



*Making things work...*



JOHN H CHAFEE BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR



2005 ANNUAL REPORT

*20 years of progress*



# *...by working together*

**TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO** Samuel Slater's vision united the people and villages of the Blackstone Valley, sparking a new energy and way of life for America. Twenty years ago the people of the Blackstone Valley set in motion a chain of events that would again unite and energize the Valley's communities toward a common vision. Today the communities of the Blackstone Valley are riding on a wave of enormous energy and economic growth, built on a solid foundation of heritage. The Commission's events and activities of 2005 focused on strengthening networks, engaging a broader community and refocusing the Valley's collective vision. **TOMORROW IS IN YOUR HANDS.**



**A SOLID FOUNDATION...** The guiding force behind the Commission's activities is its enabling legislation and its management plan, which was developed through a public process and approved by the Secretary of the Interior. The Commission's goals as defined in its management plan are ▶ Protect the Valley's historic, cultural and natural resources ▶ Educate and Interpret the Corridor's importance ▶ Foster activities that invite people to enjoy and celebrate the resources ▶ Stimulate research to understand the Valley's role in America's history ▶ Coordinate and encourage partnerships to achieve these goals.

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**OVER THE PAST TWENTY YEARS...**

*the Commission  
has been building on  
that foundation by...*

**BLACKSTONE RIVER BIKEWAY**

Significant progress was made this year toward the completion of the Blackstone River Bikeway. In Massachusetts, Congressmen James McGovern and Richard Neal, along with federal, state and local officials celebrated the grand opening of the first section of Bikeway, a 2.5 mile

stretch on the Millbury/Worcester line. In addition, Rhode Island celebrated the opening of another mile of Bikeway which included the restoration of the Lonsdale Drive-In site to wetland habitat. This year the Blackstone River Bikeway project received a significant increase in

federal funding thanks to our Congressional delegation. Senator Lincoln Chafee secured \$10M for the project while Congressman James McGovern continued his support by securing another \$5.6M. Currently, there are nine miles of Bikeway open to the public. The Blackstone River



**EXPEDITION 2005** The Corridor Commission has long been involved in a strategy to revitalize the historic, cultural and natural aspects of the Blackstone River Valley. Expedition 2005 embodied that mission. Four days, 24 stops, 14 public events, 500 paddlers, bikers, walkers, speakers, sponsors, volunteers and partners and thousands of spectators. As a follow up to Expedition 2000, participants visited places and people along the Blackstone River from Worcester to Pawtucket to highlight the progress of the last five years. This year's event not only celebrated efforts along the Blackstone River but also included biking along the streets of downtown Worcester through a planned canal district and on the newly-built segments of the Blackstone River Bikeway. Public celebrations were held each evening including a Polish



**2ND ANNUAL CLEAN WATER FESTIVAL**

The Corridor and its partners moved closer to achieving a cleaner Blackstone River with the 2nd Annual Clean Water Festival. The festival was a resounding success, drawing 1,120 junior high school students from both Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Held in March at Rhode Island College, this fun festival emphasized the importance of maintaining water quality as a benefit to all.

**NEW BLACKSTONE RIVER & CANAL RIVER TOURS**

Enthusiasts wanting to explore the Blackstone River by canoe or kayak will now have seven new Blackstone River and Canal River Tours to guide them. The guides have been designed for easy use as one page tear-offs, and are available to the public on the web and through visitor centers and river recreation businesses throughout the Blackstone

Valley. Tours are divided into beginning and intermediate skill levels and provide information for planning a safe and interesting trip. Four trips are now available in Massachusetts and three in Rhode Island with more in development. For more information or to access the tours online, visit [www.nps.gov/blac.home.htm](http://www.nps.gov/blac.home.htm) or [www.zaptheblackstone.org](http://www.zaptheblackstone.org).

Festival in Grafton, MA, and concerts at Chase Farm in Lincoln, RI, Blackstone, MA and Pawtucket, RI. Expeditioners hosted meetings with dam owners about dam removal in Millbury, toured the newly redeveloped Ashton Mill in Cumberland, RI, and unveiled a Water Quality Report Card for the Blackstone River. The Corridor applauds the many efforts in taking great ideas and putting them on the ground by renovating mills, building river landings, bringing new life to historic properties and strengthening connections throughout the Valley.

*...supporting public and private efforts in economic revitalization...preserving and interpreting historic resources...preserving the Blackstone Canal*



Bikeway received federal recognition again this year on National Trails Day, when the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Interior designated the Bikeway as a National Recreation Trail. For more information, visit [www.blackstone-riverbikeway.com](http://www.blackstone-riverbikeway.com).

**BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY GREENWAY CHALLENGE**

An explosion of early morning activity around picturesque Grafton Common in the Town of Grafton, MA, marked the starting point of the fifth annual Greenway Challenge. Runners, paddlers and cyclists from six states, eight countries and five continents traveled 54 miles through seven towns and two states in the Blackstone River Valley, representing the largest turnout of participants and spectators in the history of the Greenway Challenge. An overflow crowd greeted the teams and individuals at the finish line along the banks of the Blackstone River at the Kelly House Meadow in Lincoln, RI.



Held in September each year, the Challenge continues to be a Corridor highlight and provides a well-organized, fun, multi-sport adventure race – one of the best in New England! For Valley residents and visitors, the Challenge is a prominent symbol of the rebirth of the River.

The Greenway Challenge continues as a tribute to the many people that support the development of the Blackstone River as a recreational resource.

**CANAL PRESERVATION STUDY COMPLETED**  
 The Blackstone Canal Preservation Study, completed in partnership with the Worcester Historical Museum, represents an important first step toward the preservation of one of the Corridor's most significant resources. In addition to documenting canal-related sites and structures along twenty-eight miles in eight Massachusetts communities, the Study includes proposals for rehabilitation and interpretation of several segments of the canal. Listed as one of Preservation Mass' Ten Most Endangered Historic Resources in 2001, the Blackstone Canal is now well-positioned for restoration and renewal.



*...assisting in completion of State and local parks...restoring historic buildings...enhancing awareness for the historical, architectural and geological*



#### FARNUMSVILLE

##### FIREHOUSE BACK IN USE

The circa 1852-1853 Farnumsville Firehouse, also known as the Blackstone Engine House #3, represents one of the Corridor's early successes in preserving the historic resources of the Blackstone Valley. Based on a Corridor-funded Historic Structures Report, the exterior of the firehouse was restored in 1995. The Farnumsville Firehouse Committee has since taken responsibility for the care and maintenance of this important structure returning it to its Victorian grandeur. It continues to be a source of great pride in the mill villages of South Grafton.

#### VOLUNTEER HOURS REACH RECORD HIGH

Volunteers in Parks (VIPs) donated a record 30,297 hours staffing the Greenway Challenge, Footsteps in History, Expedition 2005, the Clean Water Festival and other activities. VIPs created special interpretive programs for maple sugaring and winter tracking, and continue to organize and

#### FISHERVILLE, MA

In 1999, the Fisherville Mill Complex in South Grafton, Massachusetts was destroyed by fire, resulting in the loss of an important historic resource. The site, which contains significant remnants of the Blackstone Canal, mill buildings and a mill pond that serves as an important water fowl flyway –

presents a tremendous opportunity for preservation and redevelopment. After a well-attended river visioning charrette, the site's owner, Gene Bernat, is developing plans that will give the site a new use while preserving its important cultural assets. Many pieces of the Blackstone Valley puzzle –

economic revitalization, historic preservation, habitat restoration and environmental cleanup – come together at Fisherville, supported by an energetic, dedicated and creative partnership.

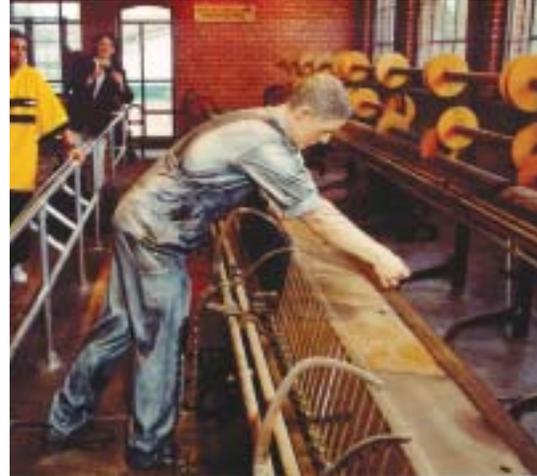


#### VALLEY CONNECTIONS NPS Park

Rangers and VIPs presented programs to about 10,000 people throughout the Blackstone River Valley and beyond. The popular Paddle Club drew record crowds wanting to experience the Blackstone River, Ranger Walkabouts gave folks a chance to explore the villages and woodland trails of the Heritage Corridor, and NPS Rangers introduced thousands of students to the stories that make the Blackstone Valley such a fascinating place to live, work, and play.

An exciting new tourism program *Footsteps in History Preserve America Weekend* was held over Columbus Day weekend. Footsteps in History merged heritage and tourism sites to provide a bridge between

history and economic development. Despite heavy rains, over 4,000 people turned out to experience 120 historic sites and programs. The project was a partnership between the Heritage Corridor, the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, the Blackstone Valley Chamber of Commerce, Preserve America, and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. Ranger Dan Wegner spent a week promoting the event by walking the length of the Blackstone Valley. Many people joined Ranger Dan along the way to raise awareness of and promote Valley wide preservation.



**SUMMER ON THE BLACKSTONE** The Corridor Commission congratulates the Providence Journal for their outstanding twelve-part series, *Summer on the Blackstone* that highlighted significant resources of the Corridor and the tremendous efforts underway to preserve those resources. Special thanks to Karen Maguire, Regional Editor, and the staff writers at the Providence Journal for a compelling look at the Blackstone Valley.

resources and sites...encouraging economic and industrial development...designing, establishing and maintaining visitor centers and other interpretive





## VISITOR CENTER PROGRESS LEAPS FORWARD

One of the primary heritage legacy initiatives identified by the Corridor is the establishment of a network of Visitor Centers to provide education, assistance and guidance to visitors as they explore the Blackstone River Valley. Recently \$6.4m in federal funding was announced – a major stimulus to moving the Northern Gateway Visitor Center forward.

### LEADERSHIP BLACKSTONE VALLEY CONNECTS THE VALLEY!

The mission of Leadership Blackstone Valley (LBV) is to cultivate a network of leaders to serve as stewards of the Blackstone River Valley. In four years the LBV partners have made great progress in accomplishing this goal. Eighty-seven graduates from across the region are active as town government leaders, chairmen of local chambers and the Corridor Commission and directors of non-profits.

The LBV program expanded this year by developing the Blackstone Valley Youth Leadership Academy for 9th and 10th grade students. The Academy organized and hosted a community

service project called, "Dude! Where's My Duck Box?" at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, MA. Duck boxes were built by Woonsocket and Blackstone Valley VoTech students, and installed in key locations to provide safe nesting places that will help rebuild the dwindling wood duck populations along the Blackstone River. The Academy was presented a \$1,000 award by the Greenway Challenge for their imaginative program.

Thanks to Friends of the Blackstone, MA Dept of Conservation and Recreation, LBV Alumni and NPS VIPs for their assistance in making this project successful!

A Phase One Study by Ann Beha Architects outlining major recommendations for the building's reuse, is a result of the partnership between the Worcester Historical Museum, the Central Massachusetts/ Worcester County Convention and Visitors Bureau, and the Corridor Commission.

The area around the Visitor Center also experienced major changes in the past year. Millbury Street through Quinsigamond Village is now renamed Blackstone River Road and new connections have been made from McKeon Road extension directly to Route 146 at Providence Street. These changes, along with the future route of the bikeway, the presence of the canal, the location of the Blackstone River's headwaters, and an engaged neighborhood continue to make Quinsigamond Village a lively and vibrant area of Worcester.

**BLACKSTONE RIVER COALITION RECOGNIZED BY EPA** As the recipient of the EPA Environmental Merit Award, the Blackstone River Coalition was recognized for 'its exceptional work and commitment to the environment.' Presenting the award, EPA Regional Administrator, Robert Varney stated that the annual award, 'recognizes outstanding environmental advocates who have made significant contributions toward preserving and protecting our natural resources.' Organizations that form the Coalition include the Blackstone River Watershed Association, Blackstone River Watershed Council, Mass Audubon, and the Corridor Commission. Congratulations to the Blackstone River Coalition on their outstanding work!



### ASHTON, RI

Economic revitalization expanded in the Valley, as the Riverlofts at Ashton Mill, a reuse of the historic Ashton Mill (1867) in Cumberland, RI, opened this year as a residential community. Adjacent to the Blackstone

River bikeway, the \$22m project consists of 184 units and is one of many redevelopment projects benefiting from the Historic Preservation Investment Tax Credits in Rhode Island. Ted Sanderson, Corridor Commissioner and Director of the RI

Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, has been an unrelenting advocate for the redevelopment of historic properties and has made Rhode Island a national model for historic redevelopment.

*exhibits...ensuring clear, consistent signs identify access points & sites of interest...encouraging local governments to adopt land use policies...*



# Message from the chairwoman

In the early days of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, the Corridor Commission created a bumper sticker that read: *Imagine the Possibilities*. It served as a reminder that over 200 years ago, Samuel Slater used his imagination to help launch the industrial revolution in America. He saw the abundant natural resources of this area and harnessed them to create an economic engine that transformed our country. He used his mind to envision what could be, and with hard work and determination implemented his vision.

Just as the mills were the hubs linking people to work, rivers to byways, and resources to economic development during the industrial revolution, so now, the National Heritage Corridor is such a hub. Since our legislative creation on November 10, 1986, we have seeded projects with more than \$23 million in funds to help inspire more than \$500 million in development. We have partnered with more than 75 federal, state and local governments and agencies, not-for-profits, chambers, volunteer organizations and individuals to work on more than 365 projects within the Corridor.

I believe that today it is time for a new rallying cry: *Realize the Possibilities*. Even as we look back upon nearly twenty years of visioning and the completion of the Visitor Center in Pawtucket, Museum of Work and Culture in Woonsocket, and River Bend Farm Visitor Center in Uxbridge, we realize that we have only laid a foundation that demands further action. We need to see the Northern Gateway Visitor Center completed in Worcester, achieve a clean river that can safely support fishing and swimming, and complete the bikeway that will link north and south, both states and many communities within the Corridor. It is time to concentrate on implementing the vision, thus realizing the possibilities.

We are grateful to United States Senators Lincoln D. Chafee and Jack Reed and Representatives Patrick J. Kennedy and James R. Langevin from Rhode Island and Senators Edward M. Kennedy and John F. Kerry and Representatives James McGovern and Richard E. Neal from Massachusetts for their substantial and continuing support. We acknowledge the indispensable involvement of the National Park Service and the dedication of our able staff, who inspire us all to “think big.”

Slater likely did not imagine the lasting impact of his actions. It is just as difficult for us to realize that we, too, can have a lasting impact on our natural and cultural environment. But as you read this report, I ask you to keep in mind that you are the Heritage Corridor. You are the Corridor Keepers, the connectors of riverway, bikeway, highway and byway. You are the reason we and our legislators work so diligently to protect this landscape and encourage heritage-based economic development. Your support of reauthorization and continued involvement in the next twenty years will be critical to achieving our mutual goals of sustainable preservation and stewardship.

Let us join hands and, in the spirit of Samuel Slater, *Realize the Possibilities*.

– Louise M. Redding

# Message from the interim executive director

As I look back on 2005 and ahead to the coming year, two words come to mind: continuity and change. In the latter category, there have been significant changes in the Commission's staff – including the departure of a long-time and much-respected executive director. The Commission, too, has seen turnover, as several ex-officio members have moved on and new members have been appointed. 2006 promises more change, as our Congressional delegation and partners work to reauthorize the federal commission for additional years of service to the Corridor communities. Change brings uncertainty, and uncertainty can be unsettling, but change can also bring new opportunities.

The achievements of 2005 and the promise of 2006 remind us that the original vision of nearly twenty years ago continues, and that the strategic goals that vision gave birth to are alive and flourishing. I have had the unique experience of serving twice as the Corridor's Interim Executive Director. In 1988-89 I helped set up the office, hire staff and launch the first ten-year plan. In 2005 I have returned, charged by NPS Regional Director Mary Bomar to assist the Corridor and Commission for as long as it takes to secure a new future.

I am struck by how consistently the Corridor Commission has followed and implemented its original vision and strategic goals over the past two decades – but also by how much has been accomplished. That early vision of a few has now become the foundation of an impressive network of partners and increasing numbers of Valley residents who understand the importance of thinking and acting as a region. Perhaps the clearest measure of the Corridor's success is the enthusiasm of so many stakeholders in continuing to build on the work of the past for the Valley's future.

I would like to second the Chairwoman's thanks to our stalwart Congressional delegation, to our capable staff, and to our hard-working, dedicated partners up and down the Blackstone River Valley. In the pages that follow you will see many of the fruits of their labors highlighted. Enjoy, and be inspired!

– *Lawrence D. Gall*

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## CORRIDOR COMMISSION

### EXECUTIVE SUBCOMMITTEE

Louise Redding, Chairwoman  
Redding and Redding, CPA, Massachusetts

Edward Sanderson, Vice-Chair  
Executive Director, Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation and Heritage Commission

Donna Williams, Secretary  
Conservation Advocacy Coordinator  
Massachusetts Audubon Society

Michael D. Cassidy, Treasurer  
City of Pawtucket, Department of Planning  
and Redevelopment

Dr. Robert Billington, Former Chairman  
Blackstone Valley Tourism Council

### NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Mary Bomar, National Park Service  
Regional Director

### COMMISSIONERS

Matthew Amorello  
Chairman, Massachusetts Turnpike Authority

Dr. William Ankner

Renee Fry  
Director, Department of Business & Technology

Kenneth Bianchi  
Executive Director, R.I. Bridge & Turnpike Authority

Stephen H. Burrington  
Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of  
Conservation and Recreation

Paul P. Clancy, Jr.  
Councilor, Worcester City Council

Mary K. Connor

Michael McMahon  
Director, R.I. Economic Development Corporation

Patricia Mehrtens

Brona Simon  
Executive Director, Mass. Historical Commission

Richard T. Moore  
Massachusetts State Senator

Burton Stallwood  
R.I. Federal Marshal, U.S. Marshal Service

Dr. W. Michael Sullivan  
Director, RI Department of Environmental Management

# Budget

The Commission is supported by a Federal Congressional Appropriation which has leveraged substantial local, state and private funds to pursue a wide range of projects that benefit the National Heritage Corridor.

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**Commission Operations** **\$ 850,000**

Congressional Appropriations to support Commission operations for administration and project development.

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**National Park Service Operations** **\$ 320,000**

Appropriations through the Operations of the National Park Service to provide technical specialists in historic preservation, planning and design, environment and National Park Rangers for interpretation.

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**Development Funds** **\$ 493,000**

Congressional line-item appropriation to provide funding to implement the following preservation and development strategies outlined in the Commission Plan and legislation.

**ONGOING DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS**

Special Events and Festivals	\$ 47,000
Commission Communication Program	\$ 45,000
Calendar of Events & Distribution Program	\$ 40,000
Making Things Work Video Update	\$ 15,000
Reports and Publications	\$ 15,000
Hot Spot Planning	\$ 20,000
Sustainability Study NPS Case Study Report	\$ 25,000

**STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

Intermodal Tour Program	\$ 10,000
Middle River Park Bridge Design	\$ 10,000
Museum of Work and Culture	\$ 20,000
Northern Gateway Visitor Center	\$ 50,000
Waters Farm: Building preservation and rehabilitation	\$ 30,000

**RIVERWAYS AND RECREATION**

River Visioning: Riverway Charettes	\$ 30,000
Watershed Coalition	\$ 20,000
Blackstone Gorge: Bi-state park river access	\$ 6,000

**INTERPRETATION AND EDUCATION**

Signage: Corridor Identity Program	\$ 30,000
Tourism Triangle Programs	\$ 80,000

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## PROGRESSIONS

**GOODBYE SUE ANDREWS** Sue Andrews, Director of Heritage Preservation and Development has taken a new position as the Chief of Staff at Lowell National Historical Park. Sue worked in the Blackstone Valley for a decade, serving as the Site Manager at Roger Williams National Memorial, and Chief of Interpretation at both the Corridor and Roger Williams National Memorial. Sue played an integral part in the development of professional interpretation throughout the Valley, with Corridor rangers, and with many of our partners through the Blackstone Valley Educators Network. Sue managed a variety of projects in her tenure at the Corridor – her contributions and cheery countenance will be missed.

**GOODBYE KAREN MATELESKA** After serving as Biologist for the past three years, Karen Mateleska left the Heritage Corridor Commission staff in July for a new post as Director of the Blackstone River Coalition. Karen first came to the Corridor Commission as a VIP during her junior year in high school and later worked as a seasonal Park Ranger. Karen spent much of her time at the Corridor working on various environmental projects including the development of the Blackstone River Coalition, the Fishable/Swimmable Blackstone River by 2015 Campaign, and the BRC's Watershed-wide Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring Program.

# *The road ahead...*

In 2003 the Corridor Commission's Futures Committee, working with the NPS Conservation Study Institute, undertook a study to explore the past and define a future for the Corridor. **Reflecting on the Past, Looking to the Future**, concluded that the Corridor's management method has been successful in its role as a catalyst and convener, has had substantial positive impact on Corridor communities, has met many of the original objectives, and the federal investment has sparked considerable public and private reinvestment. The study recommended that as we move forward, priority should be given to the following actions ▶ Complete the Northern Gateway Visitor Center ▶ Preserve the Blackstone Canal ▶ Complete the Blackstone River Bikeway ▶ Continue to support the improvement of the Blackstone River, and ▶ Develop sustainability among corridor partners including preservation communities, university partners, economic development organizations, local land use planning and others.

*"We are in awe as to the progress made over the past 30 years to clean up the Blackstone.*

*We left the Expedition hopeful that with a redoubling of effort and the involvement of the next generation, the Blackstone will become fishable and swimmable by 2015."*

*David Stein, Real Estate Developer, Uxbridge, MA*

## IN MEMORIAM

**ORVILLE R. HARROLD**, President of the Providence & Worcester Railroad Co. The Corridor Commission extends its heartfelt sympathy to the family of Orville Harrold and the P & W family. Through Harrold's leadership, the P & W supported numerous area efforts including the planning of the Worcester Visitor Center, planning of the Blackstone Gateway Park, the construction of the Blackstone River Bikeway and the preservation of the Blackstone Canal.

**DORIS DANIELS KING, 1900-2005**, The Corridor Commission extends its heartfelt condolences to the family of Doris Daniels King. Doris will long be remembered for her gift of the historic Daniels Farm, a living legacy of many generations representing a continuum of agricultural use in the Valley.

