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November 2023

## Connecting Is at the Heart of Wachusett Greenways

### Membership Counts!

Please send your 2023 membership. If you are already a member, THANK YOU. If you're not sure, please [contact us](#).

The suggested annual amount is \$40 (your gift in any amount makes you a member).

Your year-end special gift is significant. Please give to one or more of the following Wachusett Greenways funds for 2023. Your gift will help to complete and care for the 30-mile section of the MCRT through Sterling, West Boylston, Holden, Rutland, Oakham and Barre. Together we are growing ONE interconnected, united trail for people of all ages and abilities.

**MCRT Construction Fund** To construct more of the central 30 miles of the Mass Central Rail Trail. An additional \$180,000 are needed for the current construction from Manning St. to Wachusett St. in Holden.

**Dr. Edward P. Yaglou MCRT Maintenance Fund** For major maintenance and restoration of the MCRT. Currently we are contracting to remove hazard trees at the Charnock cut in Rutland. We are also undertaking parking-lot repair in Rutland, Holden, West Boylston and Sterling.

**MCRT Stewardship Endowment Fund** To grow this permanent fund for Wachusett Greenways' enduring

stewardship of the MCRT. We are seeking \$50,000 in new gifts to this fund before the close of 2023. Our goal is to help fund our first-ever employee to strengthen WG for the future. Wachusett Greenways' small band of directors have given \$5,000 to lead the way.

Whether you donate online [here](#) or by postal mail, please add a note to designate which fund(s) you choose for your giving. Welcome to every member or donor coming on-board today! Thank you to each of you who are members or donors for 2023!

Watch for our Annual Report in January to learn more of our 2023 progress 2023 and plans for 2024.

Every act of sharing makes us stronger. Peace and joy to you!

Wachusett Greenways  
PO Box 121  
Holden, MA 01520  
Colleen Abrams, President

### **Please Volunteer**

Contact us [here](#) or Colleen at 508-479-2123 or [colleen.abrams@verizon.net](mailto:colleen.abrams@verizon.net).



Join us! Leaves galore await WG volunteers to help move them to prepare the trail for winter. Contact Colleen to step up!

**We are united** through membership, special year-end giving, volunteering, serving in partnerships, and enjoying the trail. Thank you to each remarkable friend of Wachusett Greenways. Together we are resilient and grateful in 2023.

Partnerships stand as the strong foundation essential for the MCRT. Thank you to the staff and elected officials of our local Towns and the Commonwealth, the MA Department of Conservation and Recreation, MassTrails, local contractors and local foundations. We are grateful to each of you!

November is time for finishing strong and forging ahead. We look back on a BIG year and we look forward to growing together.

### **How did you enjoy the MCRT? Did you:**

- Stroll with a friend and offer quiet encouragement.
- Watch your grandchild race down the trail making windmills with her arms.
- Take a solitary walk and feel a little stronger and taller, breathe a bit deeper and experience expanding peace.
- Ride your e-bike or wheel chair to access the trail.
- Roll along joyfully, sharing the trail with bicycles of all kinds.
- Run steadily on a cool morning to build your stamina and speed.
- Ski or snowshoe as fresh snowflakes fell.
- Carry fishing poles down to the water's edge with your family to cast and wait for a strike.
- Gather with friends to caravan on the trail with baby strollers and packs, and beginner's bicycles.
- Appreciate the smile of someone you met along the trail.
- Notice a golden beech leaf, a deep green hemlock bough, the sound of a pileated woodpecker, a painted turtle, the sound of a barred owl, the sun filtering through the canopy at sunrise or sunset, the sound of the rushing Quinapoxet.

### **How did you strengthen the MCRT? Did you:**

- Work in partnership to forward the vision of a complete and cared for MCRT between Northampton and Boston.
- Mow miles of the central 30-mile portion of the MCRT with Wachusett Greenways.
- Remove leaves and muck from the trail ditches with a shovel or fork.
- Repair a mower.
- Fix or pull a trailer.
- Clean a bench.

- Remove graffiti.
- Mail letters bringing news and encouragement to give.
- Write a thank you.
- Pick up litter.
- Patrol a parking lot.
- Dispose of a doggie bag.
- Tidy a restroom.
- Drive your truck or trailer.
- Clean a bridge.
- Plant a bush or tree.
- Cut a hazard tree.
- Remove brush and branches from the trail shoulder and ditches.
- Blow and rake leaves from the trail and ditches.
- Install a new split rail fence or picnic table.
- Paint a tunnel mural. See accompanying article.
- Write a grant proposal.
- Survey the trail.
- Plan to connect the next section of the MCRT.
- Carry out a major maintenance or restoration on the MCRT.
- Help construct a new section of the MCRT.
- Complete a new bridge.
- Ask a friend to join.
- Invite a stranger to join.

All this and more we accomplish together!





## Pommogussett Tunnel Murals Underway in 2023

Thanks to many hardy volunteers, this year we established the planned Pommogussett tunnel murals along the rail trail under Route 56/Pommogussett Rd. in Rutland. Christy Barnes, representing Wachusett Greenways, organized volunteer hours and the professional skills of Clayton Johansen, to accomplish the priming of the tunnel walls in September. This was done thoroughly, with two coats of primer. Many thanks, team!

It's an interesting challenge, painting educational murals in a tunnel. We had a very wet summer in 2023, and the tunnel area had Route 56 road construction as well. In the tunnel, the cement walls hold the chilly temperatures of autumn, while the humidity in warm summer air can wreak havoc with the paints if they do not dry thoroughly. We had wonderful good fortune on the priming timing, and those surfaces are doing very well.

Similarly, we had outstanding good luck with our first coats of colors to create the scenes of wetlands and seasons. Artist Margaret McCandless combined science research and the joy of teaching nature information to children. Alison Stevenson and Christy Barnes joined Margaret to paint both walls of the entire 70-foot long underpass. The Pommogussett tunnel murals now feature images of summer, autumn, winter, spring, summer again, and a hint of the next autumn as well.

"We design the flow of mural scenery so that winter is in the middle of the tunnel, where that largely-white landscape reflects the maximum amount of ambient light," Margaret reports. This can be seen in the Charnock Hill Rd. tunnel murals as well, which were painted in 2021 and 2022.

The indigenous word "Pommogussett" is reported to mean "beautiful area where the waters meet and spread widely," or lovely wetlands. Thus the murals feature lovely wetlands, including swamp and marsh flowers, shrubs, open water, and water-dependent trees, with the attendant animal life that thrives in these microbiomes.

On the tunnel's south wall, passersby can see floating bogs, water lilies, dragon flies, beaver lodges, and the surrounding hills. On the facing north wall, the mural shows a similar landscape in cross-section, so viewers can see the

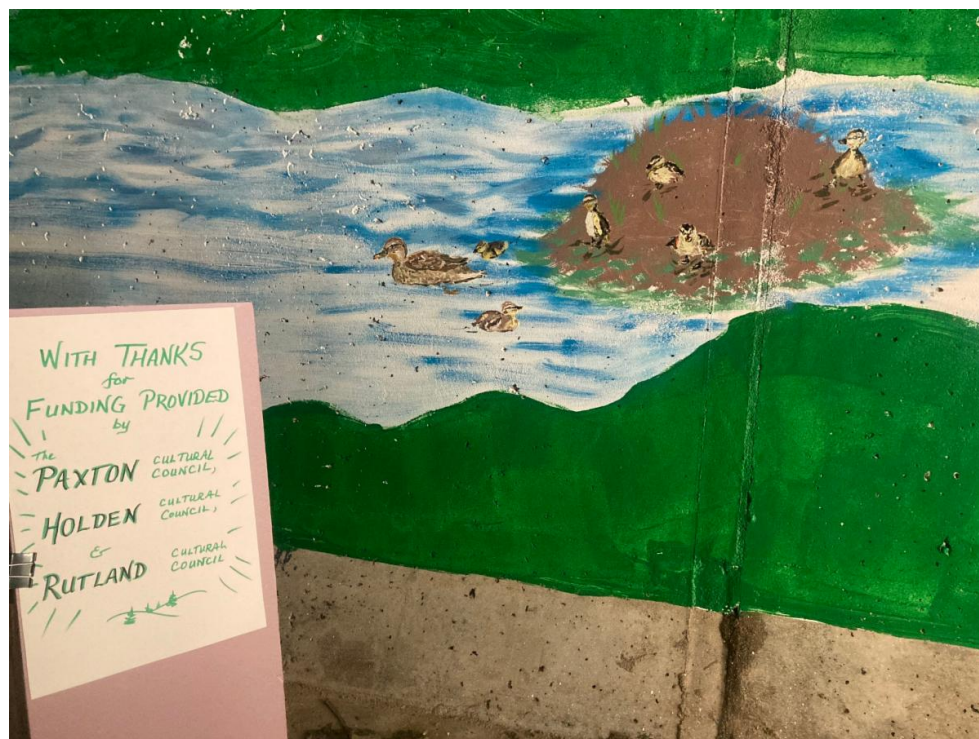
fish that dwell below the floating bogs, and beavers swimming to their underwater lodge-entrances.

The cross-section mural depicts water lilies with their roots reaching down to the pond bottom, and floating bog plants whose roots remain afloat in the wet matrix. Mallards nest atop one beaver lodge, while another reveals the inside view of beaver life in the winter. We plan to continue painting details in 2024 when the weather is warm enough for our paint to stick and to dry.

For support in making these murals, we thank EJ's Painting, Nal's Paints, the Rutland Cultural Council, the Paxton Cultural Council, the Holden Cultural Council, the Massachusetts Cultural Council, and the volunteers and membership of Wachusett Greenways.

Please celebrate their donations by visiting the Pommogussett tunnel, and viewing the murals with children and adults, friends and family. It's another stunning, colorful addition to Wachusett Greenways' contribution to providing outdoor education opportunities for all.

*Margaret McCandless*







The Pommogusset tunnel under Rt. 56 in Rutland was completed in 2011.

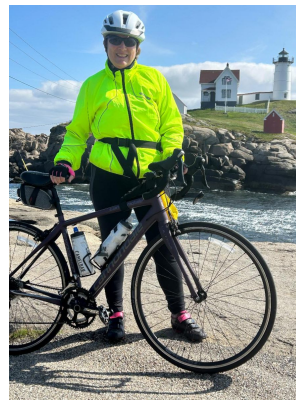


## **Bike Tours—and More—for All**

Diane Delrosario, a dedicated Wachusett Greenways member and full-time nurse at Baystate Medical Center, leads bike rides and hikes on her beloved Mass Central Rail Trail (MCRT). These outings are organized by the Cyclonauts of Springfield cycling

club. Some cyclists drive from over an hour away to join in these popular outings.

Diane has taken riders along the MCRT between Rutland, Barre and beyond with stops at historic sites along the way. A popular stop is at the foundation of the old rail station near Coldbrook Road in Oakham. Here a plaque notes that Calvin Coolidge used the train regularly to travel between Boston and his home in Northampton while he was Massachusetts Governor.



“We’re so fortunate to have the MCRT and countless other accessible outdoor resources in our backyards or not far off!” says Diane. “It’s no surprise that cyclists and hikers flock to central Mass to enjoy all that nature and our rich history have to offer.” Leading rides also enables Diane to promote local businesses, such as Heavy Evie's Diner in Rutland.

The Cyclonauts of Springfield cycling season runs from April through October followed by hiking season November through March. Cross country skiing and snowshoeing may be on the schedule depending on weather. For more information, please visit [www.Cyclonauts.com](http://www.Cyclonauts.com) and the club's [Facebook](#).

[www.wachusettgreenways.org](http://www.wachusettgreenways.org)

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