

# *The PRISM*

the newsletter of the Blackstone Canal Conservancy  
<http://www.blackstonecc.org>

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## **Canal Improvement Work**

**Note how much lower the water is to the right.**

One of the areas of the canal that has long needed improvement is the section from the canal breach south of Church Street in Northbridge southward. The need included low spots in the roadway along the sewer line on the west side of the canal, erosion on the west bank of the canal at the breach, and erosion damage at several downed trees south of the breach. While the trees served to trap floating trash washed into the canal at the breach, they also caused erosion of the bank towards the sewer line at high water.

On arriving for the September 19<sup>th</sup> workday, two large pieces of construction equipment were parked at the Church Street gate. Track marks showed that they had travelled southward along the roadway. On arriving at the breach, we found that the roadway had been repaired and the bank was being riprapped to prevent further erosion. Most interesting, was a dam in the canal just south of the breach which backed up flow through the breach itself and lowered water levels to the south. At the downed trees, we found that all of the crisscrossed mess was gone, leaving only a mat of floating beverage containers and two tires. The eroded bank had been partially repaired and was due for further repair and riprapping. At the old sewer line crossing, the pipe was now well out of the water and could be easily removed if the park is on its toes.

A most interesting development.



**The dam just south of the breach on 9/19/15**



**New riprapping on the west bank of the canal, looking south, at the north breach on 9/19/15**



**The location of the former tree dam on 9/19/15**



**The old sewer line crossing on 9/19/15**

## **SNETT / Greenway Progress**

Progress on the SNETT / Blackstone Greenway construction has been spectacular this summer. Status as of 9/26/15 is as follows:

- 1) Both the Depot parking lot in Blackstone and the Central street parking lot in Millville have been paved.
- 2) The new Main Street Bridge in Blackstone appears to be usably complete. Guide railings were being installed at each end on 9/26/15.
- 3) The Church Street tunnel looks done except for the final layer of asphalt on Church Street.
- 4) The bikeway itself is paved from St. Paul St. in Blackstone to Adams Street in Uxbridge except for short pieces either side of the Triad Bridge and next to the Central St. parking area.
- 5) Painting on the Triad Bridge is underway.
- 6) Landscaping work along the bikeway is well underway.
- 7) A nice layby and stairs has been built at the side trail to Millville Lock.



**The Main Street Bridge, Blackstone on 8/8/15**





**Bikeway in Blackstone looking north from the Depot area to the Church St. Tunnel on 8/15/15. This view looks through four bridges beyond the yellow equipment.**



**View of the bikeway looking east at pavement end across the Triad Bridge on 8/29/15**

**View across the St. Paul St. Bridge on 8/15/15. This is currently a bridge to nowhere.**



**View of the side trail to Millville Lock on 8/29/15**





## SNETT Progress

Progress is also being made on the SNETT in Bellingham. At the Rte. 126 Bridge, work is underway. Drainage improvements have begun and utility relocation is complete in preparation of replacing the bridge with a tunnel. On the tunnel itself, the floor is cast and form and rebar work has begun on the side walls. Also, further east, final surfacing work is underway on the section between Center St. and Lake Street. Excavation is also in process for the ramp at Lake St. This section will become the model for how other sections of the SNETT will eventually look.



View of the work underway to replace the Rte. 126 Bridge in Bellingham looking west on 8/8/15.



Rte. 126 tunnel work on 9/26/15. The tunnel floor is cast and rebar and form work is in process on the side walls.

## SNETT / Greenway Planning

When the current Greenway project in Blackstone, Millville, and Uxbridge is completed, a 1/3<sup>rd</sup> mile gap will remain between the St. Paul St. Bridge and the planned northern end of the Rhode Island bikeway at the state line on the west bank of the Blackstone River. This gap makes the St. Paul St. Bridge a “bridge to nowhere”. This section includes the Norfolk County Bridge over the Blackstone Canal and Canal Street

and the Blackstone Viaduct. The Viaduct includes three fill sections, a single arch masonry structure, and a seven arch masonry structure. The two masonry sections were completed in 1873 and encased in reinforced concrete in 1918 during World War I. The United States Railroad Administration controlled the railroad at that time.

Various statements have been made about the bridge and the arch sections and alternative routes suggested. The state is now considering the issue. To clarify matters, binders of the reports on the viaduct, the Norfolk County Bridge, the SNETT Status Report, and various assessor’s records and easements have been assembled and presented to several of the Blackstone Town boards and commissions along with verbal explanations of the alternatives and impacts, so that they can work with complete information.

Currently, the route over the viaduct appears to be the best and safest route. It also preserves the Viaduct which is the most historic structure in Blackstone. The main issue is developing a restoration plan that is affordable. The viaduct route also serves to protect the watered section of the Blackstone Canal.



View east from Center St, Bellingham on 9/26/15 with the new surface beyond the sign.



View west at Lake St., Bellingham of the new ramp down to Lake St. on 9/26/15.





Telephoto view east across the Triad Bridge to the Rte. 122 Bridge on 9/26/15. Paved bikeway can be seen on the far side.



View west along the bikeway west of the Triad Bridge on 9/26/15 showing pavement with new top soil on each side

- ### Wanted
- 1) The volunteer services of an experienced surveyor with the needed equipment to determine the close location of the sites of Milestones 26, 27, and 29 along the towpath from the known location of Milestone 28 despite the current watered gaps in the towpath. Also, determine the elevation of the top of the breast wall at Goat Hill Lock and where that elevation lies at Church Street Lock.
  - 2) The help of someone with a winch equipped jeep or truck to pull trees out of the canal on work days to allow for their cutting up and disposal.

### Canal Calendar

Members knowing of canal related events are requested to submit them to the editor so that they may be included.

**October 17<sup>th</sup>: Blackstone Canal Conservancy work day is, CANCELLED**



Bikeway looking east just east of Central St., Millville on 9/26/15 with new grass on each side.

### Membership

Membership in the Conservancy is open to all that are interested in the Blackstone Canal, its history and its preservation. Annual dues are:

Student: \$7	Adults: \$10
Family: \$15	Organizations: \$25

Applications and dues (payable to the Blackstone Canal Conservancy) should be sent to the Membership Secretary; Blackstone Canal Conservancy, 16 Ballou Road, Hopedale, MA 01747-1833



Blackstone Canal Conservancy  
16 Ballou Road  
Hopedale, MA

