



CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Town of Townsend,
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January 19, 2021

Hello MassTrails Committee,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Conservation Agent for the Town of Townsend, and on behalf of the Conservation Commission of Townsend, to express the Commission's support for the Squannacook River Rail Trail grant funding request.

The non-profit group, Squannacook Greenways, Inc. formed in 2011. This group of volunteers has taken the Rail Trail vision, established in 2002, and is turning it into a reality. The rail line has been cleared of trees and most recently, ties from part of the rail bed were removed.

That lease agreement with the MBTA was signed in 2015. During the planning stages, and since, multiple grants and several endowments, coupled with the spirit and hard work of volunteers, are what have moved this initiative forward. The MassTrails Grant will help Squannacook Greenways, Inc. take important additional steps toward meeting their long-standing goal.

Completion of the Squannacook River Rail Trail will avail Townsend citizens, as well as visitors to our community, a continuous artery through the center and heart of our town. It will mean easier, broader means of recreation, and for some, a safe, non-motorized means of commuting. The COVID-19 Pandemic has identified for some, and heightened for others, the desire for and importance of, outdoor space and easy access to outdoor recreation.

In 2019 the Squannacook River was designated under the Wild and Scenic River Act. The completed Squannacook River Rail Trail will assist in creating a greener community for Townsend, and in making it an even more desirable place to live. Nineteen years later this project remains challenging, however with local efforts and assistance from others, it is anticipated that the Squannacook Rail Trail will be a reality within the next few years.

We thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely


Dave Henkels
Conservation Agent