Franklin Conservation District

River Access Guidelines

Strategies for Managing Public Access to Our Rivers and Streams

Report prepared for the Franklin Conservation District
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Franklin Conservation District

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A great many individuals and organizations have participated in the initiative. The content and full scope of this report would not have been possible without their generous contributions of time and attention – and their passionate commitment to the important issue of maintaining sustainable public access to our waterways.

A complete list of stakeholders engaged during the preparation of this report appears in the Appendix. Key participants are listed below:

Bob Armstrong, Conway Selectboard and Conservation Commission
Laurie Booshada, Deerfield resident
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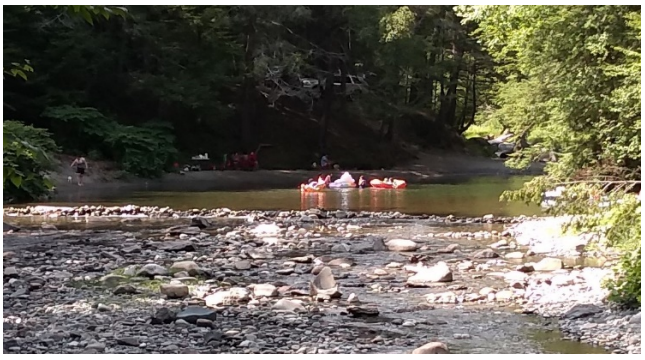
Joe Rogers, Williamsburg resident and former FCD Coordinator
Teri Rutherford, Good Bunch Farm
Kristen Sykes, Appalachian Mountain Club
Eric Twarog, Greenfield Director of Planning & Development



Cover photo of tubers courtesy of Jim Perry, Deerfield River Watershed Association. All other photos by Michael Leff.

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Introduction and Overview

Our rivers and streams are a cherished feature of the New England landscape, and nowhere more so than in Western Massachusetts. Clean water, scenic surroundings, and abundant recreational opportunities create a natural resource that has been enjoyed by generations of residents and visitors alike. These waterways are an important part of the region's appeal – and that appeal has increasingly beckoned not only to local folk but to people in nearby population centers and beyond who are seeking rural relief from urban environments. So much so in recent years that heavy use of accessible rivers and streams poses a danger of their being "loved to death."

It's critically important to address the issues caused by that trend in order to keep this precious resource truly accessible to would-be users, including local residents and out-of-town visitors. The situation has become all the more pressing in light of ongoing climate change, increasing the need for respite from higher temperatures everywhere and especially in cities. On top of that, the COVID-19 pandemic has both heightened the need for an outdoor escape and exacerbated the risks.

All of that poses serious challenges since many popular sites are ill-equipped to handle the impacts of more people seeking relief from pressures and pursuing pleasurable outlets. And the impacts are numerous, ranging from streambank erosion to blocked roadways to cross-cultural clashes.

Private landowners – whether individuals, municipalities, environmental agencies, or commercial entities – that may have welcomed neighbors and other local residents over the years are understandably concerned about the damage, noise, hazards, and other issues resulting from increased traffic. This has led to numerous popular sites being closed to the public – which has often just shifted the pressure to other spots up- or downstream. And there are no easy solutions.

Nevertheless, the need for public access to our rivers and streams demands attention and exploration of possible strategies for creating – and maintaining – sustainable access.

To that end, the Franklin Conservation District launched its Public River Access initiative during the summer of 2019, with grant funding from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. We set out to examine the issues, identify needs, and seek long-range solutions. We did that by researching experiences elsewhere, visiting numerous sites along several rivers in the region (focused particularly on the Deerfield River Watershed), meeting with a wide range of stakeholders – including landowners, nearby residents, municipal and state agency representatives, environmental organizations, and river users. This culminated in a special "World Café" forum, convened online in the spring of 2020.

While we did not find ultimate solutions – nor did we expect to – we did compile numerous tips and strategies that we believe can help ease the problem. We documented the need for financial investment in ongoing oversight. Finally, we charted a way forward – a Call to Action – involving broad stakeholder involvement and creative coalitions.

Our findings are presented in the pages that follow.

Part A: Our Rivers as Public Resource

> *"Clean, healthy rivers are the lifeblood of our communities and are vital to our health, safety, and quality of life. Most Americans live within a mile of river or stream, and much of our drinking water comes directly or indirectly from rivers and streams. Beyond providing all these useful services, rivers are also just plain fun. Rivers, streams, and their surrounding lands offer endless opportunities for swimming, fishing and boating, hiking, wildlife watching, and picnicking. Whether one is seeking exhilaration, solitude, or a much-needed break from the daily grind, there is a river our there beckoning us to come out and play."* – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

According to the *"A Framework for Resilience: Responding to Climate Change in the Deerfield River Watershed"* (Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2019), "The **Deerfield River Watershed** covers an area of 665 square miles, and is home to one of the coldest and cleanest rivers in Massachusetts. It originates in the Green Mountains of southern Vermont, flowing approximately 70 miles and dropping roughly 2,000 feet before draining into the Connecticut River in Greenfield. … The steep profile and high water quality of the **Deerfield River** attracts many sport-fishermen and whitewater enthusiasts."

And that's not all the Deerfield attracts, whether upriver in the steep grades or downstream where the water flows more serenely. Locals and visitors alike find respite in strolling along the shores, picnicking in the shade, and wading or swimming in calm clear waters – among other recreational pursuits.

Here's how the report *"A Watershed-Based Plan to Maintain the Health and Improve the Resiliency of the Deerfield River Watershed"* (Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2015-2017) describes the health of the Deerfield River Watershed: "As measured against the EPA's attributes of watershed health, including landscape condition, habitat condition, hydrology, geomorphology, water quality, and biological condition, the Deerfield River Watershed score is high. Overall, the watershed is considered healthy … with the exception being the … the most developed area of the Deerfield River Watershed, the Town of Greenfield." Overall, the report goes on to say, "The Deerfield River, including its major tributaries and many small tributary streams, are some of the coldest and cleanest surface waters in Massachusetts."

"According to the Mass. Department of Environmental Protection," as reported by the Town of Deerfield 2014 Open Space & Recreation Plan (OSRP), "the Deerfield River from the Vermont-Massachusetts State Line to its confluence with the Connecticut River is given a Class B water quality designation. Class B waters should be suitable for supporting aquatic life, recreational use (such as swimming and boating), and fish consumption." That leaves out only the fourth "designated use," which would be suitability as a source of untreated drinking water.

The Deerfield OSRP continues: "The Deerfield River Watershed Assessment Report 2004-2008, published by the MA Executive Office of [Energy and] Environmental Affairs, states that overall, water quality in the Deerfield River Watershed is quite good; however, several areas have encountered local water quality problems. According to the assessment, the principal water quality problem has been fecal coliform counts that exceed state standards occasionally during wet weather events. The report notes that nonpoint source pollution particularly from localized illegal dumping, acid mine drainage, stormwater runoff, failing septic systems, and agricultural activities, as well as elevated levels of arsenic within sediments behind several impoundments are also areas of concern."

Also worth noting are eight Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) licensed hydroelectric power plants in the Massachusetts portion of the Watershed.

"Fortunately," the Deerfield OSRP concludes, "the Deerfield River in Deerfield supports all recreational uses and has tremendous recreation potential."

> *"The Deerfield River flows into the western portion of town from the Berkshires and winds to the north past Old Deerfield before eventually merging with the Connecticut River at the town's eastern border. It is a popular destination for nature enthusiasts who canoe, kayak, fish, and swim along its length. Rare plant species inhabit the river's banks while a number of rare and endangered fish thrive below the surface."* – Town of Deerfield Open Space & Recreation Plan, 2014

Here's a succinct description of the entire **Deerfield River Watershed** from the City of Greenfield's 2012 Open Space and Recreation Plan: "The Deerfield River Watershed is a sub-watershed of the Connecticut River Watershed and consists of approximately 665 square miles between the Southern Green Mountains in Vermont and the Northern Berkshires in Massachusetts. Three hundred and forty-seven square miles of this land is located in all or part of 20 western Massachusetts towns. The **Deerfield River** flows approximately 70 miles from Stratton Mountain in Vermont to the Berkshire Mountains where it flows into the Connecticut River. Approximately 78% of the basin is forested and about 3% is urbanized while the rest remains open or as agricultural lands."

As noted in the Greenfield OSRP, the city "… has a wealth of river resources, with four rivers running through its borders. At the southern end of town is the confluence of the Fall, Green, Deerfield, and Connecticut Rivers." The report describes the overall **Green River Watershed** as follows: **"**The Green River Watershed is comprised of approximately 88.9 square miles and is the second largest tributary to the Deerfield River. The river begins in Marlboro, Vermont and ends at confluence with the Deerfield River, in the southern portion of Greenfield."

Turning its attention to the **Green River** itself, another primary focus of the Franklin Conservation District's River Access Initiative, the report continues: "The Green River flows through Greenfield for approximately 8.5 miles. As the Green River leaves the Greenfield Pumping Station and Water Supply Area at the northern border of town … The river then … continues to the Municipal Swimming and Recreation Area (where a dam allows a small storage capacity for the swim area) … till it meets the Deerfield River just upstream from the outfall of the Greenfield Water Pollution Control Facility."

> *"The Green River serves as a regionally significant corridor for rare species and wildlife habitat. The Green River contains large contiguous forest patches running along the ridges, parallel to the Green River floodplain, which serve as travel lanes for wildlife. These areas connect to the protected open space in Leyden and intersect several state-run wildlife management areas."* – Greenfield Open Space & Recreation Plan, 2012

Part B: Issues, problems, usage trends

> *"The Deerfield River is one of the grandest, most wild rivers in western Massachusetts. From the Vermont line to the Connecticut River, it cascades through canyons, meanders through flood plains, wanders past villages, and rolls through expansive forests. Long sought out by user groups such as fishermen, rafters, kayakers, tubers, the river is now overcrowded."* – Expanding Recreational Opportunities through Responsible Growth Along the Deerfield River, 2020

The problems and issues that arise from public access to our rivers are not new – but according to many users, owners, responsible agencies, and concerned observers, the negative trends have been worsening with increased usage in recent years. All agree that most popular sites have become even more so as more people make their way to formerly hidden treasures. The situation is rapidly evolving; different citizen groups, municipal agencies, and nonprofit organizations have been turning to the issue and exploring ways to address the concerns.

Why are so many river access sites seeing so much more usage? There are a number of contributing factors, in particular:

- closure of alternative spots,
- website compendiums and social media postings,
- more periods of intense summer heat,
- and most recently, pandemic relief.

> *"Quiet swimming holes and river spots get posted on the world wide web and suddenly there's an uptick in use, and abuses often crop up."* – World Café participant
>
> *"Social media has popularized formerly little-known spots."* – World Café participant

Naturally, increased usage tends to compound all the other problems…which leads to more closures, in a negative feedback loop. In this climate, so to speak, closures and restrictions in response are understandable; the current situation is not sustainable, and will only worsen as the trends noted above continue.

> *"It's the interaction of negative feedback cycles: higher summer temperatures, more demand for river access, more conflict at sites in use, closures, fewer sites, more pressure on sites available."* – World Café participant
>
> *"Recreational use has increased dramatically, driven by increasing periods of summer heat, by word-of-mouth, and social media … and with Covid-19 restrictions on alternative recreational opportunities. … Sites are being loved to death, with trash, human waste, noise, and traffic problems."* – Increasing Water-Based Recreation in Northampton Preliminary Assessment, 2020
>
> *"On most hot, weekend days the roads are jammed, parking is non-existent, some places are so full, the road gets clogged. Parking areas without services are filled with trash, human waste, debris, and signs of illicit behavior. Human conflict comes with crowding and tempers, drug and alcohol abuse, are all signs of an unmanaged public resource that desperately needs management."* – Expanding Recreational Opportunities through Responsible Growth Along the Deerfield River, 2020

In **"Part C: Solutions, strategies, resources,"** we'll explore various ways out of this jam. First, let's take a closer look at the numerous issues and problems. To be sure, there are few clean separations between many of the items described below. Just as all of the problems listed here are exacerbated by increased usage, they are also often impossible to disentangle. For that reason, a holistic approach to long-term solutions must be undertaken; it's not enough to install trash receptacles, for example, and call it a day. Broadly speaking, though, we might cluster the various challenges into three categories: **environmental degradation, safety concerns,** and **competing uses** – which can sometimes spiral into outright conflicts and clashes between user groups or with local residents.

Environmental degradation

Erosion and sedimentation

If footpaths are not properly designed to withstand foot traffic, they won't. As a result, the streambanks of most informal access points are highly eroded. As vegetation that would have held the bank in place is trampled, the underlying soil is disturbed, allowing stormwater to easily wash it away and into the river. That sets up a worsening cycle of streambank retreat as continued foot traffic combines with stormwater flows to further undercut the vulnerable land and increase sedimentation to the waterway.

> *"Natural riverbanks are not designed for the volume of foot traffic. Need some kind of protection/access built to protect riverbank and work with the river. Need professional design work to create this and find long-term solutions."* – World Café participant
>
> *"Riverbank erosion happens when there are large numbers of people accessing the river in 'unofficial' access points. Properties are not managed for large crowds, so large numbers of people are causing erosion. Who pays for putting in official structures for management?"* – World Café participant

Impaired water quality

Increased sedimentation leads to impaired water quality. For that reason, town Conservation Commissions are charged with restricting activities that can set that cycle in motion. MassDEP regulations set a high bar for preventing erosion and the agency routinely conducts water sampling to identify trouble spots. Some landowners and municipal officials express concern that they will be held responsible for correcting poor conditions caused by others – which can encourage more river access closures.

Diminished wildlife habitat

Impaired water quality threatens not only human health but also the wildlife that depend on clean water – as well as stable riverbank vegetation.

> *"[The Green River] corridor is also designated by NHESP [MassWildlife's Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program] as priority habitat. The forest/field interface and the extensive network of varied landscapes on the Green River provide extensive opportunities for predatory activity by birds and mammals, as well as an abundance of niches for edge species."* – Greenfield Open Space & Recreation Plan, 2012

Trash and dumping

Not surprisingly, one of the most common complaints concerning river access points is the trash left behind by some users – and the more users, the more trash. Some sites are also prone to active

dumping of household garbage. Discarded tires are one notorious component, but anything that's costly or difficult to dispose of properly may simply be dumped "out of sight" along a secluded spot.

Human waste

Particularly troubling, of course, is encountering human excrement at a popular spot – and in many instances, full diapers left behind. Where bathrooms are not available, this can be a natural consequence – unpleasant and even hazardous. In addition to the risk of direct contact on shore, stormwater and high flow conditions can wash the waste into the river, leading to potentially serious health impacts from fecal contamination.

> *"The entire Deerfield River watershed lacks public bathroom facilities. This contributes to human waste in and around the river."* – Expanding Recreational Opportunities through Responsible Growth Along the Deerfield River, 2020
>
> *"Forgive me for being crass, but where are all these hundreds of people who descend on the Deerfield River on a hot summer weekend relieving themselves? Not only are all these visitors dumping trash in and along the Deerfield, they are also dumping something else. Yuck."* – Letter to Greenfield Recorder
>
> *"Bathroom facilities are not available, so people tend to do their business anywhere and everywhere. Whose responsibility is to put in bathrooms and pay for them?"* – World Café participant

Safety concerns

Traffic and parking

More people means more cars, often traveling along narrow roads and parking where they shouldn't. That poses numerous problems, including pedestrian hazards, blocked emergency vehicles, violation of private property, damage to sensitive areas, and the search for less crowded but vulnerable access points. All that also places greater stress on limited municipal law enforcement and emergency response capacity.

> *"Parking is overflowing on summer weekend days on the Deerfield River. Cars and trucks overflow onto roads, private property, sensitive areas, creating congestion, frustration and safety issues."* – Expanding Recreational Opportunities through Responsible Growth Along the Deerfield River, 2020
>
> *"Need uniform access to emergency services to provide adequate response time and safety for visitors."* – World Café participant
>
> *"When you have too many cars trying to park, people start to look for other ways to access the river."* – World Café participant
>
> *"Parking is often the biggest hassle for local residents. Who owns the parking spaces and who has authority over them?"* – World Café participant

Hazards and liability

Clearly, several problems listed above can be hazardous – trash, traffic, and human waste, to name a few. Erosion, too, poses risks beyond its impact on water quality – notably, by creating seriously degraded footpaths, making the access point more hazardous and therefore less accessible to all users.

Those paths often have uneven surfaces, steep inclines and drops, exposed roots, and other tripping hazards. The river itself may be risky, with swift currents, hidden rocks, or unsafe dams along the waterway. Some spots are prone to flooding – though that in itself is not necessarily a problem, if the site and any infrastructure are designed in such a way that the river can periodically overflow its banks and "access" the floodplain as it should, without leaving ruin in its wake.

Private property owners and municipalities are naturally concerned about possible liability exposure, though state laws do offer some protection (see box below). But beyond any legal issues, the fact is that people can and do get hurt in and around rivers – and poorly designed or dangerously configured access sites compound the risks. Rescue crews may have difficulty reaching the injured party, and town budgets and personnel are strained by increased need to prepare for and conduct such rescues. And without clear emergency information posted, even local residents are sometimes unsure how to summon help – especially where multiple townships are involved.

"There have been a lot of tragic accidents along the Deerfield River. Who staffs the rescue teams? Local volunteers are not trained for river rescues." – World Café participant

"Not only is the river at risk, but users may also experience dangerous situations if river health and recreational amenities are not managed properly." – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

"Loss of life and injury are tragic and place burden on local community emergency services, volunteer services." – World Café participant

'Free and equal' access

Liability concerns are often cited by private landowners as a disincentive for allowing the public to recreate on their land, especially where river access is involved. Considering the natural hazards that may be present, landowners are naturally concerned about possible lawsuits.

In fact, Massachusetts state laws protect private landowners against such legal risks. According to the **"Recreational Use Statute"** (Massachusetts General Laws, Part I, Title II, Chapter 21, Section 17c), landowners are shielded from liability to recreational users so long as: (1) the landowner does not charge a fee for public access to their land, (2) the landowner allows "free and equal" access for recreational use to all members of the general public, and (3) the landowner does not deliberately or recklessly create a situation that is so inherently dangerous that it is likely to cause serious injury or death.

Nevertheless, as one World Café participant put it, "even though state law protects [private landowners], they can still be sued!"

"Landowners … often have a different perspective than other stakeholders because of liability concerns and the impact to property values and the land." – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

Competing uses

Conflicting activities

Many simmering issues involve competing uses of one sort or another. At their most straightforward, this can be as simple as conflicts between those who want to fish, those who want to swim, and those who want to float or paddle downstream. Sometimes the river is broad and spacious enough for all those activities; sometimes it's not. More often, different users will gravitate toward different locations best suited to their preferred activity. But when the "perfect spot" appeals to conflicting activities, trouble often begins.

> *"Conflicts between diverse user groups, such as anglers and paddlers, could pose unique challenges to the management approach."* – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

On some river reaches, tubing has become an increasingly popular activity. Sometimes regarded as a "drinking sport," with a separate tube for the beer cooler, tubing has been known to ruffle feathers and raise concerns in heavily trafficked areas – especially where put-in and take-out sites are inadequate for the volume of tubers. Similar though less fraught issues may involve kayakers and canoeists, though the degree of exertion required tends to self-select different users. As for whitewater rafting, popular especially on upper reaches of the Deerfield River, state legislation (323 CMR 6.00) addresses safety concerns and regulates livery services – though high numbers and limited facilities can still cause problems.

> *"On the Deerfield River last Sunday, folks are tubing from Bardwell's Ferry down to the South River confluence. I walked down and saw two different groups of around 30-40 people each come off the river with their tubes. This is an area that until recently was virtually unknown except to locals, and you rarely saw more than 2-3 people there."* – Email communication, Deerfield River Watershed Association
>
> *"On the Deerfield River in Charlemont, there are different levels of river engagement and rules. Rafters have often negotiated access points, but then tubers tend to use those spots and don't know the rules."* – World Café participant

Noise, partying, and illicit behavior

It's no surprise that noisy groups can disturb quieter river users as well as nearby residents. And partying often disturbs those who aren't partying. Beyond those potential conflicts, which typically increase with increasing usage, partiers can also create unsafe conditions – through intoxication, reckless behavior, trash, campfires, and the like. Not unlike other secluded natural areas, riverside hangouts can provide a harbor for illegal activity, including drug usage – sometimes evidenced by discarded needles in some locations.

> *"Many sites have closed because they're overrun with people partying."* – World Café participant
>
> *"People hang out at Russell Dam in Greenfield, but there's lots of illegal activity, so it's being shut down."* – Eric Twarog, Greenfield City Planner

Homeless encampments

Obviously, homeless encampments along rivers and streams are not designed for healthful and sustainable living arrangements – just as in any location where homeless individuals seek to create shelter and comfort outdoors. The degree to which homeless camps along certain river stretches are perceived to be a problem varies widely with the eyes of the beholder. Some consider acting to eradicate such encampments as a case of "criminalizing poverty"; others see it as simply wanting to keep these natural areas safe and clean – though that runs the risk of "cleaning up" someone's home. Clearly, this societal issue cannot be addressed in the narrow view of river protection alone, which would only shift the visible "problem" to other locations, seen or unseen.

Cultural clashes and social equity

Similarly, cross-cultural riverside encounters can provoke ire between different communities. People from outlying urban areas increasingly – and understandably – seek to enjoy river access sites in more rural locations. This can lead to direct clashes between local residents and visitors – especially where the outsiders are of different racial or ethnic groups, with different ways of enjoying riverside activities, sometimes speaking a different language, or with a different skin color. Basic cultural behaviors such as the size of the groups, the length of their stay along the river, the type of recreational activities, and the volume of their music can lead to conflict. Indeed, some particularly fraught confrontations have developed *within* local communities – where some decry racism and others see nothing more than holding all users to the same set of expectations. At its most benign, there is often perhaps a natural desire to keep local sites for local users.

> *"Neighborhood complaints and conflicts have increased dramatically with increased use and abuse. … Because recreation users are disproportionately populations of color, enforcement actions would disproportionately affect populations of color."* – Increasing Water-Based Recreation in Northampton Preliminary Assessment, 2020
>
> *"We've got some major overcrowding at several swimming/picnicking sites along the Mill River that include not only parking and trash, but potential racial strife."* – John Stinton, local resident
>
> *"[Reflecting] the 'possessiveness' that sometimes accompanies small towns, some residents feel the land belongs to them. There were a troubling number of comments by people worried about 'outsiders' using the Mill River. More specifically, 'people from Holyoke and Springfield.' This puts us in the category of not-so-subtle racist beliefs and unfounded fears that continue to limit the spaces People of Color feel welcome to explore."* – Gina Rege Marzee, personal communication
>
> *"The people who use the river often cause the problems. Some have no sense of responsibility except 'right to access,' not to take care of the land."* – World Café participant
>
> *"People who use a site feel like they have a "right" to use a site, so when there is change, people have a hard time changing with the new policies."* – World Café participant

Other complications

COVID-19 pandemic

Among the many types of disruption resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic is increased pressure on outdoor recreation areas, including popular river access sites. Who hasn't yearned for relief from the social isolation necessitated by essential public health measures in the face of an out-of-control deadly disease? That sense of "confinement" both motivates the desire for some escape (especially with restrictions on alternative recreation opportunities) and undercuts social distancing guidelines when more people seek relief in the same place. Widespread vaccination may ease the situation over the months ahead, though that timeframe is not certain – nor is this likely to be the only instance of such restrictions to public activities in the face of unanticipated contagions.

> *"Under pandemic conditions, crowded outdoor spaces have become the new reality. … If new, typically inexperienced visitors are here to stay, Leave No Trace and local land managers are having to reckon with managing the additional impact and ensuring places don't get loved to death."* – Backpacker magazine article, 2020
>
> "*Trails and public infrastructure are being heavily utilized during the pandemic [while] slashing budgets due to economic losses."* – World Café participant
>
> *"The pandemic and economic impacts add new pressures. Will river access be put to the end of the list?"* – World Café participant

Limited finances

Economic impacts, of course, are hardly the result of the pandemic alone. To date, coordinated efforts to radically increase public funding have been lacking and are sorely needed. Even in the best of times, creating and maintaining sustainable river access requires a great deal more financial investment than has been made available. Federal and state funding is often contracting while needs are expanding. Towns along the rivers typically have extremely limited financial and other resources (which also require money) to handle the strain. And individual users may struggle to afford fees charged at established river access locations.

> *"The town struggles to pay its own bills, let alone shoulder the burden of cleaning up a public resource that happens to pass through its center."* – Expanding Recreational Opportunities through Responsible Growth Along the Deerfield River, 2020
>
> *"Who pays for the cleanup, policing, infrastructure improvements?"* – World Café participant
>
> *"Towns don't have resources." "Money is the issue." "Need funding to deal with rising pressures."* – World Café participants
>
> *"There is a problem when larger public areas charge for their use; this puts pressure on the smaller, more sensitive areas."* – World Café participant
>
> *"No well-coordinated lobbying for small towns and environmental issues along rivers."* – World Café participant

Case studies: Tales of Three Towns and a City

Charlemont – Excerpt from *Expanding Recreational Opportunities through Responsible Growth Along the Deerfield River: "The town of Charlemont is the hub of activity for the most popular river sections of the **Deerfield River.** Charlemont is bisected its entire length by the Deerfield River and is home to three whitewater rafting companies and two tubing companies. Charlemont struggles with all the issues of overcrowding and lacks the tools to adequately handle the rush of river users on hot, busy weekends."*

Colrain – Complaints about **Green River** issues at July 2019 Town Meeting: *"The situation is escalating and going to get worse." "Cars are blocking the road, speeding." "Trash left behind, and no toilet facility. I found 22 diapers in one day!" "It's listed on the internet as a swimming hole!" "When Greenfield shut down the popular site at Eunice Williams Bridge, that just pushed crowds up the road." "The change in recent years is unbelievable." "July 4th weekend saw 169 cars, 600 people. You couldn't get through on a bicycle!" "Users are very intimidating, very ignorant, belligerent." "Traffic is scary, disrespectful."*

Williamsburg – Findings from local survey after popular sites on the Mill River were closed to public access: *"Q9 – If river use is important to you, which ideas best support efforts to maintain/restore access"? [Rank ordered, based on 45 respondents]*

1) *Installation of trash receptacles: 69%*
2) *Open dialogue with landowners whose property abuts the water: 56%*
3) *Establishing a volunteer sheet to manage litter / observe and report issues: 47%*
4) *Designating limited parking: 44%*
5) *Creating a waiver / release of liability form, as required by many public pools: 40%*
6) *Asking for clarification of laws by local Police Dept, town officials: 31%*
7) *Permitting "Residents Only" use: 31%*
8) *Attending a town meeting: 22%*

Northampton – Excerpts from *Increasing Water-Based Recreation in Northampton Preliminary Assessment: "Private property owners … are unable to address all of the abuse. … The City has limited resources to manage existing recreation and conservation areas and … to support increased use and new recreation needs…. Public or private enforcement (nuisance, parking, trash, waste, and noise) cannot … address all issues. The City and the community need to explore improving formal or informal swimming and whether resources (from grant funds, user fees, other public funds, and/or other sources) can be made available to address these needs."*

Part C: Solutions, strategies, resources

Closures: How not to solve the problem

As usage has increased in recent years, numerous popular spots across the region have been closed to the public in response. You don't have to look far to find examples: Buckland, Charlemont, Colrain, Deerfield, Greenfield, Northampton, Shelburne Falls, Williamsburg – everywhere we looked while researching this report has seen popular spots declared off-limits in recent years. While that's understandable, considering all the challenges described above, it's hardly a solution.

> *"When places get closed down, they tend to be large access points, which puts pressure on the small sensitive spots that don't have facilities to handle large crowds."* – World Café participant
>
> *"People are going to come whether or not you close an area."* – World Café participant
>
> *"When we close off access, that doesn't make the river less appealing. It's more likely to shut out people who would use the river respectfully. When things get closed off, you only get the rowdiest teenagers and lots of beer bottles. Making it welcoming encourages good behavior."* – World Café participant

Clearly, we can't close our way out of this mess. While that may "solve" dire situations at specific sites, it only aggravates the overall problem. People will seek out river relief wherever they can find it, as well they should. So what *is* needed to prevent closures, and convince towns and private owners to keep their sites open to the public?

Most importantly, we should understand that this is a regional issue, which demands a regional approach, with the active involvement of diverse and broad stakeholder groups.

Sustainable river access smorgasbord

Just as there is no quick fix, there is no single solution to the wide range of issues involved in creating and maintaining truly sustainable public access to our rivers and streams. Rather, there are numerous and varied approaches – large and small – that can have a positive impact, depending on the specific situation at hand.

What follows is a broad array of diverse menu choices suggested by the many stakeholders consulted as well as source materials reviewed during the development of this report. The guiding question: "***What is needed to successfully support public river access?"*** While the suggestions have been grouped into categories for ease of navigation, these are not at all mutually exclusive; indeed, most remedies address multiple issues – and most issues require multiple remedies.

Education / Outreach / Volunteers / Stewards:

- Multilingual, multicultural public outreach and education.
- Develop local "friends of" stewardship groups, fostering community involvement as part of a team.
- Support individual river and site stewards trained in public outreach and education.
- Share river stewards coordinated across municipal boundaries.
- Hire staff where possible, and train volunteers to host or "adopt" sites.
- Encourage broad community support: donations, more eyes on sites, active stewardship.

- Maintain some official presence, even if volunteers with a t-shirt.
- Support a "River Rangers" program to visit sites and raise awareness about river health issues.
- Organize a civic volunteer group to act as river educators.
- Engage community with state or town owners of land.
- Public outreach and education to make it easy for people to do the right thing.
- Post informational signage with guidelines for specific areas (e.g., acceptable use and care for private property).
- Conduct community outreach. Visit schools. Enlist watershed groups.
- Encourage sense of community "ownership" and support for river resources and public access.
- Lead by example; host cleanups, art shows, public events.
- Provide environmental education to local schools and camps.
- Run infomercials on television, radio, and other media outlets.
- More education, less discipline.
- Welcoming signs with positive messages guiding appropriate use.
- Develop a common look and strategy for outreach and education.

> *"We need clear, informative signage, especially on safety issues. For example, if 'No Swimming,' explain why."* – World Café participant
>
> *"Post educational signage that is welcoming and informative." Examples: "You are welcome to use the land, but here are rules we ask you to follow." "This is not a public recreation area. It will not be advertised, but access for swimming and trail use is allowed."* – World Café participants

Safety / Law enforcement / Emergency services:

- Hire more Environmental Officers; support adequate staff to check on sites.
- Train local first responders to perform river rescue.
- Enforce state law against blocking the travel lane; tow cars parked illegally.
- Clear signage indicating who to call in case of emergency.

> *"When developing emergency management plans, be aware of what entities are first responders, who is liable, and what different layers of response might be needed. When dealing with enforcement of laws and potential illegal activities, understand what entity is in charge of different reaches of river. Have a protocol for how the different entities will work together and keep each other informed about incidents, response and challenges along the river."* – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

Erosion / Environmental:

- Consider insights from D.C.'s RiverSmart program: "Don't put investments into zones that are likely to be damaged by floods, whether by inundation or fluvial erosion. (For example, paved bike paths in areas vulnerable to fluvial erosion may make people want to protect them through armoring.) If you allow/plan for floodplains to flood and river channels to move, it protects environmental functions and can keep people and their investments safer."
- Protect wildlife habitat through site design and on-site environmental education.
- Maintain constant vigilance. Inspect sites and watch for dumping. Report significant trash and have it cleaned up right away.

> *"Restroom facilities? Great idea. Trash bins, recycle bins? Certainly can help. Is it going to fix every problem? Probably not. Could it help with a lot of them? Sure, but it's got to be coupled with education."* – Ben Lawhon, Education Director, Leave No Trace program
>
> *"A framework for designing recreation improvements and managing ongoing use has emerged from collaboration with public land management agencies and local jurisdictions. The framework, referred to as the **'Three E's,'** where recreation amenity design and management is guided by **Engineering, Education, and Enforcement.**"* – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

Equity / Social justice:

- Support access sites equitably across region to relieve stress on any single place.
- Promote river access as source of livelihood for the public – fishing, recreation businesses, etc.
- Don't criminalize poverty, including homelessness. Be sensitive to homeless camps and don't "clean up" someone's home. Address community needs directly.
- Work with and expand Connecticut River Conservancy guidelines on homelessness, particularly in context of annual Source to Sea Cleanup event.
- Allow subsistence fishing; could potentially use this as a way to advocate for environmental protection/quality.
- Encourage sense of community "ownership" and support for river resources and public access; lead by example, host cleanups, art shows, public events.

> *"Be mindful of equity and social justice issues to ensure access to rivers for economically disadvantaged communities."* – World Café participant
>
> *"When **diverse communities** congregate at a river, it is an opportunity for communities and their values to connect. It is important to consider the strengths and exceptional characteristics of the communities that connect to the river when planning for your river recreation management plan."* – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers
>
> *"Unfortunately, racial tensions compound the local/out-of-towner dynamics and so the lack of swimming access is taking on a new tone of urgency."* – Marty Dagoberto Driggs, personal communication

Coordination / Collaboration:

- Need well-defined access areas with clear "chain of command" and responsibility for funding and maintenance.
- Establish authority and accountability.
- Empower one statewide entity to manage the river in consultation with the towns.
- Support development of centralized, well-funded organization or collaboration to oversee efforts to protect river access sites and overcome fractured management – or mismanagement – by many different entities.
- Consider establishing a consortium of existing groups to manage and provide oversight.
- Convene regular and respectful interactions among interested parties: users, landowners, town boards, volunteer groups, local nonprofits, and others.
- Create a central resource with well-maintained website for education, information sharing, and troubleshooting.
- Work with private owners of river access sites to support their needs – and enlist their support.

- Support land trusts that take advantage of unique opportunity to connect members and landowners for conservation and stewardship, raise importance of these issues, and connect with state agencies that provide leadership and services – as well as to champion funding and large-scale planning.
- Collaborate regionally.
- Develop cross-border collaborations between watershed groups, planning commissions, and other organizations with mission to conserve land and maintain river access.
- Address public river access on watershed-wide basis (including up into Vermont, especially for Deerfield River Watershed), through broad outreach and targeted improvements.
- Promote greater coordination between agencies such as DCR, DFW, and USFWS.

Study / Assess:

- Conduct watershed-wide study to look at current use/overuse areas along the river.
- Assess and track amount and type of use at each site, understand capacity and conditions, and manage for responsible use accordingly.
- Create designated areas for different types of usage to avoid conflicts between users.
- Encourage representation from different interest groups to help define uses (paddlers, swimmers, fisherfolk, etc.).
- Identify larger areas where people can access water in order to take pressure off the smaller parcels that cannot handle crowds.
- Identify "Day Use" areas for day-long visits, versus the small sensitive areas that are most appropriate for dippers who use it and leave.

> *"River recreation management plans seek to ensure that the user experience is managed* ***in a way that protects the values of the natural resources as well the recreational experience of designated users.*** *This means considering the carrying capacity or total number of users capable of sustainably utilizing the resource at a given time. The plan should take into consideration the variety of river users and how to manage potential conflicts between them."* – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

Model initiatives / Organizations/ Offers:

- Green River Village Preservation Trust in Vermont is a great example of local support and protection of a treasured resource.
- Look to other states for models.
- Review Vermont River Conservancy efforts to protect swimming holes and provide access.
- Seek additional funding from Great River Hydro and other commercial users.
- Incorporate support for river access initiatives in FERC hydroelectric relicensing, which includes plans across the region for recreation needs.
- See Connecticut River Conservancy document for recreational requests, to move vision beyond FERC relicensing and engage the state.
- Connect with Massachusetts Rivers Alliance, which is fighting to preserve funding for environmental agencies; budget cuts are likely, needs public support.
- The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) is advocating for a bill in the MA state legislature to create an Office of Outdoor Recreation (https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/SD1613).
- Consider access models similar to those in place for town beaches, national seashore, etc.
- Model site stewards after NPS interpretive park rangers program.

- The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service can help (1) design and construct a site that is accessible, safe to use for a variety of people, and based on existing conditions of the river, and (2) bring resources/equipment to construct site, at no expense to towns, as part of wildlife enhancement access. (Contact Phil Herzig, USFWS Fisheries Biologist, for details.)
- Leave No Trace partners with the five largest federal land management agencies in the United States, as well as local and municipal entities in almost every state, to educate visitors about environmentally conscious practices.

Money, the common denominator

What do just about all these things have in common? A need for substantial financial investment. The best planning recommendations can end right there. Funding is needed for site management, maintenance, restoration, and monitoring, law enforcement, adequate parking, toilet facilities, staffing, town services, outreach and education, and more.

Finding funding for the long haul

*"Funding river recreation management can be **challenging.** Traditional funding sources are not always interested in supporting recreation management. Generally speaking, it is easier to fund projects where communities "break ground" and "cut ribbons," and where there are clear and measurable changes the community can see. These projects are often capital projects in which physical changes to the landscape are involved. Management is **challenging** to fund because it is often invisible to the user and to the funder. Management also is a sustained, long-term funding need that stretches beyond the timeframe and interest of most funding sources."* – A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

*"The opportunities for the Town of Shelburne to procure funding for open space and recreation projects will be a **challenge**. … Accomplishing the actions identified in this [Seven-Year Action Plan] section will require **time and commitment** from dedicated volunteers. Where money is required, it may be sought from state and federal governmental agencies, private non-profit conservation agencies, foundations, and individual donations in addition to municipal funds."* – Town of Shelburne Open Space & Recreation Plan, 2014

The bullet list that follows presents a range of strategies for securing financial support. Lists of specific funding sources and additional guidance are included in the Appendix to this report. However, while user fees, charitable donations, foundation and government grants, and other sources all have their place in the funding patchwork needed for sustainable river access, one critically important source stands out from the rest – namely, the need for ***greatly increased and sustained investment from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.***

> ***commonwealth*** *(noun) – a nation, state, or other political unit … founded on law and united by compact or tacit agreement of the people* ***for the common good***
> (Merriam-Webster)

State legislators:

- Appeal for public funds to manage public access areas.
- Plan coordinated outreach to legislators to promote state leadership and investment in sustainable river access.
- Get state congressional leaders involved – perhaps bring key legislators on a tour of river access sites.
- Advocate strong financial support for river resources in the next Massachusetts Environmental Bond Bill.

State agencies:

- Seek support from state agencies and other entities to take burden off local community, so towns don't have to close sites to protect river or community from traffic.
- Promote a unified approach and collaboration with state agencies to get the engineering and funding to support river resources.
- Apply pressure for state involvement and funding in Western Mass.
- Encourage state agencies Increase dedicated state funds for water resources.
- to come to the table with financial and technical resources in order to aid municipalities.

Local / Regional actions:

- Collaborate on shared grant-writing across municipalities.
- Conduct local and regional fundraising appeals at all levels.
- Pursue a watershed-wide approach, develop comprehensive River Recreation plans.
- Consider collecting parking fees or other user fees to support sustainability.
- Seek funding through the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA) as a statewide issue.
- Examine Tully Lake model: U.S. Army Corps pays Royalston an annual sum for local police to include the property in their patrols when Tully is open.
- Explore tax support for towns to cover costs of maintaining public river access (sanitary facilities, maintenance, etc.).

Pursuing all of those and many other sources of support will require ongoing attention from a dedicated working coalition of river access advocates. Scattershot solutions are not sufficient. To make it stick at scale, it's time to put out a Call to Action in support of sustainable public river access.

Part D: Call to Action

How to move all those good ideas forward? Ultimately, that was the key question all participants pondered during impassioned discussions about the need for truly sustainable public access to our rivers and streams. While differing in the details, the general consensus was to form a unified working group or Task Force tasked with pursuing just that – a group that would be recognized and supported by all stakeholders.

Numerous organizations and individuals volunteered to help form and empower such a River Access Task Force. Several indicated they could devote staff time to the initiative; some suggested they might be able to contribute seed money to get it off the ground. Among the first steps will be to reach out to the various other intersecting initiatives and discussion groups that have been spawned on the topic over the past couple of years. Success definitely depends on strength in numbers – but with all parties in close communication, coordination, and collaboration. (See Appendix for list of World Café participants and other stakeholders engaged in the FCD River Access Initiative.)

> *"A **core working group** is often a group of individuals who will shepherd the plan through from beginning to end. This group is meant to be small from the onset, but will collaborate with the larger **stakeholder advisory committee** as the process develops." –* A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers
>
> *"A river management **stakeholder advisory committee** is the larger team (including the core working group) to determine how the management plan will be developed, monitored, funded, and eventually implemented. It is important that your advisory committee is made up of diverse stakeholders that represent both existing and potentially new river users. … Traditional river stakeholder interests include anglers, boaters, commercial outfitters, elected officials, and conservationists. Other nontraditional stakeholders to include are private landowners, healthcare institutions, schools, community development organizations, chambers of commerce, and arts groups." –* A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning, American Rivers

Note that the Task Force is not envisioned to serve as the entity that some proposed should be empowered with authority over river access actions and decisions. Rather, this is seen as a critical next step toward building momentum and determining what the optimal long-range scenario might be in terms of an overseeing agency or any other action steps.

Representatives from the Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG), who have participated in the Franklin Conservation District's (FCD) River Access Initiative from the start, have indicated that FRCOG itself may be able to serve as the convener for such a River Access Task Force. Many others have voiced support and expressed interest in serving as active participants.

One particularly important action that should certainly be spearheaded by the proposed River Access Task Force is to seek the inclusion of substantial dedicated funding in the next Massachusetts Environmental Bond Bill. Another important goal could be to develop a Regional River Access Management Plan to ensure long-term sustainability.

Upon convening, the River Access Task Force would be responsible for framing its own mission, vision, goals, and objectives – seeking consensus among all stakeholders as much as possible. The Franklin

Conservation District welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with those who are committed to charting our way forward on this urgent issue of maintaining sustainable river access for all.

'A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning'

As the Table of Contents below indicates, this essential guide from **American Rivers** is replete with valuable information and detailed step-by-step instructions for those engaged in any effort to plan – and maintain – truly sustainable river recreation, including public access.

As stated in the introduction: *"The goal of this guide is to provide a framework for local governments, planners, non-profit organizations, and others to develop an effective river recreation management plan that has strong community support. While this plan is not the same recipe for each community, it will provide resources and case studies that shine a spotlight on communities that have navigated the recreation management planning process and developed and implemented successful river recreation management plans."*

Step 1: Gather Information
- Create a Core Working Group
- Understand Current River Conditions
- Analyze Existing Recreation and Natural Resource Plans
- Understand Community Considerations
- Understand Recreation Use Considerations
- Understand Legal Considerations

Step 2: Solicit Input and Build Community Support
- Engage the Public
- Create a River Management Stakeholder Advisory Committee

Step 3: Set Management Priorities
- Create a Vision for Your Plan
- Identify Areas of Emphasis and Goals
- Updating Your Plan

Step 4: Implement and Monitor the River Management Plan
- Implementation and Monitoring
- Emergency Management and Enforcement

Step 5: Fund Your Plan

Appendix

Participants and other stakeholders
River access sites studied
Source plans and reports
Funding resources
World Café transcripts

FCD River Access Initiative - June 15 World Café attendees plus other stakeholders

Name	Affiliation
Nonprofit Organizations	
Emily Boss	Franklin Land Trust
Tom Curren	Franklin Land Trust
Chris Curtis	Deerfield River Watershed Association (DRWA)
Andrea Donlon	Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC)
Christine Hatch	UMass Extension
Sheila Kelliher	DRWA / Trout Unlimited
Linda Lembke	Green River Watershed Alliance
Steve Libby	Vermont River Conservancy
Ryan O'Donnell	Connecticut River Conservancy / DRWA
Charlie Olchowski	DRWA / FRCOG Planning Board
Jim Perry	Deerfield River Watershed Association (DRWA)
Alain Peteroy	Franklin Land Trust
Erin Rodgers	Trout Unlimited
Kristen Sykes	Appalachian Mountain Club
Mike Vito	Deerfield River Trout Unlimited
Eve Vogel	UMass Extension
Gisela Walker	DRWA / Charlemont resdient
Keith Zaltzberg	Healthy Soils / Regenerative Design Group
Municipal Representatives	
Bob Armstrong	Conway Selectboard / Conservation Commission
Randy Crochier	Deerfield River Health Agent / FRCOG
Wayne Feiden	Northampton Planning & Sustainability
Ellen Kaufmann	Buckland Energy Commission
Rachel Maiore	Northampton City Councilor
Carolyn Shores Ness	Franklin Conservation District (FCD) / Deerfield Selectboard
Sarah Reynolds	Charlemont Selectboard
David Schochet	Shelburne Open Space Commission
Eric Twarog	Greenfield Planning & Development
Regional Agency Representatives	
John Bennett	FCD / Windham Regional Commission
Margo Ghia	Windham Regional Commission
Kimberly Noake MacPhee	FCD / Franklin Regional Council of Governments (FRCOG)
State Agencies	
Tim Dexter	MassDOT
Leanda Fontaine	MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW)
Luke Labendz	MA Dept of Conservation & Recreation, Charlemont area
Andrew Madden	MA Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW)
Jane Obbagy	Massachusetts Association of Conservation Districts
Sgt. Thomas Provost	Massachusetts Environmental Police
Andrew Smith	Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness (MVP) Program
Federal Agencies	
Phillip Herzig	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Dave Sagan	U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service
Commercial Recreation Firms	
Helen Carcio	Great Outdoors
Jon Schaefer	Owner Zoar Outdoor & Berkshire East
Individuals	
Laurie Boosahda	Deerfield resident
Wendy Goodman	Greenfield resident
Dan Greene	Good Bunch Farm
Lois Hawkey	Greenfield resident
Gina Rege Marzee	Williamsburg resident
Michael Pattavina	Green River volunteer
Joe Rogers	FCD ex officio / Williamsburg resident
Teri Rutherford	Good Bunch Farm
Chris Skelly	Buckland Shelburne Trails Alliance
World Café Hosts	
Madeleine Charney	UMass Library
Michael Leff	Franklin Conservation District (FCD)

FCD River Access sites surveyed (as of 9/30/2019)

Code #	River	Town	Site name/location
1	Deerfield River	Charlemont (on border with Shelburne Falls)	Sunburn Beach, North River Rd, at confluence with North River
2	Deerfield River	Deerfield	Stillwater Bridge, Stillwater Rd
3	Deerfield River	Deerfield	Beneath I-91 bridge, Stillwater Rd
4	Deerfield River	Deerfield	Bar Way Farm, Stillwater Rd
5	Green River	Greenfield	Eunice Williams Covered Bridge, Eunice Williams Drive
6+	Green River	Colrain	Multiple sites along Green River Rd & North Green River Rd, from Greenfield to VT border
7	Deerfield River	Shelburne Falls	Bardswell Ferry Bridge, Bardswell Ferry Rd
8	Deerfield River	Deerfield	Deerfield Academy athletic fields
9	Deerfield River	Deerfield	Pogues Hole Rd terminus
10	Mill River	Williamsburg (Haydenville)	Behind Brassworks on Route 9
11	Mill River	Williamsburg (Haydenville)	Bridge on South Main St, at end of bike path
12+	South River	Conway	Multiple sites along Conway Station Rd in South River State Forest, including Great River Hydro recreation area near confluence with Deerfield River
13	Deerfield River	Deerfield	Mill Village Rd, below Historic Deerfield

Additional sites: https://drive.google.com/open?id=10sWCwIbz4Hsj8LqnGqI-yjwd4IkN5SAv&usp=sharing

Source Plans and Reports

"A Framework for Resilience: Responding to Climate Change in the Deerfield River Watershed" (Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2019)

"A Watershed-Based Plan to Maintain the Health and Improve the Resiliency of the Deerfield River Watershed" (Franklin Regional Council of Governments, 2015-2017)

"A Guide to Sustainable River Recreation Management Planning" (American Rivers)

"Expanding Recreational Opportunities through Responsible Growth Along the Deerfield River" (Jon Schaefer, 2020)

"Increasing Water-Based Recreation in Northampton Preliminary Assessment" (2020)

Town of Deerfield Open Space & Recreation Plan (2014)

Town of Greenfield Open Space & Recreation Plan (2012)

Town of Shelburne Open Space & Recreation Plan (2014-2021)

Funding Sources

This list is meant to serve as a starting point for Resilient DRW, and includes mostly grant funding opportunities that are available to towns. There are many other sources of funding that a regionally focused watershed stakeholder, such as the FRCOG, the Connecticut River Conservancy, Trout Unlimited or the Franklin Land Trust, could access and then partner with a town or Resilient DRW to implement. Many of the grants could fund projects that address multiple climate stressors and provide benefits to one or more sectors. For organizational purposes, the grants that primarily focus on one sector, such as Infrastructure, are grouped together.

Climate Change Planning & Implementation

Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs
The EEA's Office of Grants and Technical Assistance is a good resource to consult when scoping projects and looking for funding. This office can help towns and stakeholders seeking to fund projects that focus on developing responsible energy practices, conservation of natural resources and outdoor recreational programs.
https://www.mass.gov/orgs/eea-office-of-grants-and-technical-assistance

EEA Planning Grant
The Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs (EEA) provides funding to municipalities and Regional Planning Agencies to pursue Massachusetts Sustainable Development Principles that preserve natural resources, ensure sufficient and diverse housing, and prepare for climate change. Eligible requests include zoning for sustainable housing production, actions implementing the results of a climate vulnerability assessment or MVP program, or mitigation of climate change through zoning or other regulations that reduce energy use and greenhouse gas emissions.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/planning-assistance-grants

Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP)
This program provides funding to municipalities to pay for technical assistance to complete assessments and planning using the Community Resilience Building workshop framework (CRB). Municipalities who complete this process are designated as a MVP Community and eligible for MVP Action grant funding to implement climate resiliency projects.
https://www.mass.gov/municipal-vulnerability-preparedness-program

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance
FEMA provides three different grant programs for mitigation planning and projects that are designed to minimize loss and protect life and infrastructure from natural hazards such as flooding and extreme heat. Grant programs include Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (long-term planning and projects after federal declared emergency), Pre-Disaster Mitigation Program (hazard mitigation planning grant) and Flood Mitigation Assistance (planning and projects to reduce or eliminate risk of flood damage insured by NFIP). The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) coordinates with FEMA and administers these grant programs.
https://www.mass.gov/orgs/massachusetts-emergency-management-agency
https://www.fema.gov/

Natural Resources & Habitat

Nonpoint Source Pollution (s.319) Grants and Water Quality Management Planning (604b) Grants
The US EPA provides states with funds to support a variety of activities to reduce nonpoint source pollution (s.319 grants), including technical and financial assistance, education and training, technology transfer, demonstration projects and monitoring to assess the success of projects. EPA has stated specifically that such grants can be used to reduce pollution from stormwater runoff and other sources, recognizing the importance of green infrastructure in managing stormwater. A 40% non-federal funding match is required. The 604b grants don't require a non-federal match and can be used for planning and conceptual design for projects that use green infrastructure for stormwater management.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/grants-financial-assistance-watersheds-water-quality#2

Massachusetts Environmental Trust (MET) Grant
The MET grant provides funding to support programs, research, and other activities that promote the responsible stewardship of the Commonwealth's water resources. MET supports projects that: improve water quality or quantity, conserve aquatic habitat and species, reduce runoff pollution, mitigate the effects of climate change on water resources, promote human health as it relates to water resources, and/or other efforts consistent with the Trust's mission. Awards range from $5,000 to $100,000.
http://www.mass.gov/eea/grants-and-tech¬assistance/grants-and-loans/mass-enviro-trust/met-grants.html

Division of Ecological Restoration (DER)
DER initiates projects that restore our rivers, streams, wetlands, and watersheds. DER partners with nonprofits, towns, individuals, and groups to implement projects. These projects improve habitat for wildlife and provide many benefits such as reduced flooding, improved water quality, and public safety. Programs include culvert and dam removal as well as coastal wetland, inland wetland, and river restoration. DER provides technical assistance, helps secure funding, and coordinates project management until completion.
https://www.mass.gov/orgs/division-of-ecological-restoration

Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program
The National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program (RTCA) assists community-led natural resource conservation and outdoor recreation initiatives. RTCA staff provides guidance to communities on: conserving waterways, preserving open space, and developing trails and greenways.
https://www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca/apply.htm

Forest Stewardship Plans for Town Forests
Towns can develop stewardship plans for town-owned forests, forests owned by Conservation Commissions, or water supply land enrolled in the Forest Stewardship Program, and apply for funding to implement their forest stewardship practices available from the Community Forest Stewardship Implementation Grants for Municipalities program.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/forest-stewardship-program

Massachusetts Urban and Community Forestry
The Massachusetts Urban and Community Forestry Program assists communities and nonprofit groups in protecting, growing, and managing community trees and forest ecosystems, to improve the environment and enhance livability. The program includes grants, technical assistance, training and recognition awards, and provides guidance on urban forestry policy issues.
http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/dcr/conservation/forestry-and-fire-control/urban-and-community-

forestry.html

Parkland Acquisitions and Renovations for Communities (PARC)
PARC assists cities and towns in acquiring and developing land for park and outdoor recreation purposes. Any city that has an authorized park or recreation commission is eligible to participate and use grant funds to acquire land, develop new parks or renovate existing outdoor public recreation facilities (which may include green infrastructure). Access by the general public is required. Municipalities must have a current Open Space and Recreation Plan to apply, and the land must be open to the general public. Awards range from $50,000 to $500,000 with reimbursement rates of up to 70% of project costs.
http://www.mass.gov/eea/grants-and-tech¬assistance/grants-and-loans/dcs/grant-programs/massachusetts-parkland-acquisitions-and.html

Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity (LAND)
LAND is a state grant program implemented by EEA's Division of Conservation Services. provides grants for the acquisition of land for passive parks or conservation areas in cities and towns – which can include green infrastructure. Grants are up to $400,000 with reimbursement rates ranging from 52%-70% of the total project cost. Municipalities must have a current Open Space and Recreation Plan to apply, and the land must be open to the public.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/local-acquisitions-for-natural-diversity-land-grant-program

Massachusetts Land and Water Conservation Grant Program
This program is administered by EEA and the Division of Conservation Services. The Federal Land & Water Conservation Fund provides up to 50% of the total project cost for the acquisition, development, and renovation of park, recreation and conservation areas. Municipalities must have a current Open Space and Recreation Plan to apply.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/massachusetts-land-and-water-conservation-fund-grant-program

Sustainable Forest Management
The MassWoods webpage hosted by UMass, Amherst is a wealth of information on programs available to private landowners interested in permanently protecting, conserving and/or applying sustainable forestry practices to their land. Resources include information on the MassWildlife Habitat Management Grant Program, Chapter 61 Current Use Tax Programs, Forest Stewardship Program & Green Certification, Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), Wildlife Habitat Incentives Program (WHIP), and the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP).
https://masswoodlands.org

Forests for Fish
Another resource that will be available to private forest owners in 2019 is the Forests for the Fish toolkit under development by the Franklin Land Trust (FLT), Massachusetts Woodlands Institute (MWI), and Trout Unlimited (TU). This toolkit can be used by private landowners who have forested land along coldwater streams and would like to work with a licensed forester and fisheries consultant to prepare a Forest Stewardship Plan that includes practices for enhancing habitat and improving climate resiliency.
http://www.masswoodlands.org/projects/fisheries-management

Riparian and Wetland Buffers
There are many resources available to farmers and private landowners interested in creating vegetated buffers along rivers, streams and wetlands. The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) provides Conservation

Reserve program funds to the agricultural community. There are two types of programs: one that has a designated sign-up period and one that has continuous registration.
https://www.fsa.usda.gov/programs-and-services/conservation-programs/conservation-reserve-program/
The USDA through the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) also offers funds through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), which provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to plan and implement conservation practices on agricultural land and non-industrial private forestland.
https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/wps/portal/nrcs/main/national/programs/financial/eqip/

Human Health & Welfare

Massachusetts Community Preservation Act (CPA)
Towns that have adopted the Community Preservation Act (CPA) receive an annual match from the state CPA Trust Fund. CPA provides funding for affordable housing, historic resources, and outdoor recreation/open space, and is flexible to help fund all types of creative improvements. Funds for open space and recreation, for example, can be used to acquire and restore land and water resources and to acquire and improve parks, playgrounds, ball fields, parks, greenways, farms and gardens that use nature-based solutions to help cities and towns become more resilient to climate change impacts.
http://communitypreservation.org/

HUD Loan Guarantee Program
The US Department of Housing and Urban Development's Section 108 Loan Guarantee Program allows future Community Development Block Grant allocations to be used to guarantee loans for neighborhood revitalization projects, including construction and installation of public facilities and infrastructure. Section 108-guaranteed projects can incorporate green infrastructure into their design and construction.
https://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/states/massachusetts

EPA Smart Growth and Technical Assistance Program
The EPA administers a variety of technical assistance and planning grant programs to help communities improve the quality of the built environment, protect public health, and protect the environment.
https://www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/smart-growth-technical-assistance-programs

Infrastructure (Drinking Water & Wastewater)

Clean Water State Revolving Fund
This program is a federal-state partnership that provides communities a permanent, independent source of low-cost financing for a variety of water quality infrastructure projects: wastewater treatment, stormwater management, nonpoint source pollution control, and watershed management, including retrofit projects and certain types of "green" projects. Most loans are for a 20-year period and some are zero interest. Loans in Massachusetts are implemented by MassDEP.
http://www.mass.gov/eea/agencies/massdep/water/grants/clean-water-state-revolving-fund.html

Massachusetts DEP Drinking Water Supply Protection Grant (DWSP)
The DWSP grant program provides financial assistance to public water systems and municipal water departments for the purchase of land or interests in land for the following purposes: 1) protection of existing

DEP-approved public drinking water supplies; 2) protection of planned future public drinking water supplies; or 3) groundwater recharge. The program is a reimbursement grant with a maximum award of $300,000 and 50% project cost reimbursement rate.
https://www.mass.gov/service-details/drinking-water-supply-protection-grant-program

Mass DEP Water Utility Resilience Program
This new program provides technical assistance, partnership opportunities, adaptation planning, asset management, vulnerability assessments and training to enhance the resilience of water and waste water utilities from hazards weather events related to climate change.
https://www.mass.gov/guides/water-utility-resilience-program

EPA Water Infrastructure and Resiliency Finance Center
This program administered by the EPA provides technical assistance, toolkits, and resources to help decision makers building wastewater infrastructure projects that protect human and environmental health.
https://ofmpub.epa.gov/apex/wfc/f?p=165:1::::::

Infrastructure (Transportation)

MassDOT Local Aid Programs
MassDOT has four Local Aid programs that towns can use to fund projects that make local road infrastructure more resilient to climate change: Ch.90, Municipal Small Bridge Program, Complete Streets and Safe Routes to School.
https://www.mass.gov/topics/local-aid-programs

Transportation Alternatives Program
The Transportation Alternatives Program provides funding for transportation "alternatives" that improve transportation networks by efficiently and cost-effectively mitigating street and alley flooding. Projects can include green infrastructure components of trails and sidewalks for non-motorized transportation, such as permeable pavements.
http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/planning/Main/PlanningProcess/FundingConsiderations.aspx

Infrastructure (Energy)

Green Communities Division (GCD)
The Massachusetts Department of Energy Resources' Green Communities Division (GCD) provides grants, technical assistance, and local support from Regional Coordinators to help municipalities reduce energy use and costs by implementing clean energy projects in municipal buildings, facilities, and schools.
https://www.mass.gov/orgs/green-communities-division

Weatherization and Intergovernmental Program
The US Department of Energy's Weatherization and Intergovernmental Program provides grants, technical assistance, and information tools to states, local governments and community action agencies for their energy programs. The funding can be used to encourage installation of green infrastructure, such as green roofs, as part of the weatherization process.
https://energy.gov/eere/wipo/weatherization-and-intergovernmental-programs-office

Massachusetts Clean Energy Center's (MassCEC) Community Microgrids Program
This program helps municipalities harness the innovative micro grid technology that lowers customer energy costs, reduces greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, and provides increased energy resilience.
http://www.masscec.com/community-microgrids-program

MA Clean Energy Center (CEC) Government and Non-Profit Clean Energy Programs
MassCEC manages the Massachusetts Renewable Energy Trust Fund for the state and has diverse programs that promote clean energy, energy efficiency, and wastewater treatment plant innovation. Grant programs include solar energy, clean heating and cooling, hydro projects, organics to energy projects and many more.
http://www.masscec.com/get-clean-energy/government-and-non-profit

Learn More

Adaptation Resource Center: https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/arc-x_.html

BioMimicry: Nature's Unifying Patterns: https://toolbox.biomimicry.org/core-concepts/natures-unifying-patterns/

CAKE: Climate Adaptation Knowledge Exchange: https://www.cakex.org/

Climate Change Response Framework: https://forestadaptation.org/new-england

Climate Data Sources: http://wise.web.unc.edu/teaching/data-sources/

Colleges & Underserved Communities Partnership Program (CUPP): https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/communityhealth/collegeunderserved-community-partnership-program-cupp_.html

Connect the Connecticut: http://connecttheconnecticut.org/data-tools/

Massachusetts Climate Change Vulnerability Map: http://maps.massgis.state.ma.us/map_ol/cc_vuln.php

Massachusetts Environmental Public Health Tracking: https://matracking.ehs.state.ma.us/Climate-Change/climate_and_health_profile.html

Municipal Adaptation Planning: https://climateactiontool.org

Naturally Resilient Communities: http://nrcsolutions.org/strategies/#solutions

Resilience and Adaptation in New England (RAINE): https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/raine_.html

RiverSmart Communities: https://extension.umass.edu/riversmart/resources/resources-farmers

Smart Growth Technical Assistance Program: https://19january2017snapshot.epa.gov/smartgrowth_.html

Steps to Building Resilience: https://toolkit.climate.gov/steps-to-resilience/explore-hazards

Franklin Conservation District

River Access World Café Forum (6/15/2020)

Virtual Tablecloth Notes – Comments Sorted by 3 Questions

Questions:

1. **The Goal:** What could safe, environmentally sound, well-managed, and welcoming public river access look like?
2. **The Problems:** What are the special challenges for managing public river access?
3. **The Solutions:** What is needed to successfully support public river access? What could ***you*** offer to support public river access?

Question 1 – The Goal:

What could safe, environmentally sound, well-managed, and welcoming public river access look like?

Comments:

- **Signage:**
  - Well-defined expected uses of the access – whether canoe, swimming, fishing, etc.
  - Clear informative signage, especially on safety issues. For example, if "no swimming," explain why.
  - Signage: "You are welcome to use the land, but here are rules we ask you to follow."
  - "This is not a public recreation area. It will not be advertised, but access for swimming and trail use is allowed."
  - Educational signage in the larger parcels so people can learn how to responsibly use swimming areas.
  - Should post a place to call if anyone has complaints.
  - Have very clear, well-defined areas of access and then mark other areas that are not available for public access.
  - Need clearly defined signage – e.g., carry-in, carry-out, day use only.
  - Consider having signage in multiple languages, including Spanish.
  - Make signage big enough that people will read it.
  - Adequate signage: explain rules, know what to do, how to do it.
  - Ask for respectful behavior (pick up trash, etc.).
  - Trails clearly marked.
  - Signage needs to be engaging and informative.
  - Educational signage that is welcoming and informative.
- **Education / Outreach / Volunteers / Stewards:**
  - Clearly defined parking; signage; informative, rotating volunteer steward at the site (e.g., interpretive or cultural park rangers).
  - Informational signage. Educating the public. River hosts and rangers.

- Windshield wiper flyer: If someone is parked in the wrong place, this can be placed on their car, so they learn about the appropriate use of the area.
- Use friendly and well-established etiquette to manage user behavior.

- **Safety:**
  - Safe for whom?
  - Safe physical access.
  - Safe accessible access – including parking, clear safe path to river.

- **Infrastructure:**
  - Infrastructure: parking, bathrooms, trash receptacles, and funding for ongoing maintenance.
  - More areas designated for picnicking, campfires, support large family gatherings.
  - It is possible to have flood-resilient infrastructure. Tully Lake in Royalston Mass, managed by Army Corps. That rec area floods every spring. So, amenities that are there – parking lot, picnic table, etc. – are all designed to function if they flood. On Deerfield River, somewhat controlled by upstream hydropower projects – might have some control over this.

- **Parking:**
  - It's helpful to have parking visible from a public road. When parking is down a quiet road then much more likely to get partying.
  - Plenty of parking.
  - Plenty of off-road parking.
  - Create a small parking lot.
  - Adequate parking; towing often necessary in its absence.

- **Trash:**
  - Managing trash and litter along the river and access points.
  - Vermont has "Carry-In, Carry-Out" policy for trash at parks.
  - Places to put trash; carry-in, carry-out by every visitor.

- **Restrooms:**
  - Public restroom facilities at river access put-ins and take-outs.
  - Need bathrooms at larger parcels/access areas.

- **Miscellaneous:**
  - Welcoming: When we close off access, that doesn't make the river less appealing. It's more likely to shut out people who would use the river respectfully. When things get closed off, only get the rowdiest teenagers and lots of beer bottles. Making it welcoming encourages good behavior.
  - Plenty of land on banks for "human use."
  - Conserve key properties for public access. Formal trail access will be installed on a newly conserved property to keep people to designated areas.
  - Diverse access points to provide different uses for different users.
  - Public transportation access.

Question 2 – The Problems:

What are the special challenges for managing public river access?

Comments:

- **Safety / Law enforcement / Emergency services:**
  - Safe use.
  - Safety is a real concern: There have been a lot of tragic accidents along the Deerfield River. Who staffs the rescue teams? Local volunteers are not trained for river rescues.
  - Lifeguarding and emergency preparation. Loss of life and injury are tragic and place burden on local community emergency services, volunteer services.
  - Need for uniform access to emergency services to provide adequate response time and safety for visitors.
  - Demands on EMTs and police. Parking in public roadways, safety concerns.
  - Safety issues and environmental impacts create overlapping issues: Tree roots exposed through erosion cause tripping hazards, lack of sanitary facilities creates health hazard for water and nearby land, etc.
- **Infrastructure:**
  - Planning and permitting issues: Hard to place improvements (e.g. stairwell), barriers due to regulations.
  - Need to design sites to prevent circumvention of the protection elements as well as being in character of community and resource area.
- **Parking:**
  - No parking.
  - When you have too many cars trying to park, people start to look for other ways to access the river.
  - Parking a major issue for towns. Need town plan, create model for how to provide adequate parking for public.
  - Parking should be visible from traveled roadway, otherwise problem if cars are hidden.
  - Cars often block local traffic.
  - Parking is often the biggest hassle for local residents. Who owns the parking spaces and who has authority over them?
  - Parking areas closed by Great River Hydro. They should have a part in river access.
- **Education / Outreach / Volunteers / Stewards:**
  - The people who use the river often cause the problems. Some have no sense of responsibility except "right to access," not to take care of the land.
  - Lack of understanding by many users on their impact on the river.
  - It has been hard to change the management of the area [unknown]. Site stewards have been hired to be there and educate people. Lots of signage. Goal is to get users of the site to understand the rules of the site.
- **Trash:**
  - Misuse: trash, dumping.

- Problems with dumping in places, lots of waste tires.
- Trash and bottles left behind.
- Trash and litter removal.
- Need more river cleanup.
- Need constant vigilance, look at the sites and make sure people are not dumping. If there's waste, report it and have it cleaned up right away.
- Why are people dumping stuff in the river?

- **Restrooms:**
  - No bathrooms.
  - Bathroom facilities are not available, so people tend to do their business anywhere and everywhere. Whose responsibility is to put in bathrooms and pay for them?

- **Funding:**
  - Who pays for the cleanup, policing, infrastructure improvements?
  - Expense of design of sites and access improvements.
  - Funding: How to pay for river access?
  - Towns don't have resources.
  - Money is the issue.
  - Need funding to deal with rising pressures.

- **Overuse / Misuse / Crowds / Closures:**
  - Overuse: crowding, erosion.
  - On a nice day, there may be three times the population of Charlemont on the Deerfield River there.
  - Many sites closed because they're overrun with people partying.
  - No parking, neighbors upset, noise in middle of the night.
  - Ban alcohol from the river.
  - Quiet spots often get discovered and have impacts.
  - Quiet swimming holes and river spots get posted on world wide web and suddenly there's an uptick in use and abuses often crop up.
  - Social media has popularized formerly little-known spots.
  - Usage overwhelms the space, no restrooms, overuse, trash, how to handle traffic?
  - Many towns have had access sites closed. Examples: Greenfield closure of Eunice Williams Bridge, issues along Green River, Williamsburg has no public access site, Shelburne closure of the potholes, Sunburn Beach issues.
  - People are going to come whether or not you close an area.
  - When places get closed down, they tend to be large access points, which puts pressure on the small sensitive spots that don't have facilities to handle large crowds.
  - With closures of spaces, the pressure is higher for the other open spaces.
  - Control often starts out as a good idea, but has bad results.
  - Pattern of fewer and fewer places due to conflicts and closures.

- **Town services / Oversight:**
  - Oversight and effect on town services (law enforcement, etc.).

- Policing issue must be handled well (e.g., parking, dirty diapers, etc.).
- Enforcing appropriate (or designated) use.
- Signage and parking are needed. Towns do not have the money to put in those items. (And if they did, then there would be some level of liability they would be taking on, so it is easier for them to ignore it.)

- **<u>Erosion / Environmental</u>:**
  - Managing environmentally sensitive areas.
  - Balancing human use of riverbanks and environment protection.
  - Natural riverbanks are not designed for volume of foot traffic. Need some kind of protection/access built to protect riverbank and work with the river. Need professional design work to create this and find long-term solutions.
  - Riverbank erosion that happens when there are large numbers of people accessing the river in "unofficial" access points. Properties are not managed for large crowds, so large numbers of people are causing erosion. Who pays for putting in official structures for management?

- **<u>Equity / Social justice / Pandemic</u>:**
  - Equity and social justice issues to ensure access to rivers for economically disadvantaged communities.
  - Local people wanting to keep areas for their use only.
  - How to help townspeople deal with "outsiders" coming to use river.
  - Cultural differences may create different desires (e.g., quiet vs loud).
  - Climate change pressures likely to bring more people to rivers to escape heat.
  - Interaction of negative feedback cycles: higher summer temperatures, more demand for river access, more conflict at sites in use, closures, fewer sites, more pressure on sites available.
  - Addressing homelessness.
  - Homeless population use the river.
  - Homeless camps along the river. (Need for site stewards, police, social services.)
  - There is not enough river access. (No buses during COVID-19 so there will be more cars.)
  - Trails and public infrastructure being heavily utilized during pandemic – slashing budgets due to economic losses.
  - Pandemic and economic impacts add new pressures. Will river access be put to the end of the list?

- **<u>Private property</u>:**
  - Need to protect private land; conflicts often arise for private companies and private landowners.
  - Unwelcome public access across private property.
  - People who use a site feel like they have a "right" to use a site, so when there is change, people have a hard time changing with the new policies.
  - Landowner are concerned about liability – even though state law protects them, they can still be sued.

- **Competing uses:**
  - Swimming area versus day-use minibus/family reunion showing up for the whole day.
  - There is a problem when larger public areas charge for their use; this puts pressure on the smaller, more sensitive areas.
  - Finding different types of areas along the river that can accommodate different interests in how to use the river.
  - How do you manage tubers? Many people are entering the river in non-legal ways.
  - Tubers verses rafters in Charlemont. There are different levels of river engagement and rules. Rafters have often negotiated access points, but then tubers tend to use those spots and don't know the rules.
  - Scenic remote areas attract large groups like marathons/bike rides, which increase use.
  - Competing usage types, need to talk and understand different points of view.
  - Lack of designated access areas and areas designated for specific uses.
- **Miscellaneous:**
  - Physical challenges, infrastructure, and social aspects.
  - Not good coordinated lobbying for small towns and environmental issues along rivers.
  - How does the Paddlers Trail manage camping? Some are out of the way; misuse more common in pandemic.
  - Even with all these issues, there is still value in getting people out into the environment.

Question 3 – The Solutions:

What is needed to successfully support public river access? What could *you* offer to support public river access?

Comments:

- **Safety / Law enforcement / Emergency services:**
  - Environmental Officers available, adequate staff to check on sites.
  - Train local first responders to do river rescue.
- **Signage:**
  - Put up signage indicating who to call in case of emergency.
  - Friendly sign with positivity and creativity guiding use.
  - Guidelines for specific areas posted and signage (e.g., private property).
- **Parking:**
  - State law that you can't block the travel lane; towing when cars park illegally.
  - Collect parking fee to support sustainability.
- **Education / Outreach / Volunteers / Stewards:**
  - Outreach and education needed.
  - River and site stewards, volunteers.
  - Stewardship, foster community involvement, "friends of" groups, part of team.

- Need staff to host sites.
- Local support; eyes on sites and donations; stewardship.
- Volunteer stewards to adopt a site.
- Some official presence, even if volunteers with a t-shirt.
- "River Rangers" – mixed success, enforcement issues, but could raise awareness about invasive and other river health issues.
- Local "friends of" group can help take responsibility.
- Towns organize river guardians.
- River stewards trained for education.
- Coordinated river stewards.
- Sharing a river steward!
- Volunteer to organize a civic/volunteer group to act as river educators.
- Constant vigilance, look at the sites and make sure people are not dumping. If there's waste, report it and have it cleaned up right away.
- Engage community with state/town owners of land.
- Education. Make it easy for people to do the right thing.
- Public outreach and education.
- Outreach. Visit schools. Watershed groups.
- Environmental education to local schools/camps.
- TV and radio educational ads.
- Education, not discipline.

- **Erosion / Environmental:**
  - D.C.'s RiverSmart program insights: Don't put investments into zones that are likely to be damaged by floods, whether by inundation or fluvial erosion. (For example, paved bike paths in areas vulnerable to fluvial erosion may make people want to protect them through armoring.) If you allow/plan for floodplains to flood and river channels to move, it protects environmental functions and can keep people and their investments safer.
  - Need for education; protecting the wildlife; walk and access areas that are established with protection of flora, fauna, aquatic organisms, etc.

- **Equity / Social justice / Pandemic:**
  - Equitable support for access sites to relieve stress on any single place.
  - Public health need in response to pandemic.
  - Allowing fishing for food.
  - Livelihood for the public – fishing, recreation businesses.
  - Homelessness on the river is not a problem. Could be perceived as a problem because of criminalizing poverty.
  - Don't criminalize poverty, including homelessness. Allow subsistence fishing; could potentially use this as a way to advocate for environmental protection/quality.
  - Fort River Watershed Association is looking to use Connecticut River Conservancy (CRC) guidelines, and add on to them as needed, to be sensitive to homeless camps and not "clean up" someone's home.

- **Andrea Donlon** (Connecticut River Conservancy): "The staff at CRC have discussed homelessness and issues surrounding the Source to Sea Cleanup event. Glad to hear it mentioned here. I would also be open to more discussion and suggestions."

- **Miscellaneous:**
  - Local love of the resources/access; leading by example; cleaning up, art shows.
  - More public ownership of access locations and community support of managing access.
  - Designated use areas.
  - Work with others to get restrooms, river patrol by towns.
  - We must consider climate change.

- **Coordination / Collaboration:**
  - Need well defined access areas and clear "chain of command" and responsibility for funding and maintenance.
  - Access points are managed – or not managed – by many different agencies or companies. There is no single entity to provide uniform education and enforcement. Hands off approach. Lack of management.
  - Not a central organization, well-funded to oversee and provide this access.
  - Maybe a consortium of groups to "manage and have oversight" of the access points.
  - Nonprofit organization focused on access, citizen driven.
  - How can we work with the access owners and get them on the same page?
  - Land trusts have opportunity to make connections between members and landowners for conservation and stewardship, raise importance of these issues, and connect with state agencies that provide leadership and services – also to champion funding and large-scale planning.
  - River organizations that have stepped in to conserve land and river access.
  - Windham (VT) Regional Commission collaboration.
  - Develop a common look and strategy.
  - Coordination of agencies like DCR, DFW, USFWS.
  - Regular discussion with interested parties: users, landowners, town boards/officials.
  - Monitoring by a responsible party (state, coordinated volunteers/stewards...).
  - Coordination of outreach to legislators, grant-writing.
  - Participation in discussion groups, website for information sharing/troubleshooting.
  - We need a central resource, website for a start is great idea, but a MA state resource would be very helpful. We must collaborate, regionally, to address this concern.
  - Website that covers river access issues. No one knows all of the information. Need a place where resources can be found.
  - Accountability: Who is the authority? Who is in charge? Need clear "chain of command."
  - Someone needs to have authority and funding to manage; there would also need to be something to be managed (e.g., parking, sanitation, trash).

- **Funding / Advocacy / Towns / State:**
  - Funding critical – planning recommendations often end with this.
  - Funding needed to staff facilities.

- Funding needed for managing, restoration and monitoring, law enforcement, parking, town services.
- Need for funding and education.
- Funds for maintenance.
- Towns need funding for maintenance, patrolling, river safety. Again, Tully Lake example: Army Corps pays Royalston an annual sum for local police to include property in their patrols when Tully is open.
- Support from state/other entities to take burden off of town, so towns don't have to close down to protect river or community from traffic.
- Taxes to support town and costs for impact on river and town.
- Towns are considering recreation taxes to pay for sanitary facilities, maintenance, etc.
- Need for state investment.
- State resources needed to provide safe and healthy access points.
- **Eve Vogel** (UMass): "I'm on the Massachusetts Rivers Alliance board and many are concerned that environmental agencies will get disproportionate cuts this year from Covid reductions; they got disproportionate cuts in 2008 and still haven't recovered. So we need communities to advocate for maintaining environmental agency budgets."
- Leadership from state.
- Encourage appetite for investment in resources needed to use the areas.
- Legislation to focus that attention.
- Appeal to governments about needed funds to manage these public access areas.
- Sanitary stations are needed. We need a unified approach and must work together with state agencies to get the engineering and funding to support river issues.
- In Vermont, state capacity is limited, so river interest groups have organized together to put in river access points along the Upper Connecticut River. Funding has come from some of the hydroelectric facilities along the river.
- Make access to natural resources a priority.
- Time and money.
- Legislation, permitting, fundraising, management.
- State involvement (funding in Western Mass).
- Get state congressional leaders involved.
- Have funds available to dedicate to our water resources.
- Good if the states could get together on a watershed-wide approach, a comprehensive River Recreation plan.
- States must come to the table with resources. Aid the municipalities. Organize bond bill.
- One state entity to manage the river in consultation with the towns.
- Lobbying to get the state to do their part and fund infrastructure and patrolling.
- Bring legislators **to** the river, on a rafting/fishing trip.
- Since it's a statewide issue, get funding through the Massachusetts Municipal Association (MMA).
- Advocate for funding, including through municipalities and MMA.
- **Carolyn Ness** (Franklin Conservation District, Deerfield Select Board and Board of Health): "We should step forward and propose projects/initiatives for the MA Environmental Bond Bill. Perhaps cluster a variety of identified access sites and tally up

proposed improvements, in the range of at least $10M-$15M. Makes sense to address public river access on watershed-wide basis (including up into VT, especially for Deerfield River), through broad outreach and targeted improvements."
    - Fully support, follow up to this group for money and funding through an environmental bond bill.

- **Study / Assess:**
    - Assess amount of use at each site, and manage accordingly.
    - Define "public access." Who can access? residents only? anyone? This is a talking point that needs discussion and further information.
    - Representation from different interest groups will help define uses.
    - Specialty groups contribute – e.g., mountain bikers, paddlers, swimmers, etc.
    - Need to identify larger areas where people can access water. This will take pressure off of the smaller parcels that cannot handle the crowds.
    - Need to identify "Day Use" areas for day-long visits, versus the small sensitive areas that are most appropriate for dippers who use it and leave.
    - Has there been a watershed-wide study to look at current use/overuse areas along the river?
    - Need to understand access capacity and what responsible use looks like.

- **Model initiatives / Organizations/ Offers:**
    - Green River Village Preservation Trust in VT a great example of local support and protection of a treasured resource.
    - Look to other states for models. Vermont River Conservancy effort to protect swimming holes and provide access.
    - Responsibility for funding from Great River Hydro and other commercial users.
    - FERC hydroelectric relicensing includes plan across the region for recreation needs.
    - Connecticut River Conservancy document for recreational requests, to move vision beyond FERC relicensing, engage state.
    - **Andrea Donlon** (CRC): "I'd be happy to talk more about Great River Hydro and river access with anyone off-line."
    - Northfield Mountain trails – accessibility, free access for locals?
    - Massachusetts Rivers Alliance – fighting for funding for environmental agencies, budget cuts likely, need for public support.
    - **Kristen Sykes** (Appalachian Mountain Club): AMC is advocating for a bill in the MA state legislature to create an Office of Outdoor Recreation (https://malegislature.gov/Bills/191/SD1613).
    - Consider similar model to beaches, national seashore, town beaches for residents, free beaches?
    - **Phil Herzig** (U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service) offers to help design and construct an access that is (1) accessible, safe to use for a variety of people, based on existing conditions of the river, and (2) USFWS could bring resources/equipment to construct, at no expense to towns, as part of wildlife enhancement access.