

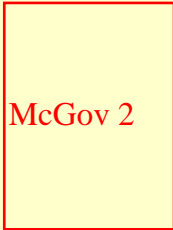


Millbury grant recipients celebrate with Congressman Richard Neal (third from right) and Rep. Paul Frost and Senator Michael Moore at the announcement at the Asa Waters Mansion in Millbury on March 9, 2010.

Heritage Partnership Grants Announced

The Corridor Commission has awarded a total of \$173,970 to twenty organizations in the Blackstone Valley for projects ranging from historic preservation to river cleanup. Projects were selected from 47 applications the Commission received in response to the Call for Proposals it issued last November. Taking into account the match provided by applicants, the combined value of the projects is estimated at close to \$1.2 million. Funding was made possible by congressional appropriations received by the Commission for the specific purpose of implementing partnership projects. [Read more...](#)

Commission Submits Appropriation Request



In early March, the Commission once again submitted a request for project funding to members of the MA and RI delegations. Such funding was previously authorized by Congress -- most recently in 2006 -- at up to \$1 million per year, but unfortunately no funding has actually been appropriated since that year. In previous years, the Corridor received on average \$850,000. The request for fiscal year 2011 is \$750,000. [To read more, click here.](#)

Commission Votes to Continue After "Sunset"

At its meeting on February 25, 2010, the Commission made a historic decision to continue as a non-federal, non-government organization after its congressional authority expires, which is currently scheduled to happen in October 2011.

Recognizing that the Corridor's work is far from done, but also that another reauthorization from Congress is not likely, Commissioners decided unanimously it would be best to prepare now for the transition, so that work can continue without interruption. They also believe it is very important to have a strong, Corridor-wide organization if and when a National Park is established. To read more, [click here.](#)

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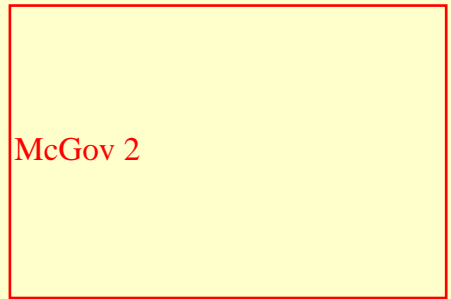
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Future Worcester Visitor Center Taken by Fire



T&G photo by Rick Cinclair

Officials have recommended razing the Washburn Moen building that was to be the Worcester Visitors Center after the majority of the building was destroyed by fire. Arson is blamed for the blaze and city officials, MADOT, Worcester Historical Museum and the Commission will be meeting soon to discuss what the options are for the site. To read the latest *Worcester Telegram & Gazette* story, [click here.](#)

A National Park in the Blackstone Valley: NPS Briefs Congressional Delegation

On March 8, the National Park Service (NPS) briefed members of the congressional delegation in Washington, DC on the status of the [Special Resource Study \(SRS\)](#). The briefing was well-attended, reflecting the keen interest the members of the delegation have in the prospects of a national park being established in the Blackstone Valley.

Terry Moore and Ellen Carlson of the NPS explained that preliminary findings indicate that at least two of the four key criteria for a new park are being met: "national significance" of the historic resources in the Valley and "suitability" (meaning that the Valley is the right place to tell the story of American industrialization as it began and evolved here and that this story is not already told elsewhere).

Additional criteria are "feasibility" (can a park be configured and operated effectively with the resources available to the NPS) and "need" (for the NPS, instead of others, to protect and interpret the resource). Moore and Carlson also discussed the various "management alternatives" being evaluated, including a "no action" alternative, a smaller park in just the RI portion of the Corridor, and a larger-scale park in both states. A draft study is expected to be available for public review and comment later this Spring, with the final version submitted to Congress by September. Shorter term, the NPS will

publish a newsletter by the end of March with detailed information about the study and the findings made so far. More information about the SRS and the findings can be found [here](#).

Congressional staff asked pointed questions, for example, whether the river and canal would be included, and when the drafting of legislation can get started. So far, the river and canal are not included in the alternatives, but they would be recognized as nationally significant and needing protection, possibly to be provided by a regional partner organization. Legislative drafting can start at any time, but the NPS recommends that a bill be introduced only after the draft study is out. The Commission has told delegation members it very much hopes that legislation can be introduced in this session of Congress, and hopefully passed next year, before the Commission's federal authority expires (in October 2011; see also "[Commission Votes to Continue](#)").

Slater Mill Funds to Refurbish Turbines



Senator Whitehouse, Mayor Doyle, Slater Mill's new executive director, Susan Whitney, and others celebrate with a ribbon cutting at the museum.

slater mill

Slater Mill, Pawtucket, RI

whitin mill

Whitin Mill, Northbridge, MA

Blackstone River Reaches Record Levels in March

The Blackstone River and its tributaries contributed to severe flooding throughout the Blackstone River Valley this month. To track the river's rise, [click here](#).

Corridor at AAA Travel Marketplace



VIP Erin Ribacchi with visitor at the National Park Service exhibit

National Park Service Rangers and staff from 25 parks in the Northeast Region participated in the AAA Travel Marketplace March 5-7 at Gillette Stadium in Foxboro, MA. Over 4,000 visitors requested information regarding Northeast parks to use in planning their summer vacations and day trips.

Free Ride Exhibit Continues at the Depot

On the evening of March 8th, over 100 people gathered at the Depot in Woonsocket to celebrate the opening of the "Free Ride Exhibit" featuring encounters with President Lincoln, Underground Railroad Discoveries, Civil War Multimedia and period artifacts.



Produced by Foss Media, the Free Ride Exhibit will be at the Depot and will complement the interpretative programs and Ranger Walkabouts to be held at the Depot on scheduled Thursday evenings and Saturday afternoons through July 5, 2010. For more information, contact Barbara Dixon at 401-762-0250 x-30.

Read the [Providence Journal](#) story on the

funding

Slater Mill has received to refurbish its centuries-old turbines so they can produce electricity and help the museum reduce utility costs.

Commission Votes (con't)

As the National Park Service has already indicated, such a Park should be partnering with a regional organization, because the Park, by itself, will probably not be able to protect and interpret all the important resources in the Valley that have a connection to the Park. That might include the river and the historic canal, but also sites and visitor facilities in other parts of the Valley that would not be included in the Park itself, yet are an important part of the story and the experience.

This does not mean that, if Congress were to consider another reauthorization, the Commission would oppose it. This simply creates another option, just to be safe. Also, the new organization will probably be very similar to the current Commission, especially in the beginning. We definitely want to maintain its bi-state character and have representation from local and state government, as well as the business and non-profit communities. And, for the sake of continuity but also to minimize confusion, the name would not be much of a change, either: how does "Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, Inc." sound?

One advantage of this plan is that we can ask people who were nominated to join the Commission, but have been waiting far too long for their federal appointments, to join the Board of the new organization. We have great nominees and, literally, cannot wait to get them more involved in Corridor work. Bylaws are being drafted and steps being taken to incorporate the new organization in the near future. For more information or if you have any questions about this development, contact [Jan Reitsma](mailto:Jan_Reitsma@nps.gov) at Jan_Reitsma@nps.gov.

As the Commission sees it, we have a bright future ahead of us. It is one in which the work of the last two decades culminates in the establishment of a new National Park that will permanently protect the nationally significant resources we have here. That Park will not replace (or displace) the regional coalition of governments, organizations and people who have worked hard and successfully to preserve the Valley's heritage; it will be a partner in that work. A Park will only strengthen the partnership that is at the core of our collective success and enable us to do even better in the future with the work that remains to be done.

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Commission Submits Appropriations Request (con't)

Before it was formally submitted, Commissioners Sanderson and Williams met with delegation members in Washington. They explained how the funds would be used for a range of projects in both states including:

- sustaining the partnerships we depend on so much (like the Blackstone Valley Heritage Markets, tourism development and the Fishable/Swimable River Campaign, among others),
- completing certain projects before the Commission's authority expires late in 2011, and
- strengthening the capacity of our partners to continue the Commission's work.

Our Senators and Congressmen showed a great deal of interest in the projects and the Commission is hopeful they will all support the request in the appropriation process now underway.

More information about the request and the projects that would be funded is available [here](#). Please take a moment to review it. It is important that decision makers hear from their constituents about how projects like these are making a difference in their communities and are doing what Congress wanted the Corridor Commission to do: partner with others to preserve the Valley's heritage and revitalize its communities.

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Dr. Albert Potter (portrayed above by Tom Stanzi of Glocester, RI) with his assistant, Nurse Clara Barton, (portrayed by Edna Kent, also of Glocester) discuss surgical procedures and medicine during the Civil War. This is an example of some of the exhibit-related events scheduled at the Depot in Woonsocket this season.

Upcoming Events

Thursday, April 8

6:30 p.m.

One Depot Square, Woonsocket

Topic: **Underground Railroad**

Discoveries: From Woonsocket, RI to Ashtabula, Ohio

Saturday, April 24

Rhode Island Historic Preservation

Conference: **Preservation is Local**

[Click here for details.](#)

Saturday, May 15

34th Annual Blackstone River Canoe & Kayak Race

For registration and details, visit theBRWA.com.

Saturday, May 15

9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

150th Anniversary re-creation of Abraham Lincoln's 1860 Presidential campaign visit with a special train from Providence to Woonsocket. For tickets and more information, visit www.tourblackstone.com.

Thursday, May 20

9 a.m.

Full Commission Meeting

Atria Draper Place

25 Hopedale St., Hopedale, MA.

Call Pauline Lozeau at 401-762-0250 x-31 for details.

Thursday, May 20

4 p.m. - 7 p.m.

One Depot Square, Woonsocket

Way to Work Transportation Fair

Alternative transportation options and bike-to-work week will be highlighted. Call Barbara 401-762-0250 x-30 for details.

Heritage Grants Announced (con't)

"There are few initiatives in my career that I have been more excited about than this project," Neal (pictured at right) said when he announced the recipients at the Asa Waters Mansion.

"This has been a partnership on many levels. You will determine the fate of these initiatives. The technologies developed here in the valley were taken to every corner of the globe. It's the foundation of American history."

"I am pleased that the Federal funding secured for the Blackstone Heritage Corridor has successfully attracted even greater investment from the local community through these partnership grants," said Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy, a member of the House Appropriations Committee. "From the historical, educational, and environmental tourism opportunities to the alternative transportation offered by the Bikeway, the Corridor can continue to drive economic growth in the Blackstone Valley."



"This is a perfect example of how the Heritage Corridor approach works," said Ted Sanderson, chairman of the Corridor Commission. "A modest amount of financial and technical assistance leads to a much larger investment by the Corridor community. This allows a tremendous amount of work to get done, and at the same time helps our partners survive the difficult economic times or even grow their capacity."

The projects receiving funding can be found on the Commission's web site and by clicking [here](#).

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Saturday, June 5

Riverfest Kayak & Canoe Race

For details, visit www.blackstoneriver.org

Monday, June 7

9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

College of the Holy Cross

Imagining Lives: Preserving & Interpreting Personal Stories

A Mass History Conference

[Click here for details.](#)

For more events and programs being held around the Blackstone Valley (and to post your own event), visit EventBlackstone.org and check your local newspaper listings, too.



Visit our website at www.nps.gov/

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