

Hockomock Swamp

As the largest remaining fresh-water swamp in Massachusetts, this 16,950 acre 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, home to at least 13 rare and endangered species - 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.

During the Woodland Period, the Indians depended on this swamp as an abundant source of game; they believed that if they camped once a year in an area known to them as 'Mollie Ground,' the good spirits of the swamp would stay with them for the rest of the year. The significance of the Hockomock's archaeological resources is enormous; small stone hearths 15" in diameter, a plummet stone fishing sinker, an ulu stone knife and other artifacts have been unearthed, indicating a very early civilization.

The Mass Division of Fish & Game own approximately 5000 acres of this swamp, providing public access to recreational areas along the Nunckatessett Greenway. The swamp is popular for hunting, fishing, boating, canoeing, swimming, and for the observation and study of plants and animals.

The fertile agricultural fields adjacent to the Hockomock's wetlands, brooks, and rivers are of prime importance, with West Bridgewater using its Community Preservation Fund to secure permanent protect of 116 acres in the town's first Agricultural Preservation Restriction (APR) agreement.



National Park Service - Wild & Scenic Rivers

The National Wild & Scenic Rivers System was created by Congress in 1968 to preserve certain rivers with outstanding natural, cultural, and recreational values, keeping them in a free-flowing condition for the enjoyment of present and future generations. The Act safeguards the special character of these rivers, while also recognizing the potential for their appropriate use and development. The Taunton received Wild & Scenic River status and was placed under the National Park Service in 2009; as a key tributary, the Town River is also recognized and afforded protection.

This 2010 Nunckatessett Greenway© map was produced by Kitty Doherty of Riverland Consulting, Scott Lussier of Suffolk University, and the Towns of West Bridgewater and Bridgewater in harmony with their Open Space & Recreation Plans. It is intended to promote unified passive recreation, education, construction of new trail spurs, PR to share Greenway information with the people, and to discover a new generation of stewards for these forgotten resources.

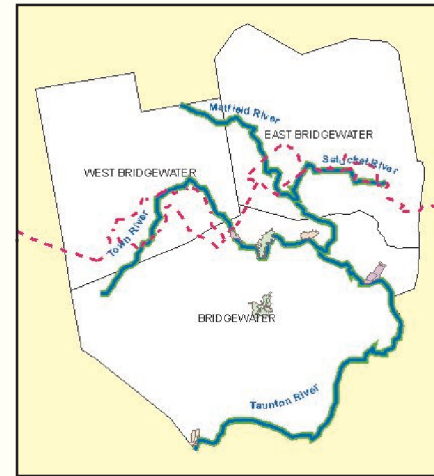
The Town River - Protected at Both Ends

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 settlement dating back to the mid-1600. Before then it was home to the Pokanoket Nation, an ancient American civilization that existed in southern New England for thousands of years. The Town River, with several Colonial Era industrial sites on the National Register of Historic Places, flows through the centers of both West Bridgewater and Bridgewater before converging with the Matfield River to form the Wild & Scenic Taunton River, now federally protected under the National Park Service.



Bay Circuit Trail

The 200-mile Bay Circuit Trail (BCT) is a permanent recreation trail extending through 34 towns in Eastern Massachusetts, linking parks and open spaces surrounding metropolitan Boston. Recognized nationally, the BCT travels through the Nunckatessett Greenway in West Bridgewater and Bridgewater. Promoting BCT stewardship is a goal found in both communities Open Space & Recreation Plans.



Sites of Special Interest

Holmes Hill

Holmes Hill overlooks the Town River and is the location of the first stockade / fort in Old Bridgewater. It was here that colonists sought refuge during King Phillip's War, both for the settlers at times of siege and for the Native American prisoners of war when settlers wanted to execute them.

War Memorial Park

This park saw intensive industrial activity as early as 1662 when the first grist mill was built; eventually 17 different mills were on site. The Ames Shovel Company operated here through the 19th century, producing shovels used across the nation to build railroads, canals and subways, and farm land. War Memorial Park is listed on the National Register of Historical Places.

Iron Works Park

Iron Works Park is also on the National Register of Historical Places. The first iron rolling mill was built on the Town River in 1695; by 1875 ranked the largest iron concern in New England, covering over 70 acres. This mill was chosen to produce armor plating for the USS Monitor and later wrought iron for the USS Constitution. The Bay Circuit Trail networks through this park.

Stiles & Hart Conservation Parkland

Stiles & Hart was once home to the Plymouth County Agricultural Society Fairgrounds - complete with an exhibition hall, grandstand, and ¼ mile trotting track. In 1895 the site became a clay- mining industry, producing bricks until into the early 1900s. Today this parkland is part of the Nunckatessett Greenway in the heart of downtown Bridgewater.

The Nunckatessett Greenway in West Bridgewater, MA and Bridgewater, MA

Today there is a vision... and a huge effort across the state to link hundreds of open spaces through:

- Parks and Trails
- Natural Resource Areas
- Important Community Features

The Towns of West Bridgewater and Bridgewater embrace this Vision with the goal of linking town-owned conservation areas to the nationally recognized Bay Circuit Trail and the historically important Nunckatessett (Town River) in order to satisfy diverse environmental, economical, educational, recreational, and social needs.

Greenways

Greenways are corridors of land and water and the natural, cultural, and recreational resources they link together. A riverfront walkway, a bicycle path, an urban walking trail connecting historical sites and neighborhood parks, a wildlife migration corridor, and a series of open spaces joined by trails are all examples of Greenways.

The Nunckatessett Greenway is a network of trail spurs connecting the Town River and Bay Circuit Trail to municipal and state conservation areas, historical sites and urban centers, school districts and Bridgewater State University, the Hockomock Swamp and the Wild & Scenic Taunton River. Set aside for passive recreation by both the Town of West Bridgewater and the Town of Bridgewater, the Nunckatessett Greenway connects people to the natural world.



Trail Construction - AmeriCorps

Based in Hawley, Massachusetts, AmeriCorps' primary partners are the Massachusetts Service Alliance and the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Corps Members spend the winter months providing environmental education and service learning programs to students in the schools of western Massachusetts. During the summer, members are engaged in delivering conservation service to Massachusetts State Parks and Forests as well as many community-based natural areas. Their work mostly involves trail construction and maintenance.

West Bridgewater and Bridgewater are fortunate to have been able to engage the AmeriCorps in the construction of several trail spurs within the Nunckatessett Greenway. In partnership, the Conservation Commissions from both communities are anticipating that the AmeriCorps will again assist in building new trails during the summer of 2011.