



LOCAL NEWS

# Squannacook Greenways award \$96,000 MassTrails grant for Squannacook River Rail Trail



A map of the Squannacook River Rail Trail between Townsend and West Groton. On June 28, 2022, Squannacook Greenways, which manages the trail, received a \$96,000 grant from MassTrails to assist in the third phase of the trail's construction. The new section is expected to open to the public sometime in March 2023, with the construction of its fourth and final phase expected to wrap up in 2024. (Photo Courtesy of Squannacook Greenways)

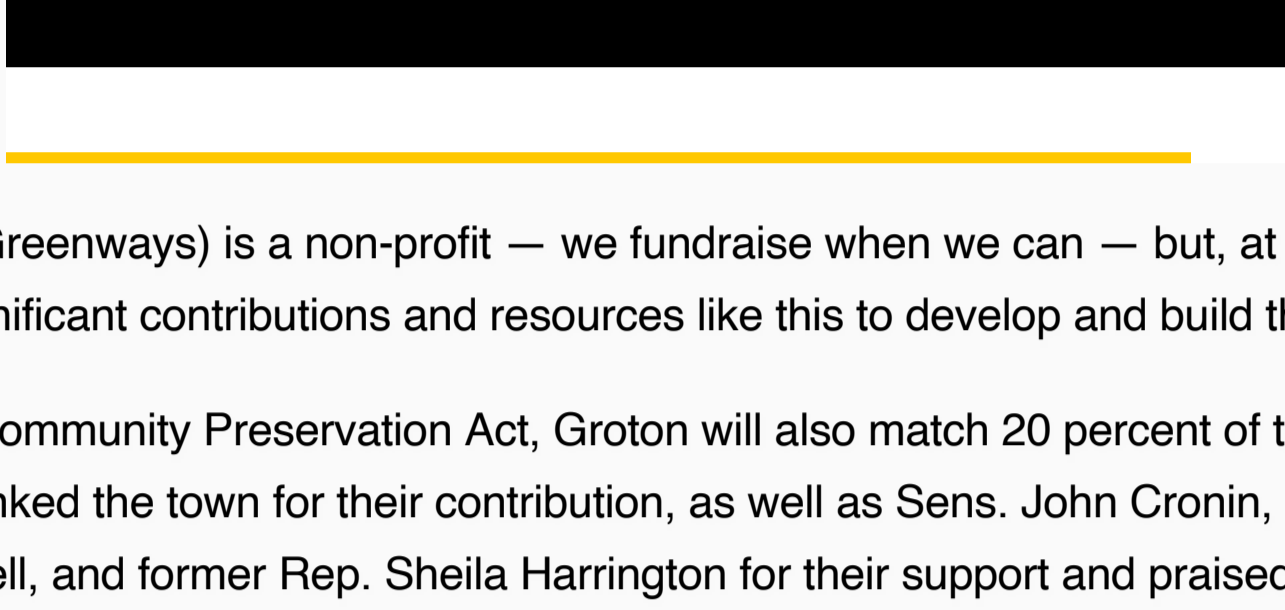
By **SHANE RHODES** | [srhodes@lowellsun.com](mailto:srhodes@lowellsun.com) | Lowell Sun  
 PUBLISHED: July 1, 2022 at 5:02 a.m. | UPDATED: July 1, 2022 at 5:02 a.m.

GROTON — With the help of a new grant from MassTrails, the third phase of the Squannacook River Rail Trail is expected to be completed next spring.

On Tuesday, June 28, Squannacook Greenways, the non-profit that manages the trail, was awarded \$96,000 to assist in the trail's continued construction. The grant is expected to cover a significant portion of the costs related to a section of the trail that runs south from Crosswinds Drive to the Bertozzi Wildlife Management Area.

Squannacook Greenways President Peter Cunningham shared his excitement for the grant and stressed its importance in regard to the trail's continued construction.

"We're super excited to be awarded the grant, very appreciative of MassTrails," Cunningham said. "It's everything — they're huge, contributions like that."



"(Squannacook Greenways) is a non-profit — we fundraising when we can — but, at the end of the day, we need significant contributions and resources like this to develop and build the trail," he said.

Because of the Community Preservation Act, Groton will also match 20 percent of the grant. Cunningham thanked the town for their contribution, as well as Sens. John Cronin, D-Lunenburg, Ed Kennedy, D-Lowell, and former Rep. Sheila Harrington for their support and praised their ability to secure funding for the trail.

Construction is expected to start in November and finish come springtime. Cunningham said he expected the third phase to open to the public sometime in March 2023, with the fourth and final phase of the trail, which will connect Crosswinds Drive back to South Street in Townsend, expected to be completed in 2024.

Cunningham noted that construction is limited to a winter timeframe as the area around the trail, due to its turtle population, is designated as an area of critical environmental concern. With that in mind, he further stressed the grant's importance as it related to completing the trail's construction sooner rather than later.

"That money obviously needs to be available during that construction window," he said. "So these grants, they make everything so much easier for us."

Cunningham called the trail an "important" part of the Groton and Townsend communities and said, come spring, he looked forward to its expanded use. He also said the safe path the trail can provide pedestrians along Route 119 was a "real benefit to the community."

"The connectedness between (Groton and Townsend), to me, at least, means something," he said. "People that are interested in hiking, or even just getting outside — walking dogs, riding bikes, whatever — it's going to be a great resource for them."

"There's really no pedestrian access to a lot of these areas, just Route 119 which is a very busy road. And with gas almost \$5 a gallon, it's nice to have a safer option for those that don't want to hop in the car," he said.

Once the third phase is complete, Cunningham said the trail could also expand further south into Ayer. He called it Squannacook Greenways' "grand vision," but said, for now, they are focused on the task at hand.

"Once this section of the trail is done, there's the potential for expansion further down into Ayer," he said. "Right now, of course, we're focused on finishing what we've already started, but being able to do that would be great."

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**Shane Rhodes | Multimedia journalist**  
 Shane Rhodes is a reporter for The Sun, joining the paper in 2022. He serves in the same role for our sister papers, the Fitchburg Sentinel & Enterprise and the Nashoba Valley Voice. A Maynard local and graduate of Boston University, Shane's interests include sports and history.  
[srhodes@lowellsun.com](mailto:srhodes@lowellsun.com)

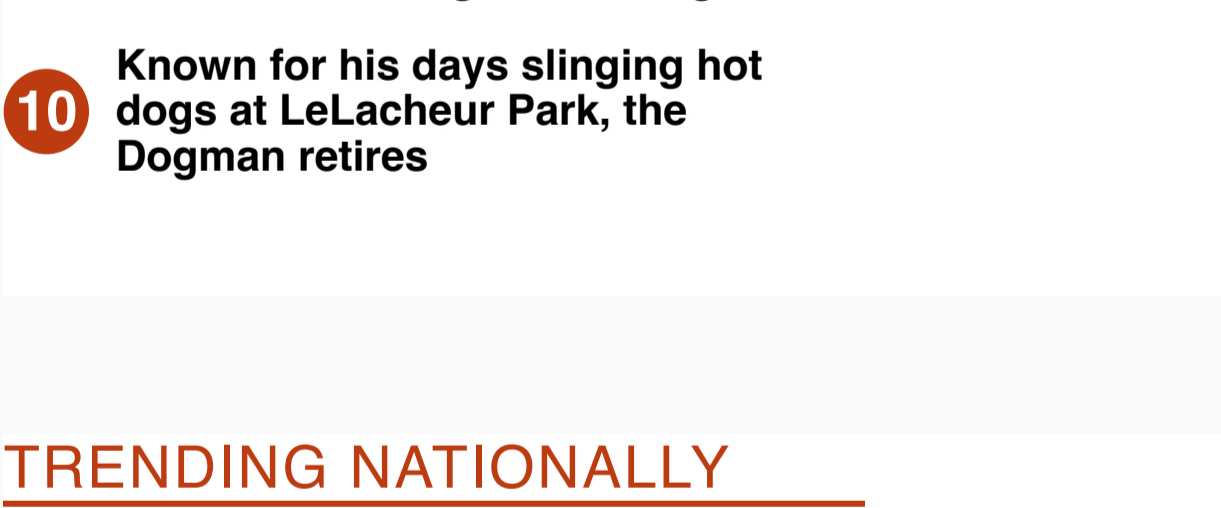
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