



Manhan Rail Trail

Easthampton, Massachusetts

Fall 2006

Finishing Touches Added

Trail users now have a nicely paved area around the Union Street kiosk where they can pull off to check out the map and announcements. This latest improvement was funded by a state Trails and Greenways grant which also paid for the kiosk.

A second kiosk will be installed at the Route 5 end of the trail and a third will go up at the new Lower Mill Pond Park near Ferry Street sometime soon.

The Manhan Rail Trail Committee also decided to salvage some beautiful bushes that were in the way of construction adjacent to the Lower Mill Pond Park. A landscaper, Brian Colby of Park View Landscaping, was hired to dig up and move several good-sized healthy hollies and spireas. The holly bushes were planted at the Route 5 end of the trail and the spireas now surround the sculpture opposite the mural.



The newly paved area around the Manhan Rail Trail kiosk near the Union Street crossing. The work was done by Better Pathways of Southamptton, which donated a portion of its labor. Company owner George Labrie and son Tim used concrete pavers to create a beautiful circular design.

Dedicated Volunteers Keep the Trail Tip Top

On any given Friday morning, you are likely to find a small but dedicated group of volunteers out working on the Manhan Rail Trail. The men meet early in the morning, gather up some hand and power tools and set out to do whatever needs doing along the bikeway. It might be repairing a fence, shoring up some earth that has given way or clearing a fallen branch. They also spend many hours keeping the grass along the 4.2 mile trail neatly trimmed.

The equipment used to maintain the trail, including a small riding tractor, leaf blower, clippers, shears and other tools, have been purchased by the Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail using donated funds. The tools and equipment are carefully maintained by the Friday morning volunteers, led by Peter Brooks.

But they are not alone. The weekly maintenance is augmented by larger work "parties" organized seasonally for a specific chore, such as cutting back brush or spreading mulch. These sessions are staffed by Friends of the trail, MRT Committee members, and members of the community.

Then there are the folks who have "adopted" sections of the trail with a promise to help keep an eye on things and do a little sprucing up once in awhile. The path has been divided into nine sections with all sections currently adopted. Adoptees include a Scout Troup, a school, two businesses, the Firefighters Association and several individuals. And finally, there are those who work behind the scenes, like Trace Meek who maintains the Manhan Rail Trail web site, and the DPW which cleared brush along most of the trail. All of these wonderful volunteers and workers deserve a big "thank you" for their many hours of service to the community!



The Easthampton Firefighters Association has adopted the section of the trail from Union Street to Payson Avenue, the most heavily used part of the trail. The group maintains the flower boxes which they installed two years ago. They also empty trash barrels, rake the grass and pick up litter. Shown here are Sean O'Leary, David Safron, William Trohon, Kevin Benson and Steve Kennedy.

Visit our web site!
manhanrailtrail.org

Rail Trail Tidbits

Counting Heads

Are you curious about how many people use the Manhan Rail Trail on a given day? The Pioneer Valley Planning Commission is too. They have asked for permission to do a head count on the trail over a span of several months. A monitoring device will record the data which will help the MRT Committee learn more about patterns of usage on the trail.

No More Shar's Grill

After several attempts at finding a tenant to renovate the old Shar's Grill along the trail at Ferry Street, the City of Easthampton made the decision to tear it down. The boarded up building was an eyesore and posed a danger due to its ramshackle condition. A brand new wooden deck has been built on the old foundation, providing a nice place to view Lower Mill Pond.

Bags on Board!

Dog walkers can help keep the trail clean and raise funds for maintenance at the same time. They can stop by the City Clerk's office and pick up a handy "Bag on Board" to carry with them when out walking their 4-legged friends. The compact, refillable dispenser attaches to any type of leash. Inside is a roll of doggie clean-up bags so dog owners will never have to remember to bring bags with them again!



Volunteer Peter Brooks guides the "Ditch Witch" alongside the Manhan Rail Trail during a recent work party. The machine cut a deep narrow ditch so that a thick vinyl root barrier could be installed.

Ditch Witch Vs Roots

More than a dozen hardy volunteers rolled up their sleeves November 4 and did battle with the wicked tree roots that are poking up through the trail's pavement. The group rented a ditch witch to dig a deep narrow trench. Volunteers then painstakingly installed thick vinyl root barriers. The thick black vinyl sections had to be pieced together and then pounded down to the correct depth.

Then the workers had to fill in the ditch, tamp it down and sweep the trail. It took four hours to do approximately 500 feet of the trail. The group started at the South St. end of the trail because it has the most root damage. More work sessions will be scheduled to tackle other sections of the trail in the spring.



Should Trail Be Venue for Events, Arts?

The Manhan Rail Trail Committee has been approached by both an arts organization in the city and a resident about possibly using the trail as a venue for an event or arts display area. This sparked a discussion about how to handle such requests.

Should the Committee develop some guidelines for groups or individuals who want to use the trail? Should an art park be considered for some permanently designated site along the trail, or should the path be kept natural? What is the City's liability in hosting events along the trail and will the event disrupt normal use of the trail? These questions need to be discussed and the MRT Committee welcomes your views. Feel free to write or email at the address to the left.

This newsletter is published by the Friends of the Manhan Rail Trail. Questions or comments may be directed to: (413)529-1460 - info@manhanrailtrail.org
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