





*The Westfield River. Protecting major tributaries of the Connecticut River is a priority. (Terry Blunt)*

While work to establish the 3,900-acre Connecticut River Greenway State Park has been very visible, many other local and regional greenway and trail efforts are underway. The hallmark of these diverse efforts is the participation of an equally diverse group of organizations including land trusts, trail groups, regional planning agencies, and municipal, state and federal governments. Greenway partners in this region identified the following priorities:

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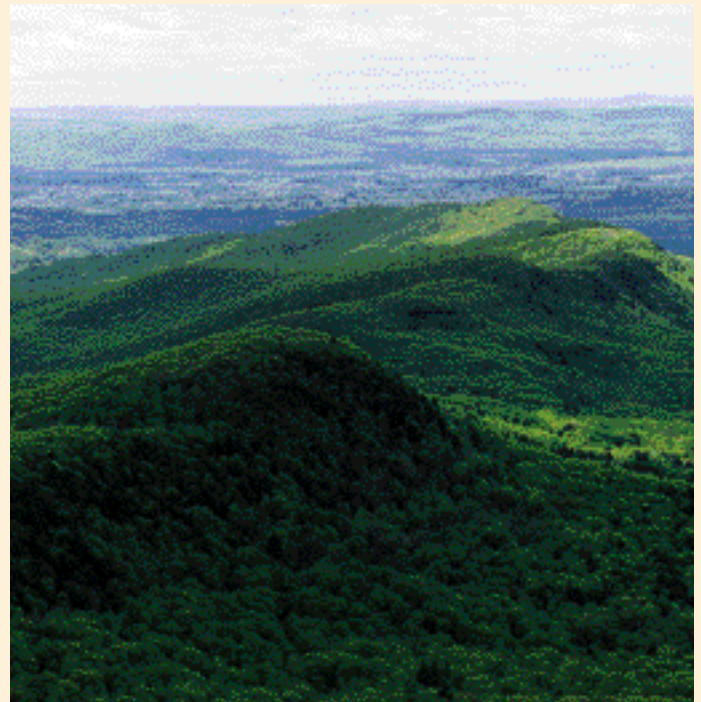
### **Protect the Connecticut River corridor and its tributaries.**

The Connecticut River is one of the most ecologically rich greenway resources in the state. It is imperative to provide financial and technical support to the ongoing efforts to protect the river and its network of tributaries including the Deerfield, Westfield and Millers rivers. While much has been accomplished to date, development pressures in the valley are increasing, as is the urgency to act now.

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### **Protect significant mountain ranges in the region, and strategically link them with the Connecticut River.**

The Mt. Holyoke Range and Mt. Tom were identified as priorities for protection. A unique geological formation, the Mt. Holyoke Range provides outstanding views of the valley, supports several rare amphibian and plant species and offers numerous trail opportunities. The Pocumtuck Range, another defining natural feature, is also a priority for protection. These ridgetops and the floodplains below provide critical plant and wildlife habitat. Protecting these ecosystems and securing connections between them will create wildlife corridors, conserve scenic views and create diverse recreational and interpretive opportunities. Support for these efforts is especially important now, as riverfront and mountaintop home sites are increasingly attractive and marketable.



*View of the Mt. Holyoke Range looking west. This mountain range, known for its scenic beauty, habitat value, and hiking opportunities, is a priority in the region. (Terry Blunt)*



*Mt. Tom, one of the gems along the Metacomet-Monadnock Trail. (Terry Blunt)*

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## **Protect and secure long-distance trails as spines of a regional trail network.**

The Metacomet-Monadnock (M & M) Trail traverses the region and links with trails in New Hampshire and Connecticut. Yet today, less than half of this 95-mile trail is permanently protected. Other priority trails in the region include the 20-mile Tully Trail and the 42-mile Robert Frost Trail that link with the M & M Trail, and the 15-mile Pocumtuck Ridge Trail that could connect with the Mahican-Mohawk Trail. All of these trails need additional protection and support if they are to serve as anchors for local trail-making efforts and to ensure their accessibility over the long-term.

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## **Support the creation of a regional rail-trail network as part of the cross-state trail.**

The popular Norwottuck Rail Trail, owned and managed by DEM, is a rail-trail focal point for the region. A number of other nearby and connecting rail-trails — including the Northampton Bikepath, the Manhan Rail Trail, the Amherst Bikeway and trail segments being considered in Ware, Hardwick and Williamsburg — are in varying stages of design and development. These efforts require additional support and funding to ensure their success. When complete, this network of rail-trails will expand recreational opportunities, create valuable commuter links within and between surrounding communities, and help to advance the larger vision of a cross-state trail.

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## **Create greenways linking unique natural features to protect biodiversity and to create recreational opportunities.**

One priority corridor in this region is a greenway-in-progress connecting the Connecticut River to Mt. Toby and Wendell State Forest, with further potential to link with the Quabbin Reservoir. In the North Quabbin area advocates are working with state agencies to create a large-scale greenway north and east of the reservoir. Targeted priorities in this area include lands within the Tully Trail, linking the reservoir with the Millers River and with Tully Lake along the Swift River, and linking Lake Dennison Recreation Area with Otter River State Forest.





Hikers at Royalston Falls on the Tully Trail. The trail is the centerpiece of the Tully Valley Private Forest Lands Initiative, a landmark conservation effort to protect one of the largest contiguous tracts of private forestland in southern New England. Through state acquisition of conservation restrictions, the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, in partnership with DEM, Department of Fisheries, Wildlife, and Environmental Law Enforcement, and Mt. Grace Land Conservation Trust recently conserved over 4,200 acres of private forestland in the Tully River Valley. This landscape-scale conservation effort encourages sustainable forest management, links existing state holdings, protects the viewshed of the Tully Trail, and provides deep woods habitat for large mammals like moose, bear, coyote, and bobcat, and many species of songbirds. (R. Check)

## Create a Circum-Quabbin Trail.

A large loop trail through outlying areas surrounding Quabbin Reservoir will connect many existing and proposed trails, including the M & M Trail, the Ware River Rail Trail and the envisioned cross-state trail. This network will link important green space, expand recreational opportunities and connect the communities through which it runs.

## Protecting the Connecticut River Greenway — A partnership approach

The Connecticut River is the largest river in New England, and the corridor of land that surrounds it is



Farmland along the Connecticut River.  
(Terry Blunt)

one of Massachusetts' most beautiful and historic landscapes. The working landscape of farms and woodlots link seamlessly with parks, natural areas, scenic vistas and many sites of ecological, historic

and archeological significance.

Recognizing the importance of this landscape and the forces threatening it, a coalition of land trusts and state and federal agencies recently launched an effort to identify the key areas along the river and in the surrounding valley still in need of protection. The group has identified 14 areas where they urgently recommend special protection measures and, in many cases, speedy action. These "critical landscapes" include the Mt. Holyoke Range and Mt. Tom, key tracts of agricultural land, and sections of the floodplain that provide important habitat for several state and globally listed rare species. As development pressures in this region increase, so does the urgent need for a concerted effort to protect these lands. The group believes that it will take a partnership approach, seeking support and financial assistance on all fronts, to truly protect the valley's natural integrity and viability.