

Initiation of Sandisfield Bylaw/ Regulations Project

BRPC has begun work with the Town of Sandisfield to develop planning board rules and regulations, as well as develop a priority list of other items that the board feels are in need of updating or overhaul. Funding for the project was provided by the Highland Communities Initiative. The planning board currently does not have a set of rules and regs, and increasing rates of development around the Commonwealth and County necessitate updates to the Town's subdivision regulations, which were created in the mid-1960's. The changes in bylaws and regulations resulting from the project should aid the planning board in responding more effectively to concerns posed by proposed new development.

BRPC Contact: *Sarah Izatt*

Staff Goodbyes

We have said "so-long and good luck" to two Senior Planners in February. Jamie Francomano apparently found Berkshire winters too mild, and summers too long, as he has taken a position with the Planning Department in Presque Isle, Maine. Jamie was with us for a little over a year and focused heavily on working with Great Barrington as an Outsource Planner.

Joellyn Warren, our longest-standing Senior Planner, has moved from the area due to her husband's job relocation to Pennsylvania. Joellyn has been with us over seven years, starting as the first outsource planner to Lenox which resulted in the Town creating a permanent, full-time town planner position. Joellyn wrote our first successful Community Development Block Grant application for the Town of Dalton and managed the development of this year's CDBG application for the Town of Great Barrington. She also established BRPC's regional brownfields program, obtaining three significant grants, including this year's \$400,000 grant for site assessment and a \$1.0 million Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund.

We wish Jamie and Joellyn success in their moves and future professional success as well.

Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area

In 2006, 29 municipalities in Massachusetts and Connecticut were designed as a National Heritage Area, the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area (UHVNHA). A "national heritage area" is a place designated by the United States Congress where natural, cultural, historic and recreational resources combine to form a cohesive, nationally-distinctive landscape arising from patterns of human activity shaped by geography.



*Canoeing on the Housatonic
(Bryant.edu)*

These areas tell *nationally* important stories about our nation and are representative of the national experience through both the physical features that remain and the traditions that have evolved within them. The management entity for the heritage area is a nonprofit organization, the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, Inc. (UHVNHA Inc.). It is responsible for developing and implementing a Management Plan.

The Management Plan must consider the interests of diverse units of government, businesses, organizations and individuals within the region. BRPC, along with the Housatonic Valley Association, assisted in the initial stages of Management Plan development by identifying items in existing public planning documents, such as Master or Open Space and Recreation Plans, which relate to the identified heritage themes.

Identified themes are: Cultural Resort; Shaping a Scenic Landscape; Cradle of Industry; Revolutionary War and the Development of Democracy; and Social groups. Development of the entire plan will occur in 2008 and 2009. More information about the Area is available at: www.upperhousatonicheritage.org.

Introduction to the Regional Issues Committee

The Regional Issues Committee is one of the BRPC's six standing committees. According to the Bylaws, the Committee provides recommendations to the full Commission regarding regional issues facing Berkshire County, provides recommendations on proposed state or federal legislation or regulations, makes recommendations to the Commission concerning requests from municipalities for policy or guidance on regional issues, and studies regional issues and policies.

The Regional Issues Committee typically meets on the last Wednesday of each month, although it takes a break in the summer. The Committee currently has eight members. The Chair is Anita Barker of Williamstown. The Committee has typically tried to focus on one regional issue each year. In past years, it has focused on developing wind energy policies and on affordable housing. This year it is focusing on energy – conservation, renewables, and cost.

BRPC Contact: *Nat Karns*

Berkshire Team Awarded Mobility Planning Grant

A five member team from Berkshire County has been accepted to attend the 2008 Mobility Planning Service Training in Washington DC April 21-24. The MPS institute offers intensive training activities that result in plans each team can take home to improve public transportation services in their communities.

The Berkshire County team submitted an application that focused on removing existing transportation barriers for residents with physical and/or developmental disabilities. The team will bring back to Berkshire County strategies to remove these barriers and increase options for work, education, personal, social and cultural opportunities and enable full meaningful community participation for these segments of the population. The Team includes representatives from BRPC, Berkshire-Rides, the Department of Mental Retardation and Rep. Smignatelli's Office. BRPC Contact: *Alison Church*

Lee Traffic Study Update

BRPC completed the Purpose and Need Statement for the Lee Area Traffic Study. The Needs Statement provides in-depth assessment of the features in Lee that dictate traffic flow through the Town, including but not limited to the following:

- Truck traffic
- Influx of traffic to the Prime Outlets
- Lee as a local retail center
- Lee as an employment center
- Seasonal influx of traffic

The Purpose and Need Statement examines the effects of traffic flow on Lee, including increased travel time and reduction in Levels of Service, and also assesses roadway deficiencies, safety considerations, population growth, economic development and future transportation demand.
BRPC Contact: *Anuja Koirala*

Clearinghouse Reviews

- Hall Brook Dam Removal (Adams)
- Housatonic River/Dorothy Amos Park Remediation (Pittsfield)
- Donny Brook Country Club (Lanesborough)
- Benedict Pond Dam Reconstruction (Monterey)
- Snowy Owl Resort (New Ashford)

Urban BMP Performance Tool

The EPA has created a new tool to provide both stormwater professionals and municipal boards with easy access to 220 studies which assess the performance of over 275 stormwater Best Management Practices (BMPs). The tool will help permit granting

authorities in considering stormwater management plans and low impact development by-laws. The tool provides access to studies covering a variety of traditional and low impact BMP types, including retention and detention ponds, grassed filter strips, porous pavement and more. Users will also find a series of essays aimed at improving understanding of BMP performance and the importance of volume reduction/infiltration in these assessments. EPA plans to add more studies over the coming year, focusing on expanding the collection of studies of low impact development or green infrastructure BMPs. The Urban BMP Performance Tool can be found at www.epa.gov/npdes/urbanbmptool



Bioretention Runoff Treatment Area in a Parking Lot

Commission Meeting Recap

At the January 17 full Commission meeting, delegates and alternates received a general overview of all of the BRPC's current projects- more than fifty across the region. A detailed briefing on emergency preparedness planning projects was also provided by staff from both the BRPC and the Berkshire County Boards of Health Association. BRPC staff distributed the "Best Practices Model for Streamlined Local Permitting" prepared by the Massachusetts Association of Regional Planning Agencies, and highlighted a few steps that could be taken by local communities to improve the permitting process. The Commission was also given a background of the Clearinghouse Review Committee, which considers projects being reviewed under the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act. The next full Commission meeting will be held March 20. All meetings of the BRPC and its subcommittees are open to the public, please visit www.berkshireplanning.org/meetings/ for meeting dates and agendas.

5th Thursday Dinner

More than eighty board members, building inspectors, planners, and attorneys from around Berkshire County joined the BRPC for January's "5th Thursday" dinner, held at the Cork 'n Hearth in Lee. Attorney Syd Smithers educated attendees about the intricacies and nuances of creating effective, defensible special permit decisions. A recording of Syd's talk, as well as invaluable handout materials, can be found at www.berkshireplanning.org/6/4/.

The next 5th Thursday dinner training will be held May 31, please contact Sarah Izatt for more information.

Meetings and Events			
March 5	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
March 11	Lee Traffic Study Working Group	3:30 p.m.	Lee Library
March 15	Citizen Planner Training	8:00 a.m.	Holy Cross, Worcester
March 20	Full Commission Meeting	7:00 p.m.	BRPC
March 26	Regional Issues Committee Meeting	3:35 p.m.	BRPC
April 2	Executive Committee Meeting	3:45 p.m.	BRPC
April 3	Transportation Advisory Committee	5:00 p.m.	BRPC

In the case of inclement weather, please call to confirm if a meeting will still be held 

