



*Protecting our water, our land, our communities*

January 20, 2020

Joan Wotkowicz  
Clerk of Squannacook Greenways, Inc.  
88 South Harbor Road  
Townsend, MA 01469

Dear Ms. Wotkowicz:

The Nashua River Watershed Association (NRWA) is in strong support of the Squannacook Greenways, Inc. (SGI) project and their \$100,000 application to the MassTrails grant program. The NRWA was involved at the outset of this effort and has been involved almost continuously over the years. SGI has been working successfully for nearly two decades to create a multi-use rail trail along the Squannacook River in the towns of Groton and Townsend, MA.

The goal of this project to convert a 3.3-mile portion of the MBTA owned but discontinued, former B & M, Greenville Branch. We understand that SGI is requesting \$100,000 for the first year of Squannacook River Rail Trail (SRRT) construction, which will start at Depot Road in Townsend and terminate at Old Meetinghouse Road in Townsend, for a distance of approximately 1.1 miles: roughly 1/3 of the total anticipated trail distance. Work will include removing the rails and delivering them to a salvage facility, removing the ties and delivering them to a disposal facility, removing stumps and grading the existing ballast sub base, installing an aggregate surface, replicating a wetland area, and repairing sections of eroded riverbank and culvert.

The NRWA recognizes the unique opportunity such a trail would have to highlight and complement the Squannacook River Greenway, which includes considerable, associated state conservation lands, notably Townsend State Forest satellite and Squannacook River Wildlife Management Area. As one resident has commented: "We're surrounded by nature and it's a real shame we're not able to enjoy it. A rail trail would only be a positive thing for discovering and connecting to nature." A level and easy-to-navigate linear stone dust trail will be the "entrance pass" to the out-of-doors for a great many town residents and visitors who are otherwise disinclined to venture into the "unknown wilderness". Indeed, the Squannacook River Wildlife Management Area, has no formal trail system and recent MassWildlife policy explicitly rules such out. If the public desires to access the Squannacook River in Townsend at present, one is hard pressed to realize that desire: the SRRT will make that access very much more realizable, family-friendly & enjoyable.

We recognize that the project occurs within the habitat of the Blanding's Turtle, and that provisions are being made to protect the turtles and their habitat. We understand that SGI will complete all construction work within the period of November 7 to March 15, to fulfill permitting requirements for the Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program (NHESP). Further, in preparation for construction, we understand that SGI has obtained all required state and local environmental permitting, completed a professional wetland delineation, installed erosion control barriers in wetland resource areas, and had a professional tree service clear the entire 3.3-mile corridor of trees and brush.

We have full faith that Squannacook Greenways, Inc. has the determination and community support needed to undertake this project. The two towns have shown serious support for this project. The Board of Directors of SGI is comprised of dedicated professionals, including town Conservation Commissioners, as well as those with bicycle, trail, and engineering careers and backgrounds: many have been involved in the project since its inception.

We offer our endorsement to the growing list of supportive organizations and individuals. Please contact us if you have any questions and thank you for considering this application.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Al Futterman".

Al Futterman  
Land Programs Director