



# Northampton Rail-trail News

Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways, Inc. (<http://www.fntg.net>) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization that supports the expanding network of rail-trails in Northampton, Massachusetts. Volume 5, Fall/Winter 2010

## FNTG: Highlights from the first five years

It's now possible to walk or bike from Williamsburg to Leeds to Florence to downtown Northampton. After stopping for sustenance in one of the many restaurants and cafes, someone can walk along the path to Smith College then continue to the Hospital Hill development and continue to Easthampton.

Thanks to the efforts of many in the City and beyond, additional trail projects came to fruition this year, and many more are being planned. The Jackson Street off-ramp and Manhan Rail Trail to Easthampton were two stimulus funded rail trail projects (of a total of four in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts). These were completed or substantially completed before the construction season wound down. The "Big Bridge" over Route 10 to Easthampton is now striped and being actively ridden.

The trail has gotten closer to Route 9 in Haydenville, as part of a purchase funded by the Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways. The City of Northampton used this money to buy several hundred feet of the path as it crossed into Williamsburg, and then donated this to the Town of Williamsburg, after adding an easement providing full public access.

Planning and design of the tunnel to facilitate the connection to the Norwottuck Rail Trail (connecting from Woodmont to Damon Road then eastwards to Hadley, Amherst and Belchertown) is underway, and is scheduled to be completed as part of the return of Amtrak to Northampton in 2012/2013.

We submitted a proposal, in conjunction with MassBike and the City of Northampton, to build kiosks to let people know about the trails. This was funded, and we

hope to have these resources in place by the summer.

The Norwottuck Rail Trail from Hadley to Amherst is also in the process of being upgraded and resurfaced, with the design process underway.

In addition to the leadership provided by the City's Office of Planning and Development, we have had unbelievable support from the Mayor, City Councilors, Congressman Neal, Congressman Olver, Representative Kocot, Senator Rosenberg, Planning Board, Conservation Commission, Recreation Commission, Community Preservation Committee, DPW, BPW, MassBike, Transportation and Parking Commission, Manhan Rail Trail Committee, Easthampton City Council, the Mayor of Easthampton, Bicycle and Pedestrian Subcommittee, MassDOT, PVPC, hundreds of donors, and thousands of community members.

The Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways was established in 2006 to help support this growing network of transportation and recreation paths. Activities that we've helped to organize or contributed to include:

- raising money for trail design by the City of Northampton as part of our holiday appeal
- co-organizing or co-sponsoring ribbon-cutting events as new trails come online
- helping to organize annual trail cleanups
- assisting with the drafting and submission of grant applications

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- working with the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission and the City DPW to create new on-road signs advertising the trail network
- publishing and distributing nearly 20,000 free maps of the trail network

## Your dollars at work

As a result of the efforts of FNTG and the leadership of the City of Northampton, there are new paths which allow bikers and pedestrians to make their way into the heart of Northampton on beautiful new trails and bikepaths. The experience is already changing our view of the city, and reorienting how we interact.

These new routes are the result of years of planning and action by the City of Northampton, with the encouragement of citizens like you who asked for better options for biking and walking in the city. Your donations and your yearly membership to FNTG has helped the City of Northampton to continue dreaming, planning, building, and improving our access to walking and biking trails in our wonderful community.

Did you know that your donation to Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways helps to make future bike paths and trails possible? These charitable contributions have been used to publicize the trails, organize activities as well as help fund city efforts to design and construct new trails. Without completed detailed plans, the city cannot apply for state and federal funding to build these new path and trails. Relatively small amounts of these targeted donations leverage funds allocated by the Mayor and City Council, and then turn into major capital projects through transportation dollars. Collectively, with our giving and memberships, we send a powerful message in support of these trails, and speed up the process of getting more built.

Global warming, raising gas prices, hard economic times all point to the benefits of biking and walking over car use. I strongly believe that investment in rail trails in Northampton is an investment in a sus-

It's amazing to look back on what's happened in the past 5 years. Thanks to everyone for their continued financial and volunteer support.

See you on the trails!

*Nicholas Horton, President*

tainable future for our city. Thank you for your support for the development of great new paths throughout Northampton that will make our biking and walking easier, safer, more convenient, and truly enjoyable.



Figure : New roadsigns

As part of our annual appeal, please consider a gift of any amount to Friends of Northampton Trails and Greenways. As in previous years, these donations can be earmarked for City of Northampton Trail Design efforts.

It's even easier to support FNTG. Donations can now be made online using a credit card through our collaboration with JustGive. Information is available on our website: <http://www.fntg.net>.

Contributions of \$50 or more to earmarked donations to City of Northampton trail design efforts will also renew your membership for next year, while allowing trail design and improvements to proceed.

*Susan Voss, Treasurer*

## Spring lecture: Future of Northampton trails

We are pleased to announce that Wayne Feiden, Director of the Office of Planning and Development for the City of Northampton, will be our speaker at the spring lecture entitled *the Future of Northampton trails and greenways*. Wayne and many others within the city government have been working to create a spine of trails

and greenways that connect to a wider system of linear paths. Through the creative use of mapping software and images, he will lead a virtual tour of the trail network, from Williamsburg to Hadley and Hatfield to Southampton. Wayne will also discuss the ongoing effort to bring Amtrak back to Northampton.

Wayne recently received a national award for his ef-

forts around the development of our rail trail network. As recipient of the State Trail Advocacy Award for Massachusetts, he was singled out as an individual who has successfully influence public policy relating to trail planning, trail protection, trail development, or maintenance. While many people have been working on

these projects, with many key partners, none would have been possible without Wayne's unflagging leadership and vision. We hope that you can join us for what promises to be an interesting and informative evening.

*Julia Riseman, Secretary*

## Trail partners: Broad Brook Coalition

Fitzgerald Lake Conservation Area (FLCA) is Florence and Northampton's largest and most significantly managed conservation area, owned by the city. This 640 acre area is composed of a 40 acre lake, upland and lowland forest, 2 small pastures managed as early successional habitat, beaver impoundments and wetlands fed by the Broad Brook. The volunteer stewards for this preserved area are members of the Broad Brook Coalition (BBC). BBC was incorporated over 20 years ago as a non-profit devoted to "charitable, educational and scientific purposes." Part of our mission includes the "preservation and enhancement of the natural character of the Broad Brook area" and the conservation of the natural environment, wetlands and wildlife habitat.

Much of the environment at FLCA is managed with thoughtful consideration of how we can enhance and preserve habitat for wildlife and plant life. The volunteer Board of Directors has created a number of committees to help create and enhance the environment many of you know, explore and enjoy.

Our Stewardship Committee meets regularly, and all of us spend many hours in the field exploring and analyzing how to manage the conservation area. The lake water is tested, and aquatic and terrestrial inva-

sive plants are removed during volunteer work days. Living with beavers is desirous and a focus of our efforts, often at a hefty price. Habitat enhancement and creation is considered and implemented. Professionals are occasionally enlisted to help with invasive plant control, remediation of beaver activity, habitat preservation and enhancement, dam maintenance, and the survival of early successional habitat.

The land acquisition committee, working in concert with the city, has helped Northampton to acquire over 400 acres, since the original 200+ acre acquisition. The trails committee manages trails for human accessibility and the lake access for boating. The Walks and Talks program helps introduce and educate the public to the natural history of the FLCA. Programs are all free and accessible to different age groups and skill levels. Programs have included content on birding, trees, vernal pools, aquatic insects, wild flowers, habitats, mushrooms, ferns, tracking and more.

BBC's website is [broadbrookcoalition.org](http://broadbrookcoalition.org). We solicit contributions, and encourage new members and volunteers to help us preserve this environment.

*Bruce Hart*

## Trail Partners: Norwottuck Network

Norwottuck Network, a non-profit organization that supports development of bicycle paths, greenways, and public trails, has reorganized. The mission also includes encouraging the use of sustainable practices and environmentally sensitive materials in the construction, renovation and operation of trails and educating the general public about the benefits of public open space and travel that has low-impact to the environment.

The organization traces its beginning to the late 1990's when a competition for trails for designation as a "Millennium Trail" was held nationwide. A grant from American Express for \$10,000 was received, which supported the public mural on the Manhan Trail in Easthampton and signs for the Swift Way, a connector trail

in Amherst.

In addition to the revitalization of Norwottuck Network, a grassroots group called the Norwottuck Trail Users Coalition (NTUC) has come together to provide information to trail users about the Norwottuck Rail Trail Rehabilitation project proposed by the Department of Conservation and Recreation. Currently NTUC is gathering e-mail addresses of trail users and supporters who would like to be informed about opportunities for public participation and comment in the review and permitting process for the project. Anyone wishing to be included on the list may contact NTUC at [ntuc@crocker.com](mailto:ntuc@crocker.com).

*Anne Wibiralske*

# Trail Partners: Grow Food Northampton

Thanks to the City of Northampton, the Trust for Public Land, and Grow Food Northampton, our community will soon become a healthier, more vibrant and more sustainable place to live, work and get around in.

The Trust for Public Land and City of Northampton have partnered over the past year to ensure that the centrally-located, 180-acre Bean and Allard Farms in Florence will be preserved forever from development. The City of Northampton will purchase 24 acres of this land to create seven sports fields ("Florence Fields"), and another 39 acres of floodplain forest along the Mill River to protect habitat and host a walking trail.

Grow Food Northampton, a new citizen-based non-profit organization, has stepped forward to fundraise to buy the remaining 117 acres of prime farmland so that they may be forever preserved as a community resource for sustainable agriculture—the Northampton Community Farm. Grow Food Northampton has mere weeks to complete their fundraising. How much land they buy is entirely dictated by the financial support that our community members bring forward. In four months, they have raised \$510,000 of a needed \$670,500 to buy all the

land. They must commit to the acreage they intend to buy on December 23, 2010, and close on the deal on January 31, 2011. To donate today to the Campaign, please visit [www.growfoodnorthampton.com](http://www.growfoodnorthampton.com).

The Northampton Community Farm will be home to at least one organic CSA farm, Crimson and Clover; small farm business incubation sites, educational programs, community garden plots, and a farm stand. The farm stand and community gardens will be right across the street from the City's sports fields, enabling athletes and their families to combine recreation with healthy food shopping and snacking.

Grow Food Northampton is also working with the City and other groups to minimize parking needs at the planned farm by supporting the creation of bike lanes. A bike lane connecting the Norwottuck Rail Trail in central Florence to the Northampton Community Farm and Florence Fields would make it easier for people to choose clean transport over automobiles. Fewer parking spaces means more prime farmland dedicated to growing nutritious, organic food for local consumption.

*Lilly Lombard*

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Address correction requested