

## Westfield River Wild & Scenic Advisory Committee 5-Year Action Plan (2006-2010)

**Vision:** The free-flowing Westfield River, as one of the most pristine rivers systems in Southern New England, supports a myriad of native fish and wildlife habitats and its intact river corridor hosts renowned historical, cultural, recreational and scenic resources which contribute to the economic vitality, quality of life, and landscape of the region.

**Mission:** The Westfield River Wild and Scenic Advisory Committee (WRWSAC) works to preserve, protect, and enhance the special qualities and outstanding natural resources of the Westfield River Watershed in concert with local communities.

### **Guiding Principles:**

- Advocate Strategically, Skillfully and Boldly
- Clarify our Message – Marketing
- Connect Events to Actions
- Education Targeted At & Part of Actions
- Who Else Can Do This Better (Or Instead of) Than Us
- Project Selection Based on Time & Money
- Speak with One Voice
- Use interactive and dynamic planning tools with realistic and structured ideas for implementation
- Work with Partners Not Solo (even if its funded)

**Strategic Imperatives:** *These are the few things WRWSAC must do, without fail, to the exclusion of everything else.*

- Funding and Staff
- Communicate and Build Partnerships with constituents, towns, policy makers, decision makers, etc.
- Understand Resources, Threats and Opportunities and make sure Communities and Others Know Their Importance
- Advocate and Actively Work to Protect Resources
- Understand Wild & Scenic Designation and Committee's role, authority and stature to protect resources

## **Strategic Goals and Objectives:**

**WRWSAC will develop and implement a 5 Year Funding Plan that includes at least \$25,000/year to fund a part-time coordinator and a minimum of \$25,000/year for projects.**

- Inventory Funding Options from Federal, State and Private Sources
- Create 5 Year Funding Plan (By Fiscal Year 2007)
- Work to secure enough funding to support Coordinator's time on the Westfield River (By June each year)
- Hold legislative breakfast at Chester Depot to highlight Wild & Scenic, Staff and Funding needs (Fall 2006)
- Work with state and federal officials to secure funding for projects
- Seek additional funding from private sources, including but not limited to, grants, foundations, businesses, donations, etc.
- Efficiently and effectively submit grant reports, documentations, and any other requirements to fulfill funding obligations

**Within the next two years, WRWSAC will comprehensively inventory and assess the Westfield River's "Outstandingly Remarkable Resources" (ORRs) and develop a Westfield River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Plan to guide the Committee's long-term strategies and actions.**

- Develop ORRs lists (i.e. natural, geological, historic, cultural, recreational and scenic resources) by branch/region (By Fall 2006)
- Meet with key town officials and community members to insure accuracy and completeness of the lists (Spring/Summer 2006)
- Inventory, assess and catalogue features through Stream Teams on each of the branches (West, Middle & East Branches) (By Fall 2006)
- Involve Towns, Organizations and Agencies in developing and reviewing ORR Lists (On-going through Fall 2006)
- Create a List of Anticipated Threats & Prioritize Level of Threat within Wild & Scenic Context
- Catalogue Lists in Different Formats (i.e. GIS Maps, spreadsheets, Posters, Pictures, Cheat Sheet of Positive Reasons for Protecting Resources) and share with communities and partners (2006-2007)
- Create database (preferably accessible through the web) that can be searched by town, river segment, and/or ORR attribute (i.e. natural, geological, historic, cultural, recreational and scenic) (2007)
- As an outreach strategy, develop a "Most endangered" resource list to highlight key threats to resources and strategies to protect them
- Compile all information to create the Westfield River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Plan (2006-2007)

**By 2007, WRWSAC will visually assess, inventory and report on riparian conditions and outstandingly remarkable features for all of the Wild & Scenic river segments and develop plans for long-term monitoring of the river and resources.**

- Stream Teams will conduct visual assessments of all the WSR segments (By Fall 2006)
- Compile information into Stream Team Reports for each Segment (Winter 2008)
- Share and compare information and reports with DEP Division of Watershed Management, town boards, agencies and organizations
- Include in the recommended actions next steps for further evaluation and/or monitoring and steps needed to develop Quality Assurance Project Plans

**In the next 5 years, WRWSAC will engage layers of community members by each year targeting outreach efforts and activities to at least 1 new demographic (i.e. youth, town officials, businesses, realtors, landowners, homeowners, river users, etc.) and a range of other community members through a combination of mailings, outreach materials, workshops, hikes, stream teams, etc.**

- Westfield RiverNotes (On-going)
- Articles in local papers (E.g. Windsor Now & Then, Country Journal, etc.)
- Photo Contest (Through Sept. 2006)
- Open House/Photo Exhibit (November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006)
- ORR Surveys (Through Fall 2006)
- Branch Stream Teams (By Fall 2006)
- Fairs & Conferences (On-going)

**Year 1: Landowners**

- Inventory the Large Landowners along River
- Reach out to Landowners to Assist with Land Protection Strategies
  - Brochure Mailing (Possibly combined with HCI's Land Conservation Options Brochure)
    - File necessary grant reports (ASAP)

**Year 2: Youth & Schools**

- Enlist schools and youth in outreach and education effort
- Tap into existing organizations outreach, e.g. help support ASERP program in one of the Wild & Scenic schools or work with TTOR and Berkshire Trail Elementary students on project related to Wild & Scenic

**By 2007, the trails sub-committee will work with the Towns of Chesterfield and Huntington, Dept. of Conservation and Recreation, and Army Corp of Engineers to repair two wooden decked bridges, conduct other necessary trail work and to officially mark the 6+ miles of the East Branch Trail.**

- Apply for and coordinate Student Conservation Assn. Americorps Trail Crews to assist with trailwork (Spring 2006)

- Work with students from Westfield State College to GPS trail features and areas in need of trailwork (Spring 2006)
- Order Trail Markers and mark trail corridor (Spring 2006)
- Sponsor community hike to celebrate trail (Fall 2006)
- Develop fall newsletter to highlight trail
- File necessary grant reports

**Within the next 5 years, Review Zoning and Overlay Districts and Update to make Enforceable and to Standardized Rivers Protection Bylaw/District in each of the Wild & Scenic Communities.**

- Work with Town of Becket to review and update Rivers Protection Bylaw/District and use as a model for other towns (Spring/Summer 2006)
- Create List of Zoning Benchmarks for Each of the Towns in the Watershed to help evaluate strengths and weaknesses in protecting Wild & Scenic resources
- Serve as a resource for the Towns and Regional Planning Commissions to help update and pass effective bylaws
- Coordinate with Conservation Commissions from each town and DEP to sponsor trainings and workshops

**Over the next 5 years, WRWSAC will maintain an active presence within the Westfield River watershed and will advocate strategically, skillfully and boldly for the river and the Wild & Scenic resources. (On-going)**

- Hold monthly meetings in one of the Wild & Scenic communities
- Invite public, town officials and guests to each of the meetings
- Send letters of concern and/or support on behalf of the river and its resources
- Monitor projects and activities within the watershed and within respective towns and/or organizations that relate to the river and Wild & Scenic resources and share information with Committee

**Guideline for Operating**

*Below is a list of committees organized to achieve the goals and objectives outlined above. Each committee has an assigned chair to facilitate and organize meetings. Each Wild & Scenic representative serves on at least one Committee per calendar year.*

**Operations Sub- Committee:** Responsible for developing and implementing 5 Year Funding Plan; filing any necessary grant reports, documentations or fulfilling any other necessary funding obligations; responsible for compiling yearly budget for WRWSAC. Responsible for effectively running Committee meetings and operations and overseeing staff, or interns conducting business on behalf of the Committee. Assists in implementation of Community Grants Program.

**Resource Stewardship Sub-Committee:** Responsible for overseeing inventory of ORRs and development of Westfield River Wild & Scenic Stewardship Plan. Stewards of East Branch Trail and responsible for organizing hikes, paddles or other recreational activities to highlight Wild & Scenic Resources. Promote long-term monitoring of the river in partnership with Stream Team volunteers. Assists in reviews of projects along the river.

**Outreach and Education Sub-Committee:** Increase public awareness and understanding of the river and W&S designation, promote partnerships to address river issues, and inform community members, partners and town officials about on-going river issues and activities; responsible for on-going outreach activities (e.g. submitting articles for Westfield RiverNotes, website content, etc.) and developing informative and interpretative materials (e.g. kiosks and trail guides for East Branch Trail).

### **Membership of the Committee**

|                                    |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Town of Becket                     | Vacant, Mercedes Gallagher alternate       |
| Town of Chester                    | Bob Thompson, Dave Pierce alternate        |
| Town of Chesterfield               | Matt Barron, Denise Cormier alternate      |
| Town of Cummington                 | Bernie Forgea, Judy Moore alternate        |
| Town of Huntington                 | Jeff Penn, Karin Vowerk alternate          |
| Town of Middlefield                | Carl Lafreniere, John Richardson alternate |
| Town of Savoy                      | Vacant                                     |
| Town of Washington                 | Reda Vilner                                |
| Town of Windsor                    | Jim Caffrey, Debbie Balmuth alternate      |
| Town of Worthington                | Helen Sharron Pollard, Jim Dodge alternate |
| Commonwealth of Massachusetts      | Joan Kimball                               |
| National Park Service              | Liz Lacy, Jamie Fosburgh alternate         |
| Pioneer Valley Planning Commission | Chris Curtis, Anne Capra alternate         |
| Trustees of Reservations           | Jocelyn Forbush, Wendy Sweetser alternate  |
| Westfield River Watershed Assn.    | Vacant                                     |

### **Implementation and Evaluation**

WRWSAC will evaluate and update this plan on a yearly basis, commencing shortly after the 1<sup>st</sup> meeting of the new year. In addition, the Executive Committee and Wild & Scenic Coordinator will review the plan and adjust workplans on a quarterly basis.