Friends of the Nashua River Rail Trail

Hello! We just wanted to give you a quick wrap-up of what the Friends of the Nashua River Rail Trail (FNRRT) have been up to in 2019.

Trail Clean-ups

Over twenty volunteers came out for a successful trail clean-up April 27-29, 2019. We removed eight bags of litter, cleared leaves and other debris from the trail surface, cut back some overhanging branches, and moved downed trees and branches away from the edges of the trail.

We are currently planning our fall clean-up for late November or early December. Stay tuned!

DCR Volunteer/Stewardship Agreement

The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is the Massachusetts state agency responsible for the Nashua River Rail Trail. A major focus for us this year has been to improve our relationship with DCR. In April we had a productive meeting with Dwayne Ericson and Matt Amadon of DCR and we subsequently sent them a detailed list of trail hazards and concerns. We have recently finalized a Volunteer/Stewardship agreement with DCR. This will allow us to do more maintenance work on the trail ourselves while coordinating with DCR on other projects.

Mowing

DCR was not able to keep up with mowing along the edges of the trail this year. While the towns of Ayer, Groton, and Nashua did some mowing, other sections of the trail were neglected. DCR recovered from some earlier equipment problems and did mow the northern sections of the trail in September. Going forward, our new agreement with DCR will allow us to operate mowers along the trail ourselves. We will rent mowers as needed and are considering the purchase of our own mowing equipment.

Equestrian Trail

We identified the equestrian trail as a priority this year. This is an unpaved trail that runs along the west side of the paved rail trail, but parts of it had become badly overgrown—especially in Pepperell and Dunstable. DCR has recently agreed to clear the brush and overhanging branches from this area. We have volunteered to provide spotters to warn trail users while power equipment is in use. We expect this work to be completed in the fall of 2019.

Fallen Trees

Fallen trees blocking the trail are a recurring problem. In the past they have sometimes been cleared by DCR and sometimes by anonymous volunteers, but not always quickly. To allow us to help with this problem, six (yes, 6!) members of the Friends group recently completed a 16-hour chainsaw certification course approved by DCR. We will coordinate with DCR to get fallen trees removed as quickly as possible.
Kiosk Material

We have worked to gain access to the informational kiosks along the trail. This was more complicated than we expected. We’ve posted updated material in the kiosks including a new set of safety and etiquette guidelines for trail users.

Other Concerns

- Some bumps and dips on the trail are not well-marked. We temporarily filled a sinkhole in Groton and we plan to mark other hazards.
- Sand often washes across the trail near the entrance to the J. Harry Rich State Forest. We are working with a member of Groton Trails Committee and hope to fix this in November.
- The mileage markers on the trail surface have been badly worn. We plan to repaint them.
- A bollard is missing from the Smith St. crossing and other bollards are not secured. We plan to secure the bollards and will try to get the missing bollard replaced.
- The stop signs and trail markings at street intersection need better maintenance. We have brought this to the attention of DCR.

Leadership Change

In March Duane Cromwell stepped down as Co-Chair of Friends of the Nashua River Rail Trail and Steve Kalter was voted in as a new Co-Chair in April. We are grateful to Duane for his years of service and look forward to his continued involvement as Chair Emeritus. We appreciate the commitment of Steve and Irv Rockwood in their service as current Co-Chairs.

Thank You!

Thanks to the volunteers who helped out with our trail clean-ups. We have a safer, more beautiful trail because of you.

Thanks to Toreku Tractor & Equipment of Ayer and to Great Road Farm & Garden (formerly P. C. Myette Power Equipment) of Littleton for giving us a discount on leaf blower rentals.

We thank Dwayne Ericson and Matt Amadon of DCR for working with us to complete the Volunteer/Stewardship agreement. We look forward to working more closely with them.

Thanks to the Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) for acting as our fiscal agent. This allows us to accept tax-deductible contributions. We are also grateful to the NRWA for providing us with space for our monthly meetings.

And finally, thanks to you for supporting the Friends of the Nashua River Rail Trail. See you on the trail!

Contacts

Visit us on the web at www.fnrrt.org. To become more involved, send an email to joinus@fnrrt.org.

Donations may be sent to the Nashua River Watershed Association, 592 Main St., Groton MA 01450. Please write Friends of the NRRT on the check.