



NASHUA RIVER WATERSHED ASSOCIATION

September 22, 2011

Mr. Edward Lambert, Commissioner
Department of Conservation and Recreation
MA Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs
251 Causeway St., Suite 900
Boston, MA 02114

Dear Commissioner Lambert:

The Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) is in strong support of the Squannacook Greenways, Inc. application to the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Recreation Trails 2012 grant program. As you know, Squannacook Greenways, Inc. seeks to create a several mile long multi-use rail trail along the Squannacook River in the towns of Groton and Townsend, MA.

The NRWA has been continuously involved in this project – converting a 3.7 mile portion of the MBTA owned but discontinued, former B & M, Greenville Branch – for over a decade: our demonstrated commitment to this endeavor is thus manifest. The NRWA recognizes the unique opportunity such a trail would have to highlight and complement the Squannacook River greenway, which includes associated state conservation lands. As one of our committee members has commented: “We’re surrounded by nature and it’s a real shame we’re not able to enjoy it. A rail trail would only be a positive thing for discovering and connecting to nature.” A level and easy-to-navigate linear rail trail would be the “entrance pass” to the out-of-doors for a great many town residents who are otherwise disinclined to venture into the “wilderness”.

Equally importantly, we have full faith that Squannacook Greenways, Inc. (SGI) has the determination and community support needed to undertake this project in the present and into perpetuity. Members of this non-profit have worked with the NRWA since the earliest years. When obstacles to this project might have made others give up, our group always found a way to move forward. When financial and environmental concerns made both Groton and Townsend have serious reservation about the project, our team worked to form official town committees in both towns to study the issues. In Townsend, this board even contained one opponent to the trail. Yet, after much hard work, this vision of building the Squannacook River Rail trail via a partnership of a non-profit and DCR was unanimously endorsed by every board member in both towns.

The Board of Directors of SGI is comprised of eleven dedicated professionals, including a current town Board of Selectman and Conservation Commissioner, a recently retired State Representative, as well as those with bicycle, trail and engineering careers and

backgrounds: most of whom have been involved in the project since its inception. The NRWA has provided organizational support throughout and Wachusett Greenways has provided collegial technical assistance.

Not only the advocates, but the towns themselves have shown serious support for this project. Groton has already put \$10,000 of Community Preservation Act funds into the trail, and Townsend voters supported the rail trail 1021-259 (~ 4 to 1 in favor) in a non-binding ballot vote in 2006.

The work proposed to be undertaken with DCR Rec Trails program funding (should it be awarded) is to engage with an environmental firm to conduct all aspects of permitting required before trail construction could proceed, and to clear the ROW of brush and obstructions so that the public might begin to more clearly envision the rail trail to come. Both these components are critical to the project's ongoing success and momentum.

We offer our endorsement to the growing list of supportive organizations and individuals. Please contact us if you have any questions and thank you for considering this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Futterman".

Al Futterman
Land Programs Director