

## Our Western Mass. Scenic Byways

Western Mass. is host to five of the six state scenic byways, including Jacob's Ladder Trail (Berkshire, Hampshire and Hampden counties), Mt. Greylock Scenic Byway (Berkshire County), Mohawk Trail (Berkshire and Franklin), the Connecticut River Farm Scenic Byway (Franklin and Hampshire) and Route 112 (Franklin and Hampshire). Several projects are currently underway on all of the byways, most of which are being funded through the National Scenic Byway Grant Program. BRPC works closely with other local entities to apply for grant funds and conduct the projects. Here is a summary of current Berkshire byway projects:

- Jacob's Ladder Corridor Management Plan (update the 1994 management plan)
- Jacob's Ladder Landscape Improvements (roadside landscaping)
- Jacob's Ladder Sign Improvements (wayfinding signs)
- Mohawk Bicycle/Pedestrian Trail Project (investigate North Adams / Williamstown bike path)
- Mohawk Trail Facilities Improvements (improve tourist amenities and information)
- Mohawk Trail Marketing Project (improve marketing of byway)
- Mt. Greylock Road Rehabilitation (augment state funds to rehab the road system within the state reservation)
- Mt. Greylock Visitor Center Improvements (building improvements)
- Western Mass. Scenic Byway Marketing Campaign (market the byways as a tourist destination)

BRPC Contact: *Lauren Gaherty*

## MPO Update

There are two vacancies on the Berkshire Metropolitan Planning Organization: for the North Central and Southwest representatives. Initial two-year terms for both the delegate and alternate in the North region are also expiring. BRPC has set up the following schedule of caucuses to solicit representatives:

- North-Central: September 23, Callahan Room, Dalton Town Hall, 5:30 p.m.
- Southwest: October 4, Selectboard Meeting Room, Great Barrington Town Hall, 5:30 p.m.
- North Berkshire: October 11, Adams Town Hall, 6:00 p.m.

Each affected Selectboard has been asked to send a representative to their respective caucus. All meetings should take less than one hour.

BRPC Contact: *Alison Church*

## Expedited Permitting Update

### Streamlined Permitting

BRPC has initiated work under the Expedited Permitting law and an agreement with the Mass Association of Regional Planning Agencies to study streamlined permitting.

Intern Cara Seabury visited every town hall in Berkshire County over the past two months in search of building and zoning permit materials. Her job was to find out how hard or easy it is to locate information on, and apply for, building and zoning permits. In many communities, she was lucky to find these materials online or compiled in a complete building packet guidebook. In others, she found little. To supplement our regional search, BRPC staff has collected examples from around the state to assist with the task of compiling a compendium of best practices. Included in this list are:

- Guidebooks
- Websites
- Master Permit Forms (one form for all permits)
- Flow Charts and Checklists

### Priority Development Areas (43D)

To date, BRPC has been asked to provide assistance in five communities to research, map and initiate adoption of priority development areas under Chapter 43D. BRPC's GIS staff continues to work on a regional model consistent with the Regional Plan to identify those sites that are best suited as priority development areas. Communities interested in information on priority development sites in their community should contact *Joellyn Warren* or *Tom Matuszko*.

## The Berkshires' First Wind Turbine



Zephyr is a 1.5 megawatt turbine that will generate 4.6 million kWh per year, enough to produce one third of Jiminy Peak's annual energy needs. Zephyr's spinning blades can be seen from Route 43 in Hancock, and from Route 7 across Pontoosuc Lake.

"Zephyr," the first wind turbine in Berkshire County, and also the first at any North American ski resort, was dedicated on August 15 at Jiminy Peak in Hancock. Standing at 386 feet from the ground to blade tip,

## Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund

BRPC is the recipient of a US EPA Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (RLF) for \$1,000,000. BRPC will provide loans and subgrants with RLF funds to eligible borrowers and subgrantees at eligible sites for eligible clean up activities. The RLF will help to enhance the credit worthiness of conventional loans and may fill funding gaps within projects. The maximum loan amount will be \$200,000, not to exceed 80% of clean up costs. Applicants will be required to provide a 20% match. Loans are available to public, private, and non-profit entities. Sub-grants are limited to municipalities and non-profits.

BRPC also has \$400,000 to conduct assessment activities at public, private and non-profit owned sites. Information and forms can be found on BRPC's website.

BRPC Contact: *Joellyn Warren*

### **What is a Brownfield, anyway?**

A brownfield is a property whose expansion, redevelopment, or reuse may be complicated by the presence or potential presence of hazardous substances, pollutants, or contaminant. Petroleum, petroleum products, controlled substances, and mine-scarred lands are also eligible sites under Brownfields Law.

## Sense of Place

Beginning in the Central Berkshires and flowing through Connecticut to Long Island Sound, the Housatonic River is an important piece of Berkshire County's ecology and history.

The Housatonic inspired Charles Ives' classical piece "The Housatonic at Stockbridge," and has been used by a ship name three times by the Navy- the first USS Housatonic had the distinction of being the first ship to be sunk by a submarine, in 1864. An integral part of the region's papermaking industry for many years, recreational opportunities along the River are now growing. The Housatonic Riverwalk in Great Barrington became the first public greenway along the River in 1992. In 2006, the 29 communities in the upper Housatonic Valley became the country's 26<sup>th</sup> National Heritage Area. On September 22-23 and October 6-7, the 6<sup>th</sup> annual "Heritage Walks" program will provide many opportunities to experience the historic, cultural and natural sites of the River and its surrounding communities. Please visit [www.upperhousatonicheritage.org](http://www.upperhousatonicheritage.org) for more information.

What contributes to your Berkshire Sense of Place? If you have an outstanding person, location, event, or cultural item which you would like featured in *Common Ground*, please contact *Sarah Izatt*

