THE PIONEER VALLEY **Regional Greenways Plan**



INTRODUCTION & PROJECT SUMMARY

The Pioneer Valley Regional Greenways Plan was developed to promote cooperative and coordinated protection of open space and greenways between state agencies, land trusts, municipalities and non-profit conservation groups. This Regional Greenways Plan brings together many plans and priorities of private organizations, public agencies, and Pioneer Valley citizens into a single, usable document.

This Regional Greenways Plan is intended to be both visionary and practical. Our greenways vision is to create a linked network of protected open spaces across the Pioneer Valley that protect the region's special places, such as the Upper Westfield River, the Upper Connecticut River Valley, the Holyoke Range, the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail, the Manhan River, the Mount Hitchcock area and the Scantic River. The practical use for this Regional Greenways Plan is to create a valuable asset for anyone working on land protection, by assembling the many layers of mapped information on natural resources and conservation priorities together in a user-friendly format and at a scale with sufficient detail.

The Pioneer Valley Regional Greenways Plan reflects a confluence of planning data and organizational visions that have been created and compiled recently including Municipal Open Space & Recreation Plans, Master Plans, land trust and conservation group priority plans, and a statewide greenways plan, Commonwealth Connections: A Greenway Vision for Massachusetts (2002). This regional plan attempts to integrate these visions and priorities into a cohesive set of goals and strategies for the Pioneer Valley.



Municipal Planning and Zoning Tools

- Open Space and Recreation Plan. Prepared by volunteer groups or by consultants for municipalities, OSRPs are blueprints for how towns can obtain the benefits of development without losing valued environmental assets. The Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services must approve a municipal OSRP before the town can apply for grants administered by the DCS.
- Master (or Comprehensive) Plan. A municipality, working through its Planning Board, may develop a long range land use planning document referred to as a Master Plan. Master planning offers the unique opportunity for a community to create a vision of its future. Key topics addressed in a traditional master plan include economic development, housing, transportation, public services, infrastructure, cultural & historical resources, and open space & natural resources.
- Community Development Plan. The Massachusetts Executive Office of Environmental Affairs administers funds from Executive Order 418 to help communities proactively plan for open space and water resources, affordable housing, economic development, and transportation.
- Transfer of Development Rights (TDR). TDR allows the private purchase of rights to develop a site (in a designated "sending area") and the transfer of those rights to a different site (in a designated "receiving area). In exchange for the permanent protection of lands in the sending area, the 'sending' land owner is paid an agreed upon value while the 'receiving' land owner gains the ability to use those purchased and transferred rights to develop more intensely at an approved location.
- Overlay Districts. Many towns enact overlay districts to protect wetland areas, flood plains, watersheds, and aquifers. An overlay zone is a district superimposed on one or more established zoning districts which may be used to impose supplemental restrictions on uses in these districts.

Local Land Trust Actions

Community-based land trusts are experts at helping landowners find ways to protect their land in the face of ever-growing development pressure. Land trusts protect land in several ways: by working with landowners who want to donate or sell conservation easements (permanent deed restrictions that prevent harmful land uses), and by acquiring land outright to maintain it as open space.

State Land Protection Programs

- Massachusetts Self-Help Program. This Division of Conservation Services program is to assist municipal conservation commissions in acquiring land for natural resources and passive outdoor recreation. Eligible land may include wildlife habitat, trails, unique natural or cultural resources, water resources, forest, and farmland.
- Massachusetts Land & Water Conservation Fund. Federally funded, this



PREPARED BY THE PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION

THIS DOCUMENT IS DEVELOPED IN PART THROUGH THE ASSISTANCE OF THE FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION, THE MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION AND CONSTRUCTION, AND THE MASSACHUSETTS HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT.

SEPTEMBER 2003.

Farmland Protection Program. This program, run by the Natural

of the fair-market easement value of the land.

to help purchase development rights to keep productive farm and

• The Forest Legacy Program. Funded by the USDA Forest Service, and

Land owners can act in several important ways to help establish a healthy

• Donation of Land & Easements. Land owners may donate property

Join a Local Land Trust. Individual support of any of the outstanding

• Land Stewardship. Land owners may choose to act as stewards of their

property and take an active role in protecting open space through

allowing trail corridors or simply improving wildlife habitats in their

responsible forest management, re-establishment of native plant species,

- or easements on property - to an appropriate land trust or

local land trusts in the Pioneer Valley may take the form of

Recreation Bureau of Forestry. This program identifies and protects

environmentally important private forestlands through acquisition or

Resources Conservation Service of the USDA, provides matching funds

ranchland in agricultural use. The USDA will provide up to 50 percent

administered in Massachusetts by the Department of Conservation and

Federal Land Protection Programs

conservation restriction.

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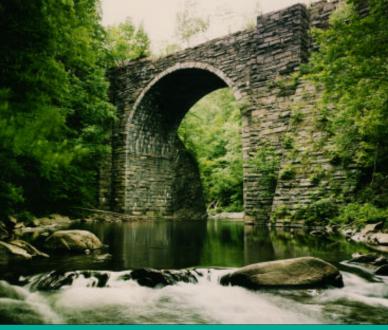
backyards.

LAND OWNER ACTIONS _

and vital greenways system in the Pioneer Valley.

government for establishing a local greenway.

membership, monetary support or volunteer effort.



LIST OF RESOURCES

GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mass. Executive Office of Environmental Affairs 251 Causeway Street, 9th floor Boston, MA 02114 (617) 626-1000 www.state.ma.us/envir

Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and

Environmental law Enforcement

251 Causeway Street, Suite 400

Boston, MA 02114

Boston, MA 02114

(617) 626-1540

www.state.ma.us/dfwele

DFWELE Riverways Program

251 Causeway Street, floor 4

www.state.ma.us/dfwele/river

(617) 626-1500

Mass. Division of Conservation Services 251 Causeway Street, Suite 900 Boston, MA 02114-2104 (617) 626-1015 www.state.ma.us/envir/conservation

Department of Environmental Protection One Winter Street Boston, MA 02108-4746 (617) 292-5500 www.state.ma.us/dep

> Mass. Department of Environmental Management 251 Causeway Street, Suite 600 Boston, MA 02114-2104 (617) 292-5500 www.state.ma.us/dem

LAND TRUSTS, FOUNDATIONS, AND **CONSERVATION ORGANIZATIONS**

American Farmland Trust New England Field Office 1 Short Street, Suite 2 Northampton, MA 01060-3952 (413) 586-9330 x 29 www.farmland.org

www.outdoors.org Fields Pond Foundation 5 Turner Street, Box 540667

69 Fox Farms Road Florence, MA 01062-1334 (413) 584-5624

Hampden Land Project PO Box 455 Hampden, MA 01036

Kestrel Land Trust PO Box 1016 Amherst, MA 01002 (413) 268-3160

New England Forestry Foundation PO Box 1099 Groton, MA 01450-3099

Appalachian Mountain Club 5 Joy Street Boston, MA 02108 (617) 523-0636

Broad Brook Coalition

Waltham, MA 02454-0667 (781) 899-9990 www.fieldspond.org

> Hilltowns Land Trust PO Box 259 Chesterfield, MA 01012 (413) 268-3160

Massachusetts Audubon Society 208 South Great Road Lincoln, MA 01773 (800) AUDUBON

www.massaudubon.org

180 Hemenway Road

RELATIONSHIP TO VALLEY VISION

The Regional Greenways Plan is a companion plan to the region's overall land use plan, "Valley Vision", adopted by the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission in 1998. Valley Vision identifies smart growth strategies for the region, to promote compact growth around existing urban and village centers, while discouraging sprawl. It also mapped specific locations, types and intensities of recommended growth, and areas recommended for open space protection. This Regional Greenways Plan goes further, identifying in greater detail areas targeted for open space preservation and greenways corridors, with strategies to promote collaboration among stakeholders to achieve protection.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

PVPC identified several key objectives for the Pioneer Valley Regional Greenways Plan:

- establish regional agreement on land conservation priorities
- provide a useful analysis tool
- foster cooperative land protection efforts
- preserve viable habitat areas and corridors for wildlife
- provide recreational opportunity and spiritual sustenance for people
- maintain healthy waterways & water resources
- maximize value of outside resources in protecting greenways establish legacy of healthy and protected green corridors for next generations

WHAT IS A GREENWAY?

A greenway is a linked network, or corridor, of open space. Some greenways provide recreation, while others protect natural habitat. A greenway may incorporate public as well as private property, but it always benefits the larger community.

Some important benefits of well-designed greenways include:

- enhanced quality of life and natural beauty in communities and neighborhoods
- preservation of native habitat for plants and animals, which improves species diversity
- protection of migration corridors for wildlife and plant communities
- opportunities for hiking trails and recreation
- farmland preservation
- containment of urban sprawl
- improved health of tributary streams and water quality in regional waterways
- reduction of flood damage in residential and commercial areas

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES AND TOOLS FOR **PROTECTING OPEN SPACE**

The following tools and strategies are recommended in this Pioneer Valley Greenways Plan to promote open space protection and to help create regional greenways:

Municipal Actions

- Massachusetts Community Preservation Act. The CPA enables communities to establish, through a ballot referendum, a local Community Preservation Fund dedicated to historic preservation, low- and moderate-income housing, and open space including active and passive recreational uses. Revenue for the fund is generated through a surcharge of up to 3% of the local property tax. While local adoption of the Act is optional, the Commonwealth is providing, as an adoption incentive, state matching funds totaling approximately \$26 million annually.
- Local Land Protection Fund. Many towns set up local funds to enable them to act quickly to buy parcels for open space, as they become available. Sometimes these are administered through the local Conservation Commission, with funding from Notice of Intent application fees and other municipal fees. A Local Protection Fund can also help provide the matching funds required by most state and federal land grant programs.
- Chapter 61, 61A, 61B. Under Massachusetts General Laws, Chapters

program is administered by the Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services and provides up to 50 percent of the total project cost for the acquisition, development, and renovation of park, recreation, or conservation areas.

- Massachusetts Agricultural Preservation Restriction Program. APR is a voluntary program, administered by the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. The APR program pays farmers the difference between the "fair market value" and the "agricultural value" of their farmland, in exchange for a permanent deed restriction that prohibits any use of the property that would damage its agricultural viability.
- Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Land Acquisition Program. The Department of Conservation and Recreation acts as a steward for the state's natural resources is through the direct acquisition of land and property interests to protect and enhance Massachusetts' natural, historic, and recreational interests.
- Massachusetts Department of Fish and Game Habitat and Land Protection Program. Administered by the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement, this program acquires river corridors, wetlands, forested uplands, and habitat of state-listed endangered and threatened species.



Westfield River

- Massachusetts Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program. ACECs are places that receive special recognition from the Department of Conservation and Recreation because of the significance of the areas' natural and cultural resources. ACEC designation creates a framework for local and regional stewardship of these resources.
- Greenways and Trails Demonstration Grants Program. The Department of Conservation and Recreation provides grant awards to municipalities, non-profits, and regional planning agencies to support innovative projects that advance the creation and promotion of greenway and trail networks throughout Massachusetts.
- Historic Landscape Preservation Program. This competitive grant program, run by the Department of Conservation and Recreation, supports the preservation and restoration of historic landscapes listed in, or eligible for listing on the State or National Register of Historic places.
- Lake and Pond Grant Program. This Department of Conservation and Recreation program awards grants for the protection, preservation, and enhancement of public lakes and ponds in the Commonwealth.
- Recreational Trails Program Grants. This Department of Conservation and Recreation program provides for the transfer of fuel tax revenue to non-profit organizations, government agencies, and municipalities for a variety of trail projects.

COLLABORATIVE AND INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES

In order to stay ahead of the rapid pace of development in the Pioneer Valley and achieve a regional greenway network, it will be vital to employ innovative and collaborative land protection strategies. The Regional Greenways Plan recommends the following:

- Regional Greenways Funding Pool: Funds derived from municipal • Community Preservation Act revenues, land trust contributions, donations from corporations and individuals could be combined in a Regional Greenways Funding Pool, to provide more effective and wellfinanced mechanism to act quickly on regionally significant open space acquisitions. This pool could be administered by a non-profit organization, with a board of directors made up of representatives from land trusts, municipalities, and conservation groups.
- Merging Resources on Individual Parcel Protection. The region has an excellent track record of land protection success stories based on collaborative funding provided by land trusts, state agencies, municipal contributions and individual donations. This form of collaboration is vital to continued success and is facilitated by such groups as the regional land trust meetings.
- Creating Local or Regional Land Banks. Some communities (i.e., Hadley) have already created local land banks or local open space funds. These are capitalized through annual Town Meeting appropriations, development impact fees or payments, individual donations or bequests, and even through donations from a Transfer of Development Rights ordinance. These are excellent vehicles for protecting land, and can provide local matching funds for state-funded acquisitions, such as Self-help grants or Agricultural Preservaton Restrictions.
- Campaign to Promote Municipal Adoption of Community Preservation Act. Only a very few communities in the Pioneer Valley (i.e., Southampton) have adopted the provisions of the Community Preservation Act, and benefited from the matching state funds available throught this program. A number of communities have voted down CPA measures at Town Meeting, in part due to strong negative campaigns by real estate interests. CPA advocates should develop an effective regional public awareness campaign to promote the benefits of CPA for open space protection, and to get more CPA initiatives on local ballots.
- Regional Open Space Coordinator. Only one Pioneer Valley community (Amherst) has a local Open Space Coordinator, and he has been extraordinarily effective in helping to protect over 5,000 acres of open space in over 30 town-owned conservation areas. Other communities have suffered from the lack of such professional assistance. Communities could band together to hire a regional open space coordinator, and only pay for a fraction of the cost of a full-time staff person. A regional open space coordinator would work with landowners on voluntary land or easement donations, write open space grant applications, and help assemble land protection deals.
- Promoting Adoption of Innovative Zoning Tools: Tools such as Transfer of Development Rights and by-right Cluster Development can help protect open space, but very few communities have adopted these zoning bylaws. Hadley and Hatfield have adopted a new and effective TDR bylaw. Both TDR and by-right cluster have recently been authorized through amendments to the state's Zoning Act. More communities should be encouraged to adopt these innovative zoning strategies.



Nature Conservancy Boston, MA 02114

Farmland

Framingham, MA 01701-2699 (508) 877-7630, ext 3404 www.newfs.org

New England Wild Flower Society

The Trustees of Reservation 572 Essex Street Beverly, MA 01915-1530 (978) 921-1944 www.thetrustees.org

Valley Land Fund PO Box 522 Hadley, MA 01035 (413) 585-8513

Winding River Land Conservancy 59 Court Street Westfield, MA 01085 (413) 572-1231 www.nature.org

THE FOCUS AREAS

Upper Westfield River

This focus area includes the entire length of the East, Middle, and West Branches of the Westfield River. It includes such features as Chesterfield Gorge, Glendale Falls, the Keystone Arch Bridges and West Branch Gorge, Gobble Mountain, Sanderson Brook, the "Pork Barrel", Bryant Mountain, Chester Blandford State Forest, Gilbert Bliss State Forest, Hiram Fox Wildlife Management Area and Chester Wildlife Management Area. The designation of the Westfield as a National Wild and Scenic River helps to focus the preservation efforts of local, regional, state, and federal agencies.

Scantic River

The upper reaches of the Scantic River in Wilbraham, Monson, and Hampden form the core of this focus area along the Connecticut border with Massachusetts. This focus area features East Brook, Temple Brook, and Peaked Mountain.

Upper Connecticut River Valley

Fertile farmlands, dramatic vistas, and interesting riverine features contrast with encroaching development patterns in this focus area. This focus area features Hadley and Hatfield farmlands, Mount Warner, Lake Warner, Fort River, Connecticut River (including Red Rock-Bashin District), and Mill River. While a portion of the farmland is permanently protected through agricultural preservation restrictions, much of this focus area is under strong development pressures.

Holyoke Range

The land in this focus area forms one of the most recognizable and treasured scenic areas in Massachusetts – the Holyoke Range. The Holyoke Range also serves as a critical corridor for migrating wildlife species. This focus area features Skinner State Park, Mount Holyoke, Mount Hitchcock, Long Mountain, Lawrence Swamp, Mount Norwottuck, Holland Glen, the Metacomet Lakes, and Cadwell State Forest.

Metacomet - Monadnock Trail Corridor

This focus area stretches along the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail from Provin Mountain in Agawam to Mount Tom in Holyoke. This focus area features the Mount Tom Reservation, Bear Hole Reservoir, the Ashley-McLean Reservoir complex, and portions of the Barnes Aquifer. The central feature of this focus area is the M&M Trail, which connects the Connecticut greenways system with Mount Monadnock in southern New Hampshire.

Manhan River

The Manhan River forms the central feature of this focus area that includes Little Mountain, the Oxbow of the Connecticut River and a portion of the Barnes Aquifer.

Mount Hitchcock

The Brimfield State Forest sits in the center of this focus area located in the far southeastern portion of the Pioneer Valley region. This focus area features Norcross Wildlife Sanctuary, Mount Pisgah, Mount Hitchcock, Cedar Swamp, Conant Brook Reservoir, Norcross Ponds, and the Quinebaug River

205 Portland Street, Suite 400 (617) 227-7017 www.nature.org

26 Central Street, Suite 34

(413) 781-6045

Trust for Public Land

Boston, MA 02108

(617) 367-6200

www.tpl.org

33 Union Street, 4th floor

www.pvpc.org

Pioneer Valley Planning Commission

West Springfield, MA 01089-2787

61, 61A, and 61B are designed to encourage the preservation and enhancement of forests, agricultural and horticultural lands, and open space. These programs offer significant local tax benefits to property owners who are willing to make long-term commitments to preserving their land in these categories. When such properties go on the market, towns have a 120 day right of first refusal to purchase them for open space.

PIONEER VALLEY PLANNING COMMISSION **26 CENTRAL STREET SUITE 34** WEST SPRINGFIELD, MA 01089-2787 413 781-6045

All photographs by Christopher Curtis

Mount Holyoke Range