

THE BLACKSTONE RIVER-USERS CONFERENCE

Blackstone Valley Visitor Center – Salve Regina University Graduate School

Tuesday, September 22, 2009

Produced at the Sustainable Tourism Planning and Development
Laboratory
Pawtucket, Rhode Island, USA



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

There are many important dates associated with the history of Blackstone River Valley that flows from Worcester, Massachusetts to Pawtucket Rhode Island. Another important date to be added to that list is the September 22, 2009 conference when over fifty advocates for the Blackstone River gathered in Pawtucket for the Blackstone River Users Conference.

The Conference was created to focus on Common Interests along the Blackstone River with the hope of finding allies for all projects. While focus was on the Blackstone River, the scope of the discussions, comments and recommendations covered the entire watershed of the Blackstone River encompassing Rhode Island and Massachusetts and the 24 National Heritage Corridor communities. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, in coordination with the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, presented the River-users Conference.

For over twenty years these two organizations have been working with public, private and volunteer groups, on federal, state and local levels to protect, develop and promote river recovery. Their work has centered on sustaining the environmental resources and improving economic revitalization while preserving historic and cultural assets.

In 1993 the Council launched the Educational Vessel *Blackstone Valley Explorer*. That decision has proved very successful and led to the Council securing federal, state, city, private and earned funds to begin construction of access landings to open the Blackstone River to the public.

This River Users Conference convened many public and private groups with an interest in the Blackstone River's future. So much has taken place along the Blackstone over the past 20 years. It appears it is time for increased coordination so each common area of interest in the Blackstone River can be effectuated.

Program

Experts representing fourteen interest areas were chosen to speak. Their presentations were limited to 5 minutes.

Topic Presentations

River Water Quality	Riverboat & Small Boat Access – A Fresh Beginning
Wastewater Treatment	Residential & Commercial River Development
National Weather Service	Forecast Center Fish Passage
River & Canal Maintenance	Blackstone Alert Program
Dam Structural Reliability	River Search, Rescue or Recovery
Canoe & Kayak Access	River Recreation
Blackstone River Explorer	River Safety & Education

(* Please visit www.sustainabletourismmlab.com to view the above PowerPoint Presentation)

Process

Presentations that were not proprietary are included in this report or are on line at Sustainabletourismmlab.com

The “engine” for the over 200 comments and suggestions coming from the Conference were the result of the attendees rotating around 15-Minute Workshop Discussion Tables based on 5 questions to be discussed. All comments were either written by the attendees or recorded by a table monitor.

Table Questions and Consensus Outcomes:

Question # 1 – How do we better maintain our River and Canal?

Outcomes:

- Improve communication/coordination
- Find tools to improve watershed management plan
- How to do sustainable maintenance and coordinate across boundaries

Question # 2 – Is there adequate visual and physical access to the Blackstone River?

Outcomes:

- Need more physical accessible
- Good information is most important. eg. Web/Signs
- Safety access is an issue
- Identify and determine where visual access could be improved
- Identify mandatory take out locations (ordinance)

Question # 3 – With the growth of River Users, are our River Search, Rescue or Recovery Operations sufficient?

Outcomes:

- Response is good, but need a communication plan. Voluntary trip registration.
- Personal Floatation Devices should be mandatory
- Don't forget about winter rescue

Question # 4 – What is the vision of the recreation program on the Blackstone River?

Outcomes:

- Need coordinated recreation program & communications strategy
- More recreation improves advocacy
- Access signs to river sites need improvement
- Explore whitewater rafting
- Need for camping

Question # 5 – How do we make the Blackstone River the safest and most enjoyable River in the Nation?

Outcomes:

- Pratt Dam does not have a program
- Evaluate using existing groups in message
- Need river signs/information access sites, mile markers

Alignment

The Blackstone River Users Conference provided the opportunity to assess the current state of activity along the Blackstone River and provided attendees the opportunity to align and promote their common interests.

Common Interest Outcomes

- ❑ Improve water quality and wastewater treatment
- ❑ Expand river recreation
- ❑ Create visual and physical
- ❑ Seek funding to purchase river-wide search, rescue and recovery equipment
- ❑ Create a riverfront development zone through each community
- ❑ Offer greater river safety education
- ❑ Insure accessibility for all along the Blackstone River
- ❑ Demand that the Blackstone River become fishable and swimmable by 2015]
- ❑ Fund a river-maintenance plan to limit future Blackstone River flood damage
- ❑ Build a system-wide, up-river, cable and buoy safety line above each dam
- ❑ Make maps and a build a website for access, portage and observation information
- ❑ Limit the use of gasoline powered recreational craft
- ❑ Develop local ordinances to limit river access to certain dangerous areas
- ❑ Build Blackstone River campgrounds
- ❑ Offer white-water paddling
- ❑ Identify photo locations and other passive recreation opportunities
- ❑ Remove obsolete dams
- ❑ Develop an on-line personal float plan registration system
- ❑ Step-up communication and overall coordination efforts
- ❑ Brand the Blackstone River

- ❑ Move quickly on the river access planning and building
- ❑ Promote the Blackstone River more through the Tourism Council, the Heritage Corridor and the Environmental agencies in MA and RI

Conclusion

Asking the attendees and the groups to take ownership and action on the Common Interest Outcomes closed the first River-users Conference.

The Tourism Council called for a second Blackstone River Users Conference to be held on Wednesday, September 22, 2010 to focus on the Common Interest Outcomes progress and what remains to be done.

Presenters List

Name	First Name	Organization
Williams	Donna	Mass Audubon
Benz	Don	RIDEM
Belt	Nicole	National Weather Service
Chateauneaf	Russ	RIDEM
Chopy	Davis	RIDEM
Keith	Diane	National Heritage Corridor Commission
McAlpine	Patti	Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Cox	Bob	Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Ben-Tre	Ben	TIA-O
Geary	Frank	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Billington	Bob	Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Sheilds	Bob	Cumberland Rescue
Martin	Don	Blackstone Valley Outfitters
Cole	Jim	Rhode Island Canoe Kayak Association

Participants List

R.Gary	Bechtholdt II	Town of Northbridge
Nicole	Belk	National Weather Services, Taunton
Ben	Ben-Tre	TIA-O
Donald	Benz	RIDEM
Bob	Billington	Blackstone Valley Tourism Council
Rachel	Calabro	Save the Bay
Russ	Chateauneuf	RIDEM
David	Chopy	RIDEM
Alice	Clemente	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Peter	Coffin	The Blackstone River Coalition

Jim	Cole	Rhode Island Canoe Kayak Association
Bob	Cox	BVTC
Bob	Dombrowski	
Arthur	Eddy	Gates Leighton Associates
Roland	Gauvin	Blackstone River Watershed
Frank	Geary	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Tammy	Gilpatrick	Blackstone River Coalition
Keith	Gonsalves	Ten Mile Watershed Council
Judy	Hadley	Blackstone River Watershed Council / FOB
Bill	Hahn	RI Canoe & Kayak Association
Brian	Jackvony	River Search, Rescue or Recovery
Diane	Keith	National Heritage Corridor Commission
Meg	Kerr	Narragansett Bay Estuary Program
Don	Leighton	Gates Leighton Associates
John	Marsland	Blackstone River Watershed Council / FOB
Don	Martin	Blackstone Valley Outfitters
Karen	Mateleska	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Frank	Matta	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Maggie	Plasse	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Jim	Plasse	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Arthur	Plitt	Blackstone River Watershed Association
Jan	Reitsma	National Heritage Corridor Commission
Bob	Shields	Cumberland Rescue
Halford	Welch	Roger Williams National Park
Donna	Williams	Audubon Society, MA
John	Desmarais	Cumberland Police Department
Tim	Griffin	Lonsdale Fire Department
Fred	Mitchell	North Cumberland Fire Department
Jim	Conway	Valley Falls Fire Department
Tricia	Jedele	Conservation Law Foundation
Peter	Adam	Albion Fire Department
Robert	Fisher	Saylesville Fire Department
Russ	Cohen	Mass Fish & Game Service
Rene	Couter	Central Falls Firm Department
Gerard	Dionne	Central Falls Firm Department

Question: How do we better maintain our rivers and canals?

- The Blackstone Valley needs better coordination of projects along the river affecting users.
- Need to factor dam release into river flow projections 12-24 hours ahead of decisions relating to operations.
- Create energy generation
- Restrict to existing structures
- Create an annual \$10,000 budget for Blackstone River clean-up that can be administered by volunteer groups throughout the Blackstone River Valley
- The river must be clean
- Trees and other large debris must be cleared to avoid them becoming projectiles during high water times
- Create new regulatory controls
- Develop a fund that could be used to pay residents for returning their tires to a proper recycling station thereby keeping them out of and along the Blackstone River
- Use caution with vegetation removal vs. trash removal
- There is a safety issue with the removal of debris
- Removal of dams vs. Hydropower. "OWNERSHIP" issues
- Generating electricity vs. maintaining river flows?
- Effort started to re-install hydropower at dam and install automatic trash racks.
- Follow-through by Woonsocket, Army Corps of Engineers, RIDEM, and private operator needed to make this maintenance happen
- Modern technology research needed to harness Hydropower
- Educate people as to what trash is to be removed.
- How to access the river and where potential problems, such as dam release during storms, create problems
- Increase Communication, Financial Support and Manpower support.
- Integrated messaging about values/uses/safety.
- Latest Technology Hydro-Power
- Better promote the monthly Keep Blackstone Valley Beautiful computer recycling programs to keep computers from becoming river trash
- A river-wide evaluation is needed
- Natural Debris vs. Trash Debris, who's responsible?
- Aesthetics versus habitat values.... Rivers are naturally messy....
- Watershed management plan – long-term maintenance coordination by volunteer interests so that trash removal is consistent and preserve values of the ecosystem
- Better coordination between project development/removal and volunteer
- Maintenance transition among state, municipal maintenance and volunteers needs to be established.
- Need manpower/volunteer basis for tree removal

- Lots of debris / lack of continuity and staff associated with removal of trash debris...who is responsible to remove trash?
- Design process coordination for long-term maintenance should begin
- Identify source of long-term maintenance of fish ladders
- There is a need to re-brand the river.
- Public education about river values / integrate messaging
- Align dam safety with hydro assessments
- Integrate Training & Education programs with cleaning/maintenance
- Coordinate Volunteer efforts with professional/government efforts

Additional Comments

I'm concerned about the word "better" and what it means? I think we should look for opportunities to return natural vegetation along and over-extending into the river unless it poses a significant public safety hazard.

This river vegetation helps add to the river's natural beauty and helps create fish and wildlife habitats, a major draw for paddlers, anglers and other boaters.

It would be fine to remove all human trash from the river – coffee cups, shopping carts, tins etc.

Thundermist Dam was put in to control floodwater. If it no longer has a significant function in that regard, it ought to be considered for decommissioning and removal.

Develop River maintenance plan – long-term maintenance coordination by volunteer/agency interests so that trash removal is consistent and preserve values of the ecosystem.

Resurrect the Streamflow Task Force to include hydropower operators, wastewater treatment plant operators, and watershed and recreation organizations.

People had different ideas of "maintenance" i.e. natural debris versus trash debris, clean up of the banks versus the stream. Some thought maintenance includes insuring natural flows and regulating dams & hydro-operations.

Outcomes

- Improve communication / coordination
- Tools to improve watershed management plan
- How to support sustainable maintenance to use and coordinate across boundaries

Question: Is there adequate visual and physical access to the Blackstone River?

- Physical access not only just in/out of river but trails from river access to other resources
- Designate fishing areas to avoid
- Create physical access for all anglers, paddlers and small boats that respect the Blackstone River.
- River landings, properly constructed, will support all users. The Blackstone Valley Tourism Council has funding in place to create river access.
- Conditions along the river – how to get this info to people / users?
- Quantify need - access should be a priority
- Visual Access – building places that people can access to view the river rather than taking down trees.
- Use Stimulus Funds to construct the last sections of the Blackstone River Bikeway
- Coordinate with rescue services as to where to put physical access points
- Make safety Physical information visual
- Camping access along the river should be put into the planning
- River way maps – include all information on biking, walking and paddling
- Accessible access for all – Universal not just mobility issues but for impairments in sight, hearing should be considered
- PFD regulation – state law mandates to only have to have them in the boat. Can towns pass a law requiring PFD use?
- Pratt Dam is a safety issue – create mandatory take out for paddlers – town ordinance subject to fine could be created
- Pass a law where if people need rescue they are charged for rescue services
- Who does river safety enforcement?..... Only if people get in trouble???
- River users could help to keep river safe by directing others and reporting other users for violations – self-police?
- Consider more people will bring more impact on habitat
- Consider vegetation -sustainability (native or not)
- Access at what cost? More use/ More safety issues / more places needing assistance/ rescue watercrafts/ fees for search & rescue activities/ mandatory takeouts
- Clearing for views, maintaining buffers, wetland permitting, challenge keeping access projects moving
- Put people access into other types of projects (fish ladders, restoration projects, bikeways)
- Consider getting people around the dams safely
- Signs along the river to direct people maps and signs at areas where parking include maps on line/curriculum
- Signage at river crossing

- Pratt Dam take out should be closer to parking
- Clean-up not clear-cutting
- Winter access for visual and recreational along river
- Access for all handicaps - deaf, blind etc, who monitors & assists
- Map Reading in schools as part of the curriculum
- Permanent maps at access points and possibly paper maps at a kiosk
- Clear Bush for access vs. preservation of Habitat
- More portage sites needed
- Observation areas needed
- RIDEM permitting should be expedited
- Information about raising water – systems for informing the public
- Use of motorboats; pro, con or type
- Pratt Dam has become a central “problem area”
- Identify who will take on responsibility for the promotion of getting kids on the river
- Getting information to the public
- River way Guide on the internet – coordinating the sites to get people information
- “Recreation website” – Trip planning – posting trips so people who get on river avoid certain dams
- Signs to tell people where you are crossing the river; work with DPW’s to install
- Create visual accessibility as much as possible, maintain critical places that allow visual access, program with DEM to do this
- Establish warning signs that there maybe fines for water rescue
- Restoration plans to include safety plans & signs
- Boating access and portage routes should be considered during all fish/habitat restoration projects on dams
- Connect the different recreational education information – bike maps connect to water trail maps
- Use Fish Ladder funds to keep the river clean
- RIDEM permitting creates obstacles for creating access points
- Impact concerns Bike Path, Woonsocket Falls landing
- Roger Williams Zoo naturalizes a beetle to control purple loosestrife.
- Invasive species are relentless!
- Army Corp of Engineers clearing proposal should be considered in Woonsocket, RI
- Missing access points in Massachusetts
- Create Users fees. Tubes monitor take-out of downriver paddlers

Additional Comments

There is little if any need to remove the vegetation growing along the banks of the Blackstone in Woonsocket that’s part of the Army Corps flood control project.

Vegetation in and along the river creates lots of habitat niches for fish, birds and other wildlife as well as adds to the visual appeal of the river corridor. We should retain this vegetation unless it poses a significant public safety hazard. That said, you can judiciously prune a bit to create and maintain “viewing windows” to the river at appropriate locations.

A possible location for a camping area is at the Mass/RI line.

We need more places for people to get to and walk a long the river with signage making people aware of it.

Install a footbridge at the head of the Blackstone Gorge (near the rolling mill Dam) to enable pedestrian access to the west side of the Blackstone Gorge. Such a bridge would also help public safety personnel access the west bank of the Blackstone.

Create signage program that:

- Identifies waterways at road crossings throughout the watershed
- Directs folks from roadways to river access points

More/better river access info on web

Increase visual access to river for passive enjoyment, i.e. park benches, photo ops, and playgrounds.

Under visual & physical access Peter noted a few comments concerned with the removal of vegetation along banks, i.e. invasive versus native species and the Army Corps recent proposal to cut trees along the levees.

Outcomes

- Need more physical access
- More important is good information. Web, Signs
- Safety access is an issue
- Identify and determine where visual access could be improved
- Identify mandatory take out location (Create an ordinance).

Question: With the growth of River-Users, are our River Search, Rescue or Recovery Operations sufficient?

- A personal Float Plan for each paddlers trip should be encouraged
- A system should be created in the Valley where paddlers can register their trip on line so as to inform public safety officials of their whereabouts
- Rescue equipment is lacking
- Secure federal funding for rescue equipment that all safety officials would share in mutual aid
- Install river cameras on the Blackstone
- More safety equipment is needed
- More safety training is needed
- River Access, Pratt Dam, EPA – site
- Knox Box: Shared by; Police, Fire & Rescue
- Create the most “accessible” river in RI and make it reasonably safe”
- Response capacity “good” vs. prevention of incidents is “poor”
- Safety issues during winter use i.e. ice-fishing should also be included
- Encourage Access to River / Revisit Access issues
- Webcams to keep an eye on dams fish ladders
- Access points, Martin St. (North of Pratt Dam, South of Pratt Dam)
- Make the culture of river users one that expects to use a PFD
- Use social webs for information
- Remove granite blocks a Pratt Dam
- RI Blueways could create float plan model and a place to post on their website exploreri.org.
- Improve River Access
- Improve access to the scene of incidents
- Equipment needed; Grants, Funding, PFD & Helmets
- Clear trees to shoot safety – lines need for “ARC”
- Make PFD’s part of River-Users Culture
- Why isn’t it required by RI law to wear life jackets? Should we work together on getting a law passed?
- Include accommodating needs of river rescue team (access) in the “Fresh Start” River navigation Program
- Install web cameras at key locations along the river especially where there have been rescues before.
- Cold weather recreation ice rescue
- Filing float plan online (Facebook)
- Invasive plants can be problems
- Create a wildlife rescue plan coordination
- Closer access for boats north of Pratt Dam possibly through old Nunes disposal site
- Grants for rescue equipment
- Signs with phone # and location along river at launches & dams
- Who owns Pratt Dam?

- Knox box keys for river access and a separate key for river access Police/Fire/Rescue
- Prevention is not top priority
- Need signing of dams - Call for local emergency
- How aware are people of potential hazards?
- Dam Releases, Storms improve news about dam release
- How to find River Search/Rescue?
- Fines? Warning? Statewide?
- Access and safety search plans together and not separate
- Create On-line Float plan program
- Signs identifying preset location along the river

Additional Comments

Installing safe portages around all dams or other impediments in the river reduces the likelihood that public safety officials will need to be called in for rescue operations.

Ask Val Stegomoen of the Mass Department of Conservation + Recreation at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge for advice on this issue in Massachusetts.

If we improve the rivers water quality, the river will be safer for all river users

I feel that gasoline powered craft with the exception of tourism boats; rescue crafts and environmental agency craft should be prohibited.

I think our efforts are sufficient let's be realistic....you will never make the river completely safe. We should focus on better education on safety.

Response capacity "good" vs. prevention of incidents is "poor"

- Access and safety search plans together and not separate
- Install safe portages around all dams

Make the culture of river users one that expects to use a PFD

Signs with phone # and location along river at launches & dams

There is the need for coordination & training. Specific proposal for a "Knox-Box" for shared keys near Pratt for Lincoln and Cumberland. Are there other opportunities for joint training? Do we reach out further upstream into Massachusetts? Some dams have buoys installed. Where are others needed?

Outcomes

- Pratt Dam is an issue. Needs safety enhancements.
- Response is good. But need a communication plan. Voluntary trip registration

- PFD's should be mandatory
- Don't forget about winter rescue

Question: What is the vision of river recreation program on the Blackstone River?

- Health of River: Water quality can drive an increase in recreational use – more recreational use can't drive water quality improvements
- How do we get better at informing residents & visitors what's going on?
- Use On-line services
- Use the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Heritage Corridor & RIDEM for promotion with volunteer groups
- Market recreational opportunities – where to send people? How to get the word out? Get a coordinated plan in place.
- No jet skis should be allowed on the Blackstone
- Power boats increase need for policing and increase risk
- Build chutes on dams
- Create more river access using the Tourism Council's river access plan
- Permit needed for night river access
- Create campgrounds along the Blackstone River for organized camper use. These could be profit centers for local Boy Scout groups, Girl Scouts and Educational opportunities
- Campfires along the river should be allowed with permits
- Night fishing should be allowed with permits
- Restrict speed on the Blackstone River by all users – signs posted at Access points
- The Blackstone River should be promoted as the safest river to enjoy in North America – we need to put systems in place to deliver on the promise
- Can be an inception for canoeing and fishing
- White water paddling:
 - Opportunities for creating white water,
 - Look at how flows are managed to create white water,
 - Remove dams + create rapids,
 - Sediment issues
 - Removal of dams would be a plus for water quality
 - Have positive effect on flooding
 - Better for fish passage
 - Thunder mist reactivated
 - Release causes real problems
 - Need advanced notice of releases
 - Powerboats on River to Narrow! Speed!
- The Blackstone Valley Explorer is an introduction to the river – encourage folks to canoe, kayak, etc.
- Lonsdale Meadows and Cumberland well fields are gated. Make access for Rescue and police
- Kelly House has management

- Use existing agencies, River Bend Farm
- Small groups as pilot projects
- Easy access from river but not from land
- Discourage partying etc
- Establish a Carry in / Carry out trash program
- Start small
- Stream continuity program is important for river restoration
- Require paddlers to wear PFD's
- Encourage more outfitters to use river for recreational trips/tours
- Coordinate online and kiosk for information
- The River should be accessible for all not just those with fancy kayaks
- Passive & active recreation should be encouraged
- Passive – park benches, relaxation, photography, writing and walking
- Signing – interpretive materials& guide should be expanded
- Central Falls Landing needs signs about history and safe river use
- Create signs for river access. Create Private & Public partnership
- Establish an instructional program for river us. Learn to canoe, kayak, fish
- Learn about Nature – Blackstone River Field guides on plants, birds, animals etc.
- Education on Water Quality is important
- On the Blackstone River, north of Manville – Allow water skiing
- Cumberland Well field use could be expanded, allow camping on River
- Power boats:
 - Set limit on size of motor
 - Only electric motor below a certain size
 - Rescue craft is fine
- Power boats don't belong on the river other than rescue and educators
- They would cause more problems then rip up sides of river
- Oil spills, gasoline spills
- No power boats other than safety boats or the Blackstone Valley Explorer
- Need to address access for safety and rescue
- RIDEM permit for Central Falls landing is for canoes, kayak & only the Blackstone Valley Explorer – no other motorboats.
- Camping done well in other state parks
 - Only 2 sites in RI, Burlingame and the Wood-Pawcatuck
 - Lonsdale Marsh
 - Kelly House
 - Above Albion could be considered for camping
- Privately owned sites – is there potential?
- Regulations should be clearly posted
- Reservation system could be established
- Need facilities for camping
- No powerboats should be allowed on the Blackstone
- Create benches to sit and observe nature
- Encourage enforcement on water
- Create a list of photo spots

- Education
- Promote to all merchants along river that the river is a new highway
- Mandate under state or local law the use of PFD's in use if on boats
- Broaden recreational opportunities
- Create information kiosks
- All boats should be welcomed on the Blackstone River but restrict their speed to 1mph. Include speed restrictions for all personal powered craft as well.
- Create a statewide signage system
- Create a Web Portal for river information – Use the Blueways website?
- Develop unified presentation of recreation programs
- Develop a portal for information on River Access. Possibly use Explore RI.org
- Create River accessibility for all
- Signage on the river indicating “Photo Stop”
- Coordination of programs along the River (On-line)
- Use ExploreRI.org
- Clean water means
 - Return to nature
 - Health enjoyment
 - Recreating

Additional Comments

Where do people find out about recreational opportunities? From the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, Heritage Corridor, State Tourism, Municipalities, Volunteers, Web portal and specialized sites.

No gasoline powered boats except public safety and environmental safety boats should be allowed.

Even if we try to limit powerboats w/certain horsepower and/or speed, who would do it? It's very difficult to regulate and enforce this.

There is a significant potential for enhancing white water paddling opportunities on the Blackstone by the removal of obsolete dams. Albion, Manville, Elizabeth Webbing, Thundermist Russ Chateaufeuf & Sons that such dam removal would have a positive impact on river water quality and dam removal is much better for removing barriers to migratory fish, much better than a fish ladder. Trout and other resident freshwater fish would also benefit from dam removal. This would draw paddlers to the river as well as spectators.

If camping is abundant in other states, why not RI? It can be funded by fees. Power Boats over 10 HP not good for River, i.e. Pollution and wake damage.

Once you have good boat ramps, boats will come – boats of all sizes. If power boats all allowed/encouraged, they will come.

Be careful to not affect the health of the river – the river would eventually be negatively impacted by recreation (boating etc).

Camping: Low impact; Need to understand user; Enforcement / Homeless / Kids
Look for feasible areas. Use RIDEM sites; size limits, Carry in/out.

Health of River: Water quality can drive an increase in recreational use – more recreational use can't drive water quality improvements

Prohibit gasoline-powered craft with the exception of tourism boats, rescue crafts and environmental agency craft

Create campgrounds along the Blackstone River for organized camper use. These could be profit centers for local Boy Scout groups, Girl Scouts and Educational opportunities

During the workshop discussion there was a clear consensus that people wanted more public use of the River, but there was great concern with unrestricted motorboats using new access sites.

Outcomes

- Users. Powerboats? No. Except Blackstone Valley Explorer + safety allow electric?
- Need for coordinated Recreation program and communications strategy.
- More recreation improves advocacy
- Access signs to river site needs improvement.
- Explore whitewater
- Need for camping. RIDEM/MADCR?

Question: How do we make the Blackstone River the safest and most enjoyable river in the Nation?

- Education is key to river safety and the enjoyment of the river
- Speed is more important to regulate than what you float on
- Life jackets laws should be strengthened and broadened
- RI Blue ways Alliance guided tours should be lead by a licensed guide
- Ownership of Dam – Safety issue @ The Tubes “Pratt Dam”
- Coordinate dam releases with the weather river forecast
- Problems created by public use of Gas powered boats???
- Ask boat renters to wear PFD
- Work with river towns to create ordinances where it is prohibited to paddle. This would help safety officials with their work and make paddling in restricted areas a punishable offence. Off limit sections of the river would be above dams and near dangerous obstructions such as the “tubes” in Lonsdale.
- Leave a float plan with someone of where they will be paddling

- A.C.A – American, Canoe (Kayak) Association
- Safety part of water mgt. (water coalition)
- Place on Bulletin Board to use PFDs
- Create a state or town/city ordinance requiring the wearing of life jackets on the Blackstone River in all personal watercraft
- Suggest to all personal watercraft users file a On-line Paddle Plan for their protection. When in trouble this plan will be used to help Safety Officials locate the vessel in trouble. The On-line system could be hosted by one of many river-interested groups.
- Use neighborhood/volunteer groups for education
- Release of water @ Woonsocket requires advance notice
- Water skiers at Manville
- Create stewards of rivers
- Power boats / jet skis
- Keep water quality in “mix”
- PFDs – Insurance Premiums only
- Support the Blueways Coalition
- Educate & Legislate the public
- Brand the Blackstone River
- Create signs on bridges & mileage signs
- Need to coordinate a team of relevant parties to discuss Pratt Dam
- Neighborhood River Watch
- River safety coordination
- Use a Stream Team model
- Websites (Blackstone Alert - Safety)
- Ice rescue
- Pratt Dam tubes need to be eliminated regardless of who owns the dam
- Make safety an element of watershed management
- Have BRC coordinate public education including downloading the info.
- Need for safety improvements
- Work with rescue organizations, towns and cities
- Stream teams/sub-watershed teams already working on WQ issues now also patrolling for safety.
- Head’s up from Thundermist Dam when sudden releases will occur
- Make PFD’s mandatory for all boaters. Is Enforcement possible??
- Educational reminders at all launches portages, Dams etc
- More warning signs further up from Pratt for portage to access
- Install signs under bridges
- Build a flood call systems of riverside residence for flood warnings

Additional Comments

Trees and other natural vegetation in and along the Blackstone River convey a number of habitat and other values. This vegetation should be retained wherever possible unless it poses a significant threat to public safety.

This vegetation helps boost fish and wildlife populations, which are a major draw for paddlers, anglers and other river users.

Trees shade the water. They help raise dissolved oxygen levels and make fish happier.

Trees in the water provide important cover for fish to hide from paddlers

Overhanging branches are resting perches for birds

Tree branches over the river contribute twigs and insects, important fish food

Consider zoning the river into sections that are suitable for different types of boats and user groups. Some section should be zoned “natural” and left for paddlers only (no trailers or other motorized boats)

A very enjoyable river experience for some (to watch as well as participate in) is whitewater paddling and rafting. The Blackstone could have much more potential as a whitewater destination if more dams were removed (Elizabeth Webbing, Thundermist, Albion, Manville, etc)

The biggest impediment to promoting the Blackstone River as a safe and enjoyable recreational destination is continued poor water quality (although it's much better than in the past, it still lags behind many other rivers in RI & MA). A cleaner river will be a much more pleasant place to be on and in.

Who controls the release of water at the Thundermist Dam.

Get people to the river and educate them about water quality build a constituency for Water Quality improvement.

Do more education in schools and beyond on water quality and the other good things: fish restoration and recreation.

Take advantage of new development along the Blackstone River – establish compelling “brand” for the river as it is now and vision for where we want to go.

Address the issue of loose materials in mill yards along the river that become missiles during flood conditions especially pallets in building on Martin Street, Cumberland.

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Suggest to all personal watercraft users file an On-line Paddle Plan for their protection. When in trouble this plan will be used to help Safety Officials locate the vessel in trouble. The On-line system could be hosted by one of many river-interested groups.

Create signs on bridges and mileage signs, river-side take-out signs, dam signs, educational reminders at all launches portages, dams etc

We can and should try to make it safer; but it never will be safe and we should not encourage people to think it is safe, therefore the need to wear a PFD and be alert to changing conditions.

Outcomes

- Pratt Dam does not have a program
- Evaluate using existing groups in message
- Need river signs/information access sites, mile marker