resources so that human behaviors are changed in a manner that facilitates the watershed's restoration.

**Proposal No. 13 – Berkshire Conservation Agent Program  
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission**

Abstract: 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, training, and education directly to municipal Conservation Commissions. Commissions would receive direct technical assistance, including field work, 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 wetland bylaws, wildlife habitat management plans, and provisions of the Scenic Mountains Act. This Program would also build capacity through coordination of peer to peer networking of Commission members.

Matching funds from at least nineteen participating municipalities are projected to provide almost one quarter (\$80,385) of the total Program amount of \$328,940. NRD funds totaling \$248,555 are requested for this 4 year program by the project applicant, the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, partnering with Terry Eucker and Conservation Commissions.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. The proposed activities could benefit the natural resources of the Housatonic River watershed by enhancing the ability of local Conservation Commissions to protect, maintain, and preserve natural resources in the Housatonic watershed.

**Proposal No. 14 – Less Toxic Landscapes: A Healthier Housatonic River  
Center for Ecological Technology**

Abstract: The Housatonic River suffers from nutrient concentrations that diminish habitat for fish and other aquatic species as well as impairment from herbicides and pesticides. Diazinon, found in urban areas, is highly toxic to birds, mammals, beneficial

insects and freshwater fish. Changing human behavior through effective, timely education will reduce the overall toxic load from non-point sources.

**Less Toxic Landscapes: A Healthier Housatonic River** will adapt successful strategies used by 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.

Total cost: \$282,540 for 2007 – 2010. Request to NRD Trustees: \$216,540

Overall schedule: Winter: Landscaper Workshops, training for retail staff  
Early spring – fall: education for general public (repeated over 3 years)

Partners: City of Pittsfield, Western Massachusetts Master Gardeners Association.

Threshold Criteria Determination: This proposal passes Threshold Criteria. The proposed activities could benefit the natural resources of the Housatonic River watershed by fostering an understanding of the potential natural resource issues regarding pesticide use and an appreciation for the watershed's natural resources so that human behaviors are changed in a manner that facilitates the watershed's restoration.