

The following is the introductory letter for the Housatonic River Museum:

The Housatonic River Museum~~~~~

Summer, 2006

The Housatonic River Museum is currently under development as a center for exploring the natural science of the Housatonic River watershed and examining the historical and ongoing relationship between humankind and the river.

From its headwaters at Muddy Pond (Washington, MA), Richmond Pond (Richmond, MA) and Pontoosuc Lake (Pittsfield, MA) in central Berkshire County, its confluence in Pittsfield and its numerous tributaries, the Housatonic River finds its way to the sea in Long Island Sound at Stratford, CT. Bringing together 150 miles of river and 2,000 square miles of watershed in Massachusetts, New York and Connecticut, the Housatonic River Museum will serve as a **dynamic center for learning and enjoyment**.

Located in downtown Pittsfield, a stone's throw from the banks of the Housatonic's West Branch (specific site to be determined), the museum will be an entertaining, educational and engaging destination for Berkshire residents and visitors, providing a **stimulating environment for self-paced, interactive exploration of river-related topics for children and adults**. Indoor and outdoor thematic exhibits and activities will reinforce the river's role as a natural and cultural resource. The Housatonic River Museum will **celebrate the significance of rivers in our landscape**: watersheds to the water cycle, erosion to estuaries, water power and water pollution, river industry and river poetry, source to sound.

In addition to on-site exhibits (Roto Studio, Dublin, Ohio), the museum will offer educational programs (workshops, lectures, science fairs), will organize recreational activities (canoe/kayak trips, walks, hikes, industry tours) and will be available for school and summer camp field trips. After school programs will be developed as an extension to public school science classes. Art exhibits, musical events and readings will complement these offerings. Designed with removable walls and a kitchen for catering, the museum will be available for gatherings.

Community-based partnerships may include:

- A dedicated space within the museum for **historical societies** from watershed towns to display river-related artifacts, photographs and documents
- A central location for information about **river advocacy groups** and programs
- Local media-sponsored archives for river-related news
- Traveling exhibits in a **mobile museum** for senior centers, libraries and other public venues presented by student volunteers
- **Internships** for college students
- **Student-driven** exhibit development and design

The Housatonic River Museum is a not-for-profit educational institution. The museum will be built and funded by private and public donations, grants, memberships, admission fees, exhibit sponsorship and fund raising events.

~~~~~**Because you never step in the same river twice.**

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**Museums are trusted sources of knowledge and inspiration. Safe places for the exploration of ideas and experiences. Vital partners in our communities. Economic engines. Sources of civic pride and accomplishment. Catalysts of social change and partners in a knowledge economy. Stewards of a shared heritage that represent humankind's greatest achievements and nature's greatest treasures.**

(from the American Association of Museums)

The initial board of the project includes Jim McGrath, Pittsfield Parks Dept., Crispina ffench, Crispina Designs, Pittsfield, Laura Viner, aquatics instructor, Berkshire South Regional Community Center, Carrie Saldo, Berkshire Bureau Chief, WAMC and Jenny Hersch, Founder. Berkshire Community College has agreed to become the fiscal sponsor.

The Housatonic River Museum, sited at the headwaters will compliment two existing Housatonic River-oriented institutions in CT- The CT Audubon's Costal Center in Milford and SoundWaters in Stamford that address the estuary portion and Long Island Sound. We will work closely with existing local environmental and educational organizations as we celebrate the role of rivers in our landscape.

We have received private pledges of \$500,000 and are pursuing other grant opportunities. \$298,100 was requested from the Housatonic River Natural Resource Damages Fund to design and construct 1,500 sq ft of exhibits with Roto Studio of Dublin, Ohio (see [www.rotostudio.com](http://www.rotostudio.com) for examples of their work) that directly relate to the Evaluation Criteria of the Project Proposal application. The capital budget of \$2.3 million includes 4,500 sq ft of exhibits housed in a 7,000-10,000 sq ft Green Building. The operating budget is approximately \$400,000 per year. We are working with the City of Pittsfield to find a building site. The project idea has been well received by many individuals and organizations in Berkshire County including the City of Pittsfield's Office of Community Development, the West Side Initiative, Mayor James Ruberto, representatives of the Pittsfield Public Schools, representatives of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, the Housatonic Valley Association, the Berkshire Chamber of Commerce, Berkshire Enterprises, PEDDA, Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation, Rhonda Serre (Congressman Olver's office), Senator Andrea Nuciforo, Rep. Smitty Pignatelli and others. We will work with C.E.T. to obtain information regarding Green Building design and funding.

Housatonic River Restoration stated that "Widespread endorsement was offered for the proposed Housatonic River Museum in Great Barrington", the original location for the

project in 1998. A strong recommendation was also made at that time that the Housatonic River Museum should be located in Pittsfield.

The Housatonic River Museum will serve our community educationally, socially, artistically and economically. Support from the Housatonic River NRD Fund will certainly help this valuable project become a reality.