



Photo credit: Google Earth

A Bridge So Near

For years, under the persistent enthusiasm of Polly Bartlett, DRWA has been working toward building a pedestrian bridge so hikers on the Mahican-Mohawk Trail can cross the South River near its confluence with the Deerfield River in Conway, MA. In March, DRWA signed a formal agreement with TransCanada Hydro Northeast (TC), which owns the land and has made a major financial contribution to the project as part of requirements under

the Federal licensing agreement for the Deerfield power stations and dams.

TC will supervise the construction of the bridge while DRWA will purchase the materials with funds it has collected over the past few years plus additional contributions from TC. DRWA's contributions come from about \$64,200 that it has lined up at the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, the Fields Pond Foundation, and the Massachusetts Greenways program, plus an escrow account from the power company which was the previous owner of the site.

The bridge, which will be made largely of glass reinforced plastic, was designed and will be built by ETTEchtonic, Inc, of Philadelphia. TC will get all required permits to build the bridge and hopes to see it built during the 2008 construction season.

The bridge location (above) is near the confluence of the South and the Deerfield rivers about 6 miles southeast

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of Shelburne Falls and 2-½ miles upstream from the I-91 highway bridge. The spot is where a railroad used to cross the South River on a bridge 175 feet above the river and 550 feet long. To get to the location, take Station Road south to its end from Bardwell Ferry Road. There is a steep foot trail (a section of the Mahican–Mohawk) to where the 100-foot pedestrian bridge will cross at a lower level on the stone piers in the river left from the old railroad bridge.

Volunteers Needed for 2008 Water Quality Studies

April will mark the beginning of another year of DRWA water quality monitoring of the Deerfield River and its tributaries. 2008 water quality monitoring activities will include springtime pH and alkalinity testing and the annual fall macroinvertebrate assessment.

We'll also begin a **lake water quality monitoring program** this year (delayed from an original start date of spring 2007). We plan to focus our initial effort on the recreationally popular Ashfield Lake, where we will sample a number of water quality attributes from spring into the fall. We're looking for volunteers with a boat or canoe who would like to participate in regular (monthly from May through October) sampling of the lake. Volunteers will be trained in collecting water samples and in taking various measurements such as water temperature and transparency. DRWA invites anyone interested in assisting with any of these projects to contact Mike Cole at 413-475-3610 or mcole@abrinc.com.

DEP Follows up DRWA's 2007 Bacteria Monitoring

In the Fall 2007 *Current*, we reported the Colrain Central School septic field as the suspected source of elevated bacteria concentrations in the North River immediately downriver of the route 112 bridge in Colrain center.

A follow-up investigation by the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection determined that the bacteria in the river at this location was of animal origin (what type of animal(s) could not be determined with the tests they used). Accordingly, the school and town were informed of these newer findings; the source of the elevated summertime counts remains undetermined, but now appears to be unrelated to any failing septic systems or other source of human waste.

Graduate Student Will Examine Land Use Effect on River Health

Jason Saltman, a graduate student at Green Mountain College in Poultney, Vermont, is focusing his graduate research on the Deerfield River watershed. Using macroinvertebrate data collected by DRWA over the past three years, Jason will examine relationships between land use and the biological health of rivers in the watershed. Jason will use spatial data describing the land use of the watershed and Geographic Information System (GIS) analysis software to examine whether river health is lower in more developed areas of the watershed (e.g. a lot of urbanization or agriculture). We hope the results of the study help us better understand the range of biological conditions in our rivers and how much change in the landscape from a natural, forested state results in a measurable change in these conditions.



Spring runoff in April brings its typical roar to the Potholes in Shelburne Falls, where the ice has demolished the flashboards atop the dam (above) and (below) at Gardner's Falls, where black water spills over the dam for the entire width of the river. Both spots have good observation decks.



Don't Miss RiverFest at Shelburne Falls!

On Saturday, June 14, the village of Shelburne Falls will once again celebrate the Deerfield River and the surrounding countryside with RiverFest.

RiverFest is an annual tribute to the Deerfield River, and the role it plays in people's lives and the ecosystem of western Massachusetts.

Through entertaining, educational displays and demonstrations, a unique "Frog & Flower Parade" of schoolchildren (and adults), art, crafts, tag, book and plant sales, RiverFest helps people of all ages—area residents as well as visitors—gain a greater understanding of and appreciation for a rich natural resource.

In keeping with this year's theme, "Celebrating a Working Watershed," grownups and youngsters will be able to meet some of the spectacular birds of prey that soar through local skies; find out about the environmental and health benefits of eating locally grown foods; learn about sources of safe, sustainable energy; discover how to identify invasive and edible wild plants; take a ride on a historic trolley car; and even spend some quality time rafting on the river.

There will be musicians and vendors throughout the village; children's games; singing and storytelling; creative workshops leading up to the colorful "Frog & Flower Parade" (you don't have to be a kid to march along!) and much, much more.

While visiting RiverFest, enjoy the many shops and restaurants of Shelburne Falls amid the scenic beauty of the Deerfield River watershed. Come early, stay late. You'll take home inspiration and wonderful memories.

RiverFest is sponsored by the Deerfield River Watershed Association in conjunction with area merchants, organizations and the support of the Local Cultural Councils of Ashfield, Buckland, Charlemont/Hawley, Colrain, Conway, Greenfield, Rowe and Shelburne.

A Rough Winter Means Tough Trail Repairs

Through most of April, the Mahican-Mohawk trail was well covered with snow in many parts and unsuitable for hiking. As soon as possible, a crew will go out to assess the condition of the trail and its needs for this year.

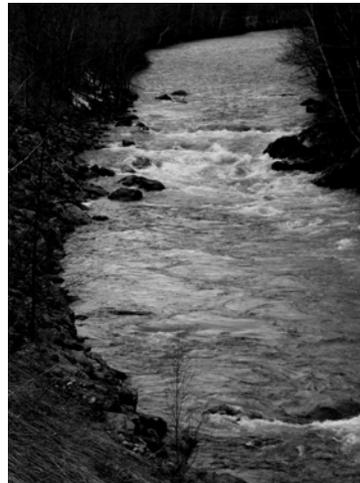
Then DRWA will be asking for volunteers to help repair the ravages of the winter, so keep in touch with the web site www.deerfieldriver.org for further details and work dates.

RiverFest Hikes on the M-M Trail

As part of RiverFest, there will be two hikes on Sunday, June 15. One hike suitable for families with small children will be from Shelburne Center down to the main M-M trail and upstream coming back out at the Route 2 Trail Head just east of the State Police barracks. This hike is about two and a half miles long and includes lots of flowers to enjoy, Sluice Brook as it tumbles into the Deerfield River, Wilcox Hollow access to the River, and the former forestry nursery with its many non-native plants. This hike begins at 9:30.

A second hike will be in the Mohawk Trail State Park in Charlemont and will climb to the ridge above the campground to Todd Mountain and its view down the Deerfield River valley. Although this hike is only about four miles long, it climbs 1200 feet in three miles and may not be suitable for young children. The hike starts at 9:00 am.

For all hikers, there will be a picnic at the Buckland Recreation Area on Route 112 after the hikes. Hikes are free of charge, but registration is mandatory to arrange for car spotting and food preparation by local supporters. Call Polly Bartlett at 413-625-6628 for details and to sign up.



Zoar Gap—A favorite run for kayaks and white-water canoeists in summer, turns into a formidable Class 5 or higher torrent when reservoirs are full and Vermont snows melt in the spring.

Photos: Ted Merrill

Become a DRWA Member!

Name.....
Street.....
Town..... Zip.....
Email.....

**Individual \$15 • Family/Business \$25
Contributing \$50 • Sustaining \$100
Patron \$500**

**Send to DRWA, 15 Bank Row, Suite A,
Greenfield, MA 01301**

Hike and Bike Schedule for Spring 2008

Sunday, April 20. Hike and pancakes at Davenport's Sugar House. This is a popular event. We will meet at 9:00 am at Davenport's Sugar House on Tower Road in Shelburne and hike to the High Ledges. The weather will dictate what kind of footwear to use as we climb a half mile on a woods road to the ridge then a mile along the ridge to High Ledges with its spectacular view down into Shelburne Falls and up the Deerfield River. We then return to the Sugar house for you choice of pancakes, fritters or waffles with maple syrup.

Saturday, May 3. Wild flowers of Bear Swamp in Ashfield. This is a joint hike with the Appalachian Mountain Club. Meet at 11:00 am at trail head or at 9:00 am for breakfast. Call Polly Bartlett for details at 413-625-6628

Saturday, June 7. Jay Rasku will lead us on a Breeding Bird Survey for the Mass Audubon Society along the Green River. This walk can be for any experience level. Bring binoculars, insect repellent, water and a snack. Meet at Foster's Supermarket at 70 Allen Street at 6:30 am. We will return at noon.

Sunday, June 15. Two hikes on the Mahican-Mohawk Trail and picnic at the Buckland Recreation Area. See details under RiverFest.

All hikes are free and open to the public. Priority given to DRWA members.

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The Deerfield River Watershed Association is a non-profit organization with the mission to preserve, protect, and enhance the natural resources of the Deerfield River watershed in south-eastern Vermont and north-western Massachusetts. Its activities include water quality monitoring, educational programs, administration of volunteer programs and participation in regulatory matters.

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www.deerfieldriver.org