

Unsung Heroes— Local Volunteer Spotlight Sally Loomis, Williamsburg

Open space preservation and environmental protection are clearly driving forces in Sally Loomis' life. After spending all day working in her professional capacity as the Deputy Director of the Environmental Leadership Program, Sally continues her efforts protecting the open space and character of her hometown by volunteering on the Planning Board, Community Development Committee, and Open Space Committee in Williamsburg.



Sally got involved with the Planning Board five years ago because she wanted to work locally on environmental issues to balance her professional work cultivating national leaders in the environmental field. Her involvement has been particularly rewarding lately as both the Community Development Plan and the Open Space Plan were completed. Both plans received much community participation and support along the way, and Sally feels the town is energized to begin the next phase of implementation. You might meet Sally at some of the upcoming HCI workshops during the fall, but come this winter, she and her husband Paul Jahnige and their two daughters will be volunteering on organic farms in Hawaii, Costa Rica, and Europe for six months!

HCI salutes all of the region's volunteers. To nominate someone for our volunteer spotlight, contact us at 413/268-8219.



THE HIGHLAND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE REGION

- | | | | |
|--------------|------------|-----------------|--------------|
| Ashfield | Conway | Huntington | Peru |
| Becket | Cummington | Leyden | Plainfield |
| Blandford | Florida | Middlefield | Rowe |
| Buckland | Goshen | Monroe | Russell |
| Charlemont | Granville | Monterey | Sandisfield |
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| Chesterfield | Heath | New Marlborough | Shelburne |
| Colrain | Hinsdale | Otis | Tolland |
| | | | Tyringham |
| | | | Washington |
| | | | Westhampton |
| | | | Williamsburg |
| | | | Windsor |
| | | | Worthington |

THE STATE OF THE STATE

“Smart Growth” and “Sustainable Development” are the current buzz words around the state government, and the Romney Administration is putting them into action with the creation of the Commonwealth Capital Fund, a consolidated grant application process that scores each community’s success in reaching Smart Growth objectives. These new policies and programs have substantial implications for towns, especially if they have plans for using state grant funds. Bob Mitchell, the newly appointed Special Assistant for Sustainable Development in the Governor’s new Office of Commonwealth Development, will be giving a presentation about these changes and how they impact Highlands towns. Don’t miss this opportunity to learn about and discuss how these policies affect your town.

The presentation entitled “Smart Growth In Massachusetts: The Commonwealth Capital Initiative” will be held on December 1st at the Cummington Community House at 6PM. For more information, contact HCI.



IMPLEMENTING SMART GROWTH OBJECTIVES, LIKE ZONING FOR VILLAGES, IS THE GOAL OF THE ROMNEY ADMINISTRATION'S COMMONWEALTH CAPITAL INITIATIVE.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, OR TO JOIN OUR MAILING LIST, CONTACT US AT:

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A NEWSLETTER OF THE HIGHLAND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE (HCI)

HIGHLAND HAPPENINGS

of Massachusetts

Highlands region

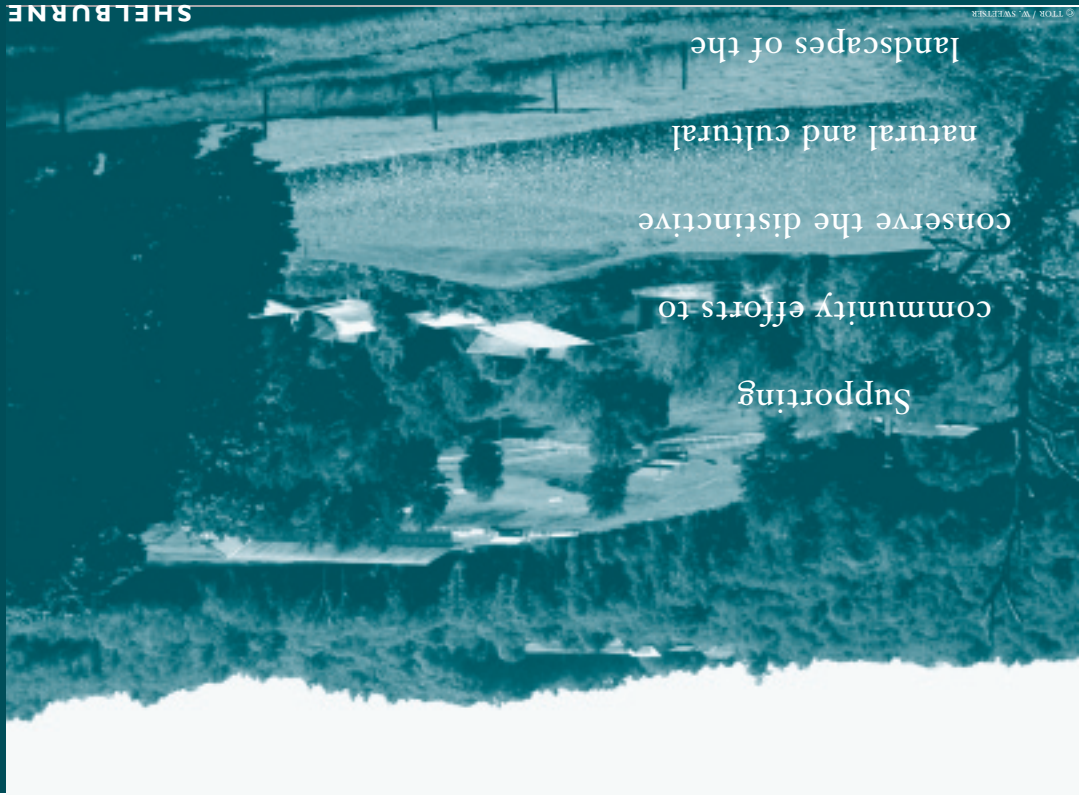
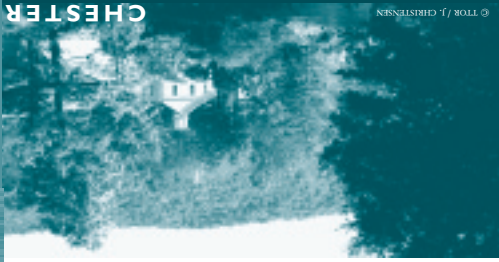
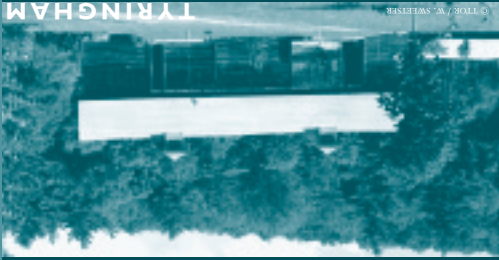
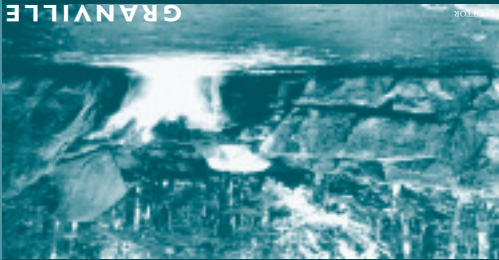
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Supporting



NOVEMBER 2004

ISSUE 6

VOLUME 3

HIGHLAND HAPPENINGS

HIGHLAND COMMUNITIES INITIATIVE
A PROGRAM OF THE TRUSTEES OF RESERVATIONS



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The Westfield River's 'Wild and Scenic' Designation Expanded

On September 28, 2004, Gale Norton, Secretary of the Interior, formally expanded the Wild and Scenic designation of the Westfield River to an additional 34.8 miles. The newly designated miles supplement the 43.3 miles originally designated in 1993 as a state-administered National Wild & Scenic River. The Wild and Scenic designation is meant to encourage property owners, regional groups, citizens, and all levels of government to act as stewards by promoting and protecting the river. This includes devoting more resources such as planning and technical assistance to the communities along these pristine stretches.

Secretary Norton said, "It is particularly gratifying to note the active involvement and support of local governments and private sector partners in protecting the outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values of these river segments. Collaborative efforts of this sort represent the very best in conservation."

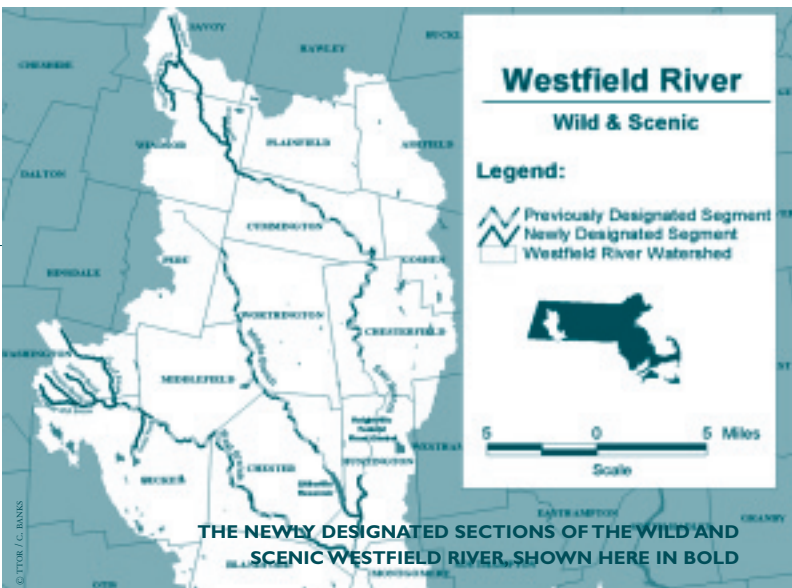
Under the National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act (NWSRA), a river must be free flowing in a natural condition, and possess outstandingly remarkable scenic, geologic, fish, wildlife,

historic, or cultural values in order to be designated "wild and scenic."

Some of the outstanding values of the newly designated segments of the Westfield River include:

- One of the best coldwater fisheries in the Commonwealth
- One of the finest whitewater canoeing and kayaking areas in the northeast, providing novice and expert whitewater for the annual Wildwater Races
- Outstanding historic resources including two historic villages along the river
- Unique geologic features such as the spectacular Windsor Jams and Shaker Mill Falls
- One of the largest roadless wilderness areas remaining in Massachusetts
- Home to endangered species and important habitat areas for biodiversity
- Extensive wetland areas, including areas along Drowned Land Brook in Savoy and Windsor
- Pristine headwater streams of the East and West Branches
- Jacob's Ladder Scenic Byway, which provides many scenic overlooks of the Westfield River.

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The newly designated segments include the headwater streams of the West Branch in Washington and Becket, and of the East Branch in Savoy and Windsor. It also includes sections of the lower East, West, and Middle Branches and Main stem in Huntington. 🌿

THE WESTFIELD RIVER WILD & SCENIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE PLANS TO HOLD EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR TO CELEBRATE THE RIVER AND THE NEW DESIGNATION. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT EVENTS OR TO SIGN-UP TO RECEIVE THEIR MONTHLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER, WESTFIELD RIVERNOTES, EMAIL WESTFIELD_RIVERNOTES@HOTMAIL.COM OR CALL 413/268-3129.

A Town Treasure and a Conservation Legacy

The residents of Rowe, on the far northern border of the Highlands, have myriad recreational opportunities of which to avail themselves, right in their own hometown. The Rowe Town Park was created thanks to a summer resident's fond memories of boyhood visits to Rowe. Inspired by the gift of Maine's Baxter State Park from Senator Baxter to the people of Maine, Percy Brown donated 400 acres of his family property to the residents of Rowe in 1955. Brown wanted the land to be enjoyed by the residents of Rowe, and specified that the land was to remain forever in its natural wild state "for beasts and birds, not including fish." His intentions were honored in the Rowe Town Park, established the following year.

Though accepting such a generous gift may seem like an easy decision, some residents did have concerns about maintenance and taking property off the tax rolls. "There's always somebody that's an 'aginner,'" noted Jack Williams, a



COME SEE THE GREAT VIEWS FROM MT. ADAMS IN THE ROWE TOWN PARK ON NOVEMBER 20.

selectman and former park commissioner, referring to the tendency for town decisions to attract at least one dissenting voice. Fortunately, most Rowe citizens recognized the wisdom and long-term value of accepting the land. They now treasure their park, and support its expansion. Since the first donation in 1955, the park has grown to roughly 1,500 acres through subsequent purchases—a few at below market price—and an additional gift from Brown. The park now includes a swimming beach, basketball court, horseshoe pitch, trails, and tennis courts.

As the Town's full-time Park Ranger, Sean Loomis has his hands full. In the summer, the beach is the most active part of the park—a pontoon boat on the lake and a children's recreation program keep the park lively. Plus, most trails in the park were built years ago and are always in need of maintenance.

The gems of the park—Pelham Lake and Mount Adams—are the main attractions for visitors. At 2000 feet from Mt. Adams, there's a sweeping view south, all the way to Deerfield on a clear day. The park holds reminders of the town's history as well. With old farmlands and stone walls, and remnants of the Browning Bench Tool Factory, strategically sited near an old flume from the 1800s when mills dotted the riverbanks, the park also holds reminders of the town's history. 🌿

THE ROWE TOWN PARK IS OPEN ONLY TO TOWN RESIDENTS, BUT HCI IS SPONSORING A RARE OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLORE THE BEAUTY OF THE PARK WITH RANGER LOOMIS. THE WALK WILL TAKE PLACE ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 20 AT 11 AM.

Laying the Trail's Foundation

On a sunny Saturday in September, hikers, bikers, skiers and horseback riding enthusiasts from across the Highlands region came to the Williamsburg Grange to learn about establishing networks of community trails. The workshop



PARTICIPANTS IN THE HCI TRAILS WORKSHOP DISCUSSED TRAIL MAINTENANCE WHILE HIKING AT PETTICOAT HILL RESERVATION.

© TTOR / W. SWEETSER

featured Highland residents who are active in trail organizations sharing the lessons they've learned in successfully building trails in Williamsburg, Ashfield, Huntington, and Worthington. Obtaining permission from landowners, sensitively laying out trails to avoid water and ledge, the types of trail designs that different users prefer, and the pros and cons of point-to-point trails and loops were the main topics of discussion.

According to the workshop's panelists, the key to maintaining a successful trail is building a relationship with landowners to traverse their land and respecting the restrictions they want on the use of their land. Walking the proposed trail with the owner is

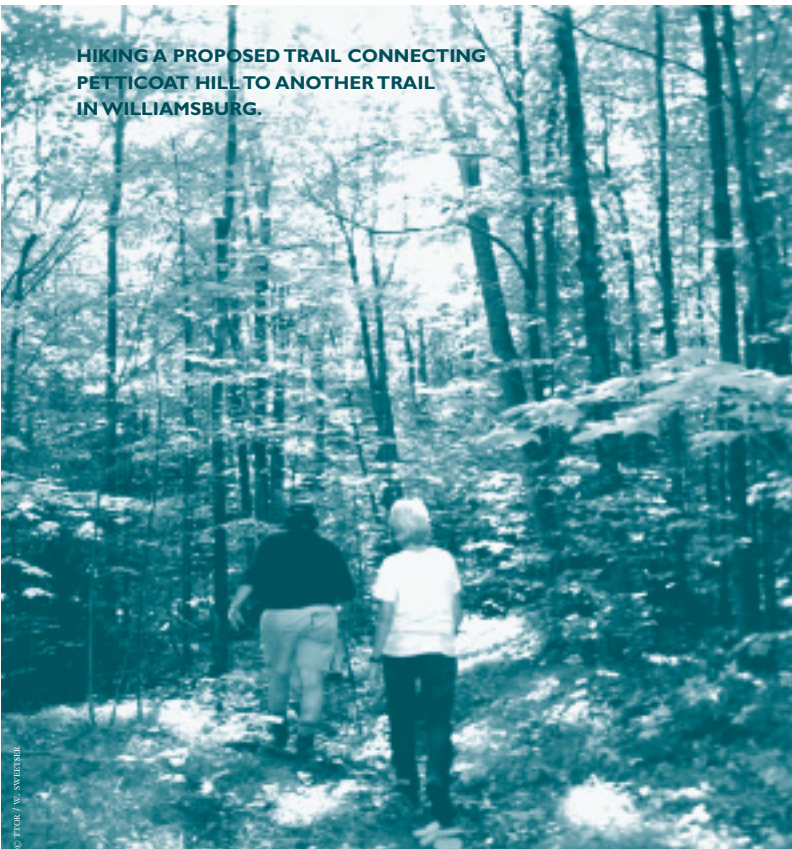
highly recommended, since it is the best way to ensure they understand the location and boundaries of the trail. Most landowners are much more comfortable allowing trails to traverse their property on a trial basis. After permission is obtained, regularly staying in touch with landowners about any concerns can prevent them from magnifying into larger problems and the removal of trail access. Signs that warn trail users that improper use of the trail could lead to its closure also help build respect and understanding between landowners and trail users.

Workshop participants were also guided through the nuances of Recreational Use Statute, which limits landowner liability for accidents that occur on their property. As long as the landowner is not charging a fee for access and the accident was not caused by reckless and wanton behavior on the part of the landowner, the landowner should not be found liable for accidents.

Diverse community support for trails is important not just for building trails but also for maintaining and protecting them in the future. One way to achieve this is to involve youth groups in trail construction. Not only does this capitalize on an available source of labor, it also builds a constituency of future town residents who have invested in trails and will therefore be much more likely to use and advocate for them in the future.

Participants were treated to a fine fall hike on Petticoat Hill after the workshop, and previewed a planned connecting trail designed by the Williamsburg Woodland Trails Committee. 🍂

A SECOND WORKSHOP TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSIONS ABOUT BUILDING AND MAINTAINING COMMUNITY TRAILS IS PLANNED FOR DECEMBER 8TH AT 7PM AT THE MEEKINS LIBRARY IN WILLIAMSBURG.



HIKING A PROPOSED TRAIL CONNECTING PETTICOAT HILL TO ANOTHER TRAIL IN WILLIAMSBURG.

UPCOMING EVENTS

FOSTERING A LOCAL FOREST ECONOMY: SMALL FOREST-BASED BUSINESSES AS A CONSERVATION STRATEGY FOR THE REGION'S WOODLANDS
Saturday, November 6 | Sanderson Academy, Ashfield | 9AM - 1PM
\$20 To register, contact 413/397-8800.

BARN PRESERVATION WORKSHOP (SPONSORED BY PRESERVATION MASS)
Saturday, November 6 | Petersham
For more information, contact 617/723-3383 or visit www.preservationmass.org.

MASS ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS FALL CONFERENCE: ENFORCEMENT IN THE REAL WORLD
Saturday, November 6 | Pittsfield
For more information, contact 617/489-3930 or visit www.maccweb.com.

SUBDIVISION REGULATION SERIES: THE NEW ROAD IN TOWN
Tuesday, November 9 | Russell Town Hall | 7PM
\$5 Please register in advance.

PLANNING THE FUTURE OF THE FARM
Tuesday, November 16 | Shelburne Grange Hall | 9AM - 1PM
\$10 Please register in advance.

ROWE TOWN PARK HIKE
Saturday, November 20 | 11AM
Free, please register in advance.

SMART GROWTH IN MASSACHUSETTS: THE COMMONWEALTH CAPITAL INITIATIVE
Wednesday, December 1 | 6PM
Free.

MASS ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS UNITS 7 AND 8
Saturday, December 4 | Stanton Hall, Huntington | 9AM - 3PM
HCI towns receive 50% discount. Call 617/489-3930 or visit www.maccweb.org.

SUBDIVISION REGULATION SERIES: SMALL CHANGES THAT MAKE A BIG DIFFERENCE (RESCHEDULED FROM OCTOBER)
Tuesday, December 7 | Chesterfield Senior Center | 7PM
\$5 Please register in advance.

COMMUNITY TRAILS ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
Wednesday, December 8 | Meekins Library, Williamsburg | 7PM
\$5 Please register in advance.

For more information on these events, please visit www.highlandcommunities.org or call 413/268-8219

PASSING THE FARM ON TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF FARMERS WILL BE THE TOPIC OF AN HCI WORKSHOP IN NOVEMBER.

Planning the Future of the Farm

Of the many challenges farmers face, preparing and planning for the future of the farm beyond their lifetime is a unique one. With complicated tax and inheritance laws, development pressure, and a struggling farm economy, transferring a farm to the next generation is not easy. HCI is sponsoring a special workshop to provide specific information and practical advice to farmers about these complicated topics. Creative methods of finding and supporting new farmers, the tax implications for incorporating and passing on a farm, and conservation strategies to protect the land from development will be addressed by local and regional experts. This half-day workshop will also offer plenty of opportunities for farmers to share their experiences in planning for the future of their farm. The workshop will be held on Tuesday, November 16 from 9AM to 1PM and is \$10 per person, which includes lunch. Please register in advance with HCI if you plan on attending by calling 413/268-8219 or email jchristensen@ttor.org. 🌿

NEW ADDITION TO HCI



Meet Jane Christensen, the newest addition to the HCI Staff. As the HCI Program Assistant, Jane will be utilizing her local knowledge of the region and her experience as a member of the Worthington Planning Board and providing administrative and project support to HCI. Welcome Jane!

The Highlands Region

of Western Massachusetts



map & guide



NEW PUBLICATION!

The Highlands is known for its natural beauty and distinctive rural character and history. Now you can explore this beautiful region with the help of the *Highlands Map and Guide*, an informative resource that highlights the many natural, cultural, historic and recreational assets that make the 38 Highlands communities unique. The reverse side contains an overview of the history of the region, from geologic times to the present, complete with illustrated photos. Look for the *Map and Guide* in town halls, town stores, and libraries. If you'd like a copy mailed to you, just let us know!