

# RIVER VIEWS



## LAURIE SANDERS

Ecologist, Naturalist, & Co-Director  
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“Because Northampton’s history is inextricably tied to the river, to its broad floodplain and to the water power that its tributaries provided, a healthy river has a huge impact on our work at Historic Northampton. When we offer programs related to the river, they fill up immediately. You could say, we’re flooded with calls.

The Valley’s combination of geology, ecology, beauty and human history is extraordinary. And thankfully, some of the most significant areas have been permanently protected. Not only are more people boating on the river, but there are so many more people paddling kayaks and participating in community rowing programs. That’s one of the many, many benefits of a cleaner river. Like Water Rat says to Mole in Kenneth Grahame’s *Wind in the Willows*: ‘Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing—absolutely nothing—half so much worth doing as simply messing about in boats.’

For ten years, I was the host and producer of *Field Notes*, a weekly natural history radio feature that aired on WFCR/NEPR. Several years ago I interviewed a middle-aged employee at the Chicopee wastewater treatment plant. He had worked at the plant for most of his career and honestly, he had a very filthy work. When a sewer line got plugged, he was the one who had the unenviable task of cleaning it out. Still, after he told me about that awful part of his job, he then said that he was proud of that work. He knew that because of it, his children, his grandchildren and their children would know a cleaner, healthier river. He got teary telling me. A cleaner river was his legacy.”



Photo by Chris Curtis