



Trail Spur Network

Today there is a Vision and a huge effort across the state to link hundreds of open spaces through parks & trails, natural resource areas, and important community features.

The Bridgewater and West Bridgewater planning documents embrace a conceptual **Vision** known as the **Nunckatessett Greenway (NG)**, with the goal of connecting town-owned conservation areas and urban centers to the nationally recognized AMC / **Bay Circuit Trail** and to the **Town River**, a focus tributary of the National Park Service's Wild & Scenic Taunton River.

NG is unique; nestled between the Hockomock Swamp Area of Critical Environmental Concern and the Wild & Scenic Taunton River, it features both wilderness beauty and downtown business districts. Its recreational potential can trigger economic enhancement as healthy trails and parks equal healthy, vital communities.

This greenway links multiple sites of special interest – Native regions like Mollie Ground and Titicut, Mass Department of Fish & Wildlife Management Areas, Skim Milk Bridge, War Memorial Park, Iron Works Park, and Town River Landing / Stiles & Hart Parkland – and it includes a trail spur through Bridgewater State University's Wyatt Sculpture Garden that links to the Taunton River via the Old State Farm Trail.

It fosters natural resource preservation and provides open space for passive recreation with Outdoor Classrooms where natural and cultural history, science, art, literature and many more disciplines meet to tell a compelling story of the Old Bridgewater Area.

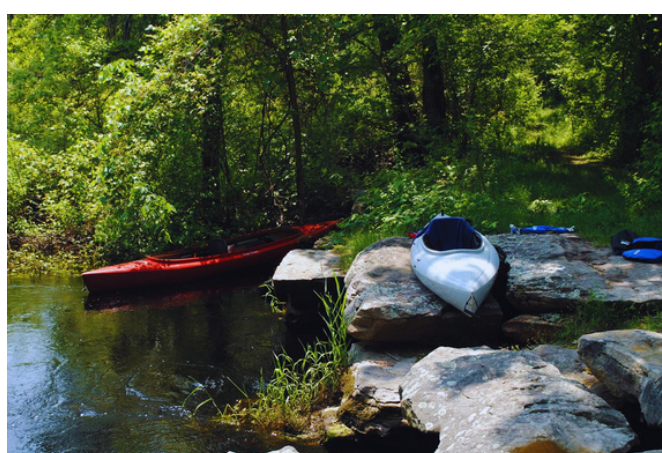
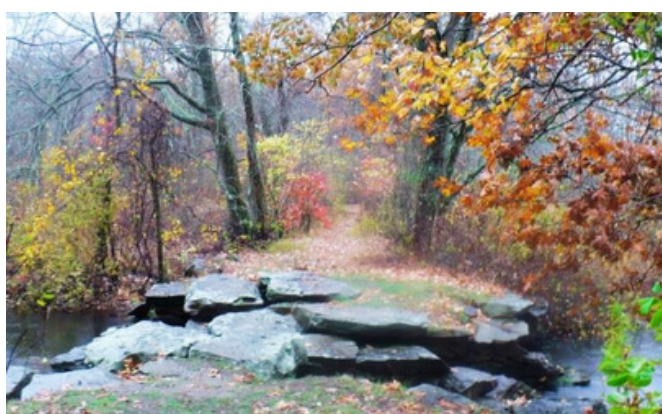
This NG Trail network includes multiple access locations for car-top boat put-ins, with canoeing, kayaking, hiking, cross-country skiing, picnicking, birding, photography, tenting, dog-walking, fishing, and hunting all allowable uses. While Bridgewater State University and each town manage their own parklands, the 501 (C) (3) Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater (NRTB) coordinates activities between partnering groups and volunteer participants.

The Hockomock Swamp: As the largest remaining fresh-water swamp in Massachusetts, this wetland is a protected Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a huge, 7 ½ billion-gallon water reservoir. It is a unique and irreplaceable wildlife habitat—a vast natural and scenic area, an oasis of peace and quiet. For thousands of years the Hockomock has remained close to primeval wilderness, a soggy, trackless woodland of white cedar, red maple, cat-tail marsh, small ponds, and meandering streams. Early civilizations depended on this swamp as an abundant source of game; they believed that if they camped each spring in an area known as 'Mollie Ground,' the good spirits of the swamp would stay with them for the rest of the year. It is rumored that Mollie Ground was a pre-colonial trading post attracting diverse peoples from Canada, New York, and from all over New England. The Mass Division of Fish & Game own approximately 5000 acres of this swamp – headwaters to the Town River - providing public access to recreational areas along the Nunckatessett Greenway. The swamp is popular for hunting, hiking, fishing, canoeing, swimming, and for the observation and study of plants and animals. The fertile agricultural fields adjacent to the Hockomock's wetlands and rivers are of prime importance.

Town River (Nunckatessett) Known today as Town River, the Nunckatessett originates in the Hockomock Swamp. This meandering, 14-mile river corridor is one of the earliest areas of colonial activity, dating back to the early 1600s. Before then it was home to the Pokanoket, Ponkapoag, and other Native American civilizations that existed in southern New England for thousands of years. The Town River hosts several Colonial Era industrial sites that are on the National Register of Historic Places, and flow through the centers of both West Bridgewater and Bridgewater before converging with the Matfield River to form the Wild & Scenic Taunton River which is now federally protected under the National Park Service.

Bay Circuit Trail The 200 + mile Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) is a permanent recreational trail extending through 34 towns in eastern Massachusetts, linking parks and open spaces around Boston. Now managed by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), the BCT is recognized nationally. Part of its route travels along the Town River in West Bridgewater and Bridgewater, then on to the South Shore. Promoting BCT stewardship is a goal found in both communities' Open Space & Recreation Plans. The Bay Circuit Alliance has partnered with the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) whose 100 years of natural resource protection and trail experience ensures sustainability and stewardship of the BCT. The common vision includes securing additional off-road sections of this trail through the Bridgewaters.

Wild & Scenic Taunton River The southwesterly flowing Taunton River begins at the confluence of the Town and Matfield Rivers in Bridgewater and empties into Mount Hope Bay. The Taunton River is a nationally designated Wild & Scenic River with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values. It is the longest undammed coastal river in New England, has globally rare freshwater and brackish tidal marsh habitats, and is part of the state-designated ancient Wampanoag Commemorative Canoe Passage. In an advisory role to the National Park Service, the Taunton River Stewardship Council is responsible for managing the Taunton River as a Wild & Scenic River.



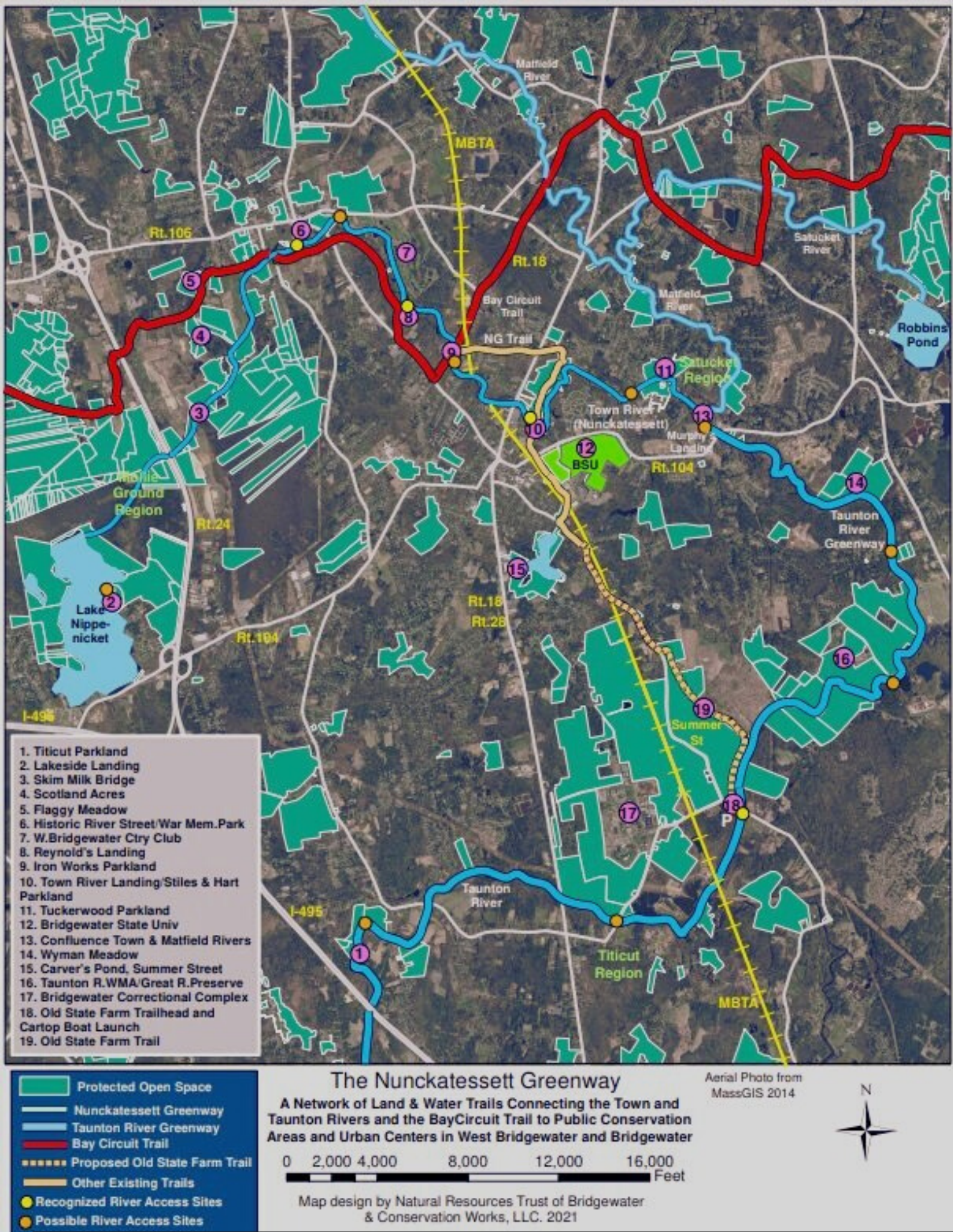
Photos courtesy of Kent Kreutler, Ben Walsh, Jack Manchester, Dan Rezendes, and Julie Amaral Diedricksen.

NRTB is a 501 (C) (3) organization established to protect the natural and cultural history, biological diversity, agriculture, and the forests, fields, and fisheries in the Bridgewater area; to also protect open space, and to share its scenic landscape in a responsible recreational format that will benefit the towns economically. Current directors include James Hayes - Bohanan, Peter Dangoia, and Peter Fuller; Kitty Doherty is the NRTB Project Coordinator.

The NG land & water trail network along the Town River & Bay Circuit Trail in Bridgewater and West Bridgewater is the current focus of the Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater.



For more information, visit www.nunckatessettgreenway.org



1. Titicut Parkland
2. Lakeside Landing
3. Skim Milk Bridge
4. Scotland Acres
5. Flaggy Meadow
6. Historic River Street/War Mem.Park
7. W.Bridgewater Ctry Club
8. Reynold's Landing
9. Iron Works Parkland
10. Town River Landing/Stiles & Hart Parkland
11. Tuckerwood Parkland
12. Bridgewater State Univ
13. Confluence Town & Matfield Rivers
14. Wyman Meadow
15. Carver's Pond, Summer Street
16. Taunton R.WMA/Great R.Preserve
17. Bridgewater Correctional Complex
18. Old State Farm Trailhead and Cartop Boat Launch
19. Old State Farm Trail



Photo courtesy of Joan Peirce MA Department Fish & Wildlife

#3 Skim Milk Bridge

A dry-stone slab bridge crossing the Town River marks the route of an old road to Taunton. The exact age has not been pinpointed, but historical records indicate that it dates to around 1800 and remains in near perfect, original condition. Skim Milk Bridge is in the process of being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.



File photo

#9. Iron Works Park

This 5-acre oasis with waterfalls and a fish ladder is connected to the Bay Circuit Trail and within walking distance to Bridgewater Center. Located on the Town River at High Street, it played a prominent role in the industrialization of our country. The main park entrance is inside the Bridgewater DPW yard, Iron Works once contained over 25 buildings and employed over 500 men. The plant was known for its ability to roll iron plate used for making boilers on locomotives. This mill was chosen to produce armor plating for the USS Monitor and later wrought iron for the USS Constitution. In 1988, the site was abandoned, and the land donated to the town of Bridgewater. Iron Works Park is on the National Register of Historical Places.

The park is in the process of redevelopment with the removal of the High Street Dam and the alewife fish ladder, giving migrating herring free access to spawn in the upper reaches of the Town River and Lake Nippenicket. A new entrance has been opened on High Street and a user-friendly canoe access is also planned. Historic tours are available for groups.



-Steve Black, Steward



Photo courtesy of Chris Iannitelli, DPW Director

#6 Historic River Street Area

In addition to Holmes Hill where the colony's first stockade / fort was built, the Reverend Keith Parsonage which is now owned and maintained by the Old Bridgewater Historical Society, Pratt's Landing and Beaverton Woods, the Canoe Club - a favorite venue for social affairs - and the beautiful Arch Street Bridge, the River Street area in West Bridgewater boasts many historical places including War Memorial Park. **War Memorial Park** is one of the most important historic sites in West Bridgewater; it commemorates the nation's first industrial park and is the first location of Ames Shovel Company which operated on the Town River through the 19th century, producing shovels used across the nation to build railroads, canals, and to work farmland. This 5 - acre park saw intensive industrial activity as early as 1662 when the first grist mill was built; eventually 17 different mills were on site. It is where Reverend Keith gave his first sermon in 1663; War Memorial Park is listed on the National Register of Historical Places and is currently under renovation with the construction of a pedestrian plaza and new sitting areas along the street.



Photo courtesy of Monica Bentley Fishing pond at Stiles & Hart Parkland

Conceptual image pedestrian bridge courtesy of DCR.

#10. Town River Landing/ Stiles and Hart Parkland

Town River Landing is a 2-acre site on Spring Street now being redeveloped into a destination mini-park, the HUB to connect the Nunckatessett Greenway land & water trails, conservation parklands, and the People to downtown businesses, the uptown historic district, and to the beautifully landscaped Bridgewater State University. This user-friendly oasis of quiet beauty will offer sitting areas, picnic spots, a canoe / kayak staging area on the river, and parking as well as quick public access to the shops along Spring and Broad Streets. Constructing a pedestrian bridge to connect this site to the Stiles & Hart Parkland across the Town River is planned.

Stiles & Hart Parkland was once home to the Plymouth County Agricultural Society Fairgrounds - complete with an exhibition hall, grandstand, and ¼ mile trotting track. In 1895 it became a clay - mining industry, producing bricks until into the early 1900s. Today this 80 - acre site with a mile of riverfront in the heart of downtown Bridgewater is part of the Nunckatessett Greenway, bought by the town in 1999 as Open Space. The nonprofit Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater has hosted the AmeriCorps to blaze trails in this park and are advocating for the community to build a pedestrian bridge linking the parkland to the downtown at the Town River Landing. The Nunckatessett Greenway Trail then continues to Bridgewater State University Campus.



Photo courtesy of Dan Rezendes, BSU Assistant Athletic Director at BSU.

File photo.

#12. Bridgewater State University

Great Hills Trails

Great Hills Trails provide passive recreation and a remarkable Outdoor Classroom for students, faculty, staff and the greater community. Great Hill was formerly a thriving Wampanoag community – truly an area where history and nature meet. Currently, there are six different loops covering 3 miles encompassing a variety of terrain, plant, and animal life. These trails are suitable for walking, running, mountain biking, snowshoeing and back-country skiing.

Greg & Fay Wyatt Sculpture Garden

On a Nunckatessett Greenway spur through Bridgewater State University, the Wyatt Sculpture Garden features the bronze works of Greg Wyatt, who interprets and reimagines famous Shakespearean poems into the language of dance. Twenty sculptures are presented in the historic center of campus, some with braille plaques. A soaring Baryshnikov sculpture depicting the dancer Mikhail Baryshnikov suspended in mid-leap leads visitors into the garden. The NG Trail continues past these marvelous works of art to Summer Street.



File photo



File photo Vernal Pool Site



#15. Carver Pond

Once home to Bridgewater Cotton Gin (1816 to 1822) and subsequently used for ice harvest, is located on Summer Street south of Bridgewater State University. Public trails around the pond bisect scenic woodland with diverse plants and wildlife including swan, osprey, fox, muskrat, turtles, and birds. This parkland is in Bridgewater's water supply district, with 5 wells located on the south side. The surrounding wetlands help to purify the surface water which in turn contributes to good water quality in the aquifer below. Carver's Pond is also an Outdoor Classroom for the university and public schools, and used for picnicking, fishing, canoeing, and ice skating.

#17. Bridgewater Correctional Complex - Old State Farm

Old State Farm During the influx of Irish immigrants in the late 1840's into Boston, the city was bursting at the seams with unemployed. The state decided in 1852 to erect three "Alms Houses" to help the cities deal with this burden. Identical buildings were erected in Bridgewater, Munson, and Tewksbury, each holding over 400 residents, men, women, and children. They were designed to be self-run and self-supporting with a large agricultural operation supplying themselves with fresh meat and produce, and with sales to the neighboring communities. Over the next 100 years the Old State Farm in Bridgewater evolved into the largest prison in the state. As the dairy farm operation was discontinued, in 2004 legislation was passed that permanently protected 425 acres of the Old State Farm under Article 97 of our Massachusetts State Constitution.

David Moore, Bridgewater Historical Commission

#19. Old State Farm Trail

In 2020 legislation was again signed into law, creating a 10' Conservation Easement that established a new hiking trail to connect the existing Nunckatessett Greenway Trail network along Summer Street to the Wild & Scenic Taunton River, at the Summer Street Bridge. This Old State Farm Trail (OSF Trail) will be a woodland path bordering the protected farm fields still in active agriculture and new residential developments to the north. The Natural Resources Trust of Bridgewater (NRTB) is spearheading trail development; the trail will be part of the municipal trail system. Contributions toward this trail project may be made via the Nunckatessett Greenway website.



The volunteer advocacy work NRTB does would not be possible without generous contributions from supporters – people who want a user-friendly parks & trail network. Our Nunckatessett Greenway website is equipped with PayPal, where you may send donations towards the Old State Farm Trail Project and the Town River Landing Pedestrian Bridge Project. Please bear with us as we update this website.

For more information, visit www.nunckatessettgreenway.org

