

October 12, 2006

Review Team Evaluation Comments
c/o Woodlot Alternatives, Inc.
30 Park Drive
Topsham, ME 04086

RE: Clap Park to Wild Acres Greenway Project (Application ID: 015)

Dear Natural Resources Damages Trustees:

Thank you for this opportunity to address some of the issues developed in your "Evaluation Summary Memorandum" for the Clapp Park to Wild Acres Greenway Project (Application ID: 015). We believe it's important to clarify some of the benefits that this project will provide to the overall Housatonic River system, and why funding of the project is justifiable from a watershed protection and enhancement perspective.

Criterion A1 is well supported by this project. The acquisition of the subject parcel in combination with existing acquisition projects will protect watershed areas and a lengthy segment of the Housatonic River from development pressures. The acquisition will protect naturally vegetated watershed, which protects existing water quality characteristics of the river, allowing the damaged sections of the river to recover without degradation from upstream sources. As clearly stated in the application, the acquisition will provide for direct public recreation and contact along a lengthy section of the Housatonic River, thus further supporting this criterion.

Clarification of the project's ability to meet Criterion A7 was requested in the comments. The only direct enhancement of the river afforded by the project is the removal of dumped debris from the parcels once they are acquired. Removal of debris will allow for the natural regeneration of the parcels in these localized disturbed areas, thus adding to the overall acreage of "natural" watershed along the river corridor. The area to be addressed includes the scrub-shrub upland habitat type shown in Figure 5 of the application. Once debris is removed, the access roads to these areas will be blocked so that further illegal dumping is restricted.

For Criterion B3, we would like to emphasize that new trails would not be developed in naturally vegetated areas. As can be seen in Figure 5, there are adequate existing trails and or utility easements that can be used to develop an adequate trail network, thus avoiding additional disturbance in the watershed.

The availability of land to create the final connection (Criterion B5) is not well addressed in the application due to the complexity of that action. Currently, the public

crosses the railroad corridor to access Clapp Park without the benefit of a designated, safe public crossing. This usage is well documented, and this fact will be used in negotiations with the railroad in identifying and designing a suitable crossing. These negotiations have yet to be completed. In the worst-case scenario where a crossing cannot be negotiated, the project will continue to provide many benefits to the Housatonic River, and additional public access to the river. The City is committed to pursuing the entire connection.

The City of Pittsfield is committed to funding further costs associated (Criterion C4) with surveying, trail connections for Greenway linkage and acquiring necessary parcels to complete the Greenway Corridor. Presently, The City is actively in the process for acquisition of parcels for the Greenway Project. Passageway for crossing railroad tracks will be coordinated through the City Solicitor's Office, which is a use of City resources. The City Solicitor will negotiate and reach a legal agreement with the Railroad for a safe easement across the tracks.

The City will make improvements to existing trails on the property, and de-commission trails not considered necessary, which will result in less or limited disturbance. We intend to block entrance by vehicles unto the property to prevent illegal dumping. We intend to utilize existing City resources to cleanup the property, such as Parks Department, and Department of Pubic Works & Utilities. We have repeatedly utilized these resources for these purposes. We are in the process of establishing a Conservation Fund through the City Solicitor's Office for the purpose of acquiring open space land, surveying, and trails & maintenance. Let me remain the Trustee's that the City has already funded new facilities at Wild Acres, which includes an Environmental Education Center.

The City believes that acquisition of this property has an immediate benefit of Habitat protection & value, and protection of watershed for the River, which is of most importance. (Please direct yourselves to figure 5) This parcel directly abuts the Southwest Branch of the Housatonic River. Development of trails for Greenway linkage is a long-term benefit. The successful acquisition of this parcel is the first step in this process. (Please refer to Cover letter by Mayor Ruberto) The City is committed to making the Wild Acres Greenway Project a successful reality, and The City has the necessary resources available to make this proposal a success.

On behalf of The City of Pittsfield, I appreciate the opportunity to make further comments on our proposal. We also want to thank the Trustees for making a sincere effort for evaluating each proposal fairly.

Sincerely,

Caleb Mitchell
Conservation Agent
City of Pittsfield