



GREAT BARRINGTON HOUSATONIC RIVER WALK

September 26, 2006

Housatonic River NRD Fund
c/o Woodlot Alternatives Inc
30 Park Drive
Topsham, ME 04086

RE: Public Comment:

Proposal No. 1 – Great Barrington Housatonic River Walk, Great Barrington Land Conservancy

The following is offered by the applicant in response to comments made by the Review Team Members:

Criterion B1 (Technical Feasibility):

“One reviewer scored his criterion low because of concerns that compost tea application may be an inappropriate technology due to the necessity of repeated applications and the reviewer’s impression that this technology does little to improve the water holding capacity of soils....Augmentation with organic matter may be a more appropriate technology.”

Response:

The following response is offered by Heather Cupo who supervises the compost tea program for River Walk:

Compost tea has the potential to improve water holding capacity of the soil in the following ways. 1) Fungal compost tea of the type being applied will introduce a diversity of fungal species including macro and mycorrhizal fungal species to the soil. Fungus are 90% water. The hyphae or fungal strands hold water in the soil. 2) In addition to enhancing the nutrient uptake for the plants, fungal interactions with plants allow the plants access to the water in those hyphae when drought conditions arrive. 3) The introduction of live organisms to these soils will help the nutrient cycling of the organic matter that exists and more successful plants will keep the organic matter produced on site.

Repeat applications of compost tea, diminishing in number over time, are an effort to counteract the allelopathic effects of Norway maple and garlic mustard. Both of these plants produce chemical exudates that destroy soil microorganisms in particular fungal organisms.

This is experimental, but it could be helpful and important to other reclamation projects and urban forest areas if we can show improvements through these treatments.

Criterion B4 (Measurable Results):

“The criterion would have scored higher had the applicant provided specific information such as the species affected and how River Walk would enhance connectivity. The individual hoped for expansion of the width and/or length of the vegetated riparian buffer instead of merely enhancing existing riverfront area that has already been restored and is in relatively good condition.”

Response:

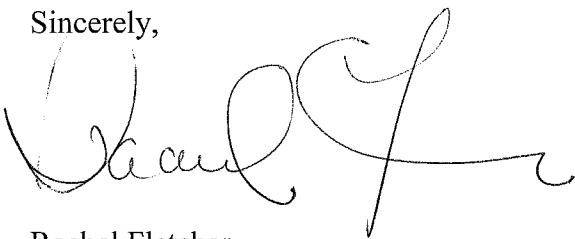
The River Walk is defined by a pathway of a specific length that is not changing. The width of the easement area is also a static number, but within that footprint only certain areas have been managed as reclaimed riparian zone; hosting a diversity of plant species and providing good erosion control.

Approximately 1.5 acres of River Walk’s ½ linear mile of riverbank have been reclaimed, but remain vulnerable to invasive species and therefore require light maintenance.

In addition, a program of intensive planting and invasives control is proposed for four new, unclaimed areas (0.36 acres) that are vegetated overwhelmingly with invasives; (300 sf “Church”, 500 sf “Brooks extension”, 4500 sf “Stanley Overlook”, and 7500 sf “Du Bois Park.”

The native plant species proposed for these areas are delineated in the proposal. The seventy-three species of birds that have been observed can be made available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Rachel Fletcher". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the word "Sincerely,".

Rachel Fletcher
Director