

## **Appendix G. Description of Public Outreach**

### **G.1 Summary**

#### **G.1.1 Steering Committee (Nomination Sponsors)**

Members of the Steering Committee preparing the nomination of the Upper Housatonic River ACEC began informally contacting local officials, residents, and members of various community and environmental organizations about submitting an ACEC nomination in May 2008. The Steering Committee is comprised of representatives of the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Green Berkshires, Inc., and the Massachusetts Audubon Society (Mass Audubon). One of the goals of the Steering Committee is to use the vehicle of an ACEC nomination and designation to build a strong coalition of citizens, organizations, and local and state governments to preserve and restore the upper Housatonic River.

#### **G.1.2 [www.savethehousatonic.org](http://www.savethehousatonic.org) Website**

To support this effort, the Steering Committee also created the [www.savethehousatonic.org](http://www.savethehousatonic.org) website, which went on-line July 19, 2008. The website provides a wealth of information on the ACEC Program, a summary and maps of the Upper Housatonic River ACEC nomination, and facts about the contamination of the Housatonic River and the actions of General Electric and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to address the mandated clean-up of the river. The complete ACEC nomination document, and supporting maps, will be posted on the website following the formal submittal of the nomination to Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environment Ian Bowles.

#### **G.1.3 Support for the Nomination**

Informal support for the nomination has grown over the course of several weeks and months. Organizations publicly supporting the nomination include:

Berkshires Environmental Action Team (BEAT)  
Berkshire Litchfield Environmental Council (BLEC)  
Citizens for PCB Removal (CPR)  
Housatonic Clean River Coalition (HCRC)  
Housatonic Environmental Action League (HEAL)  
Housatonic River Initiative (HRI)  
Housatonic River Walk of Great Barrington  
Housatonic Valley Association (HVA)  
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)  
Northwest Conservation District (NCD)

Stratford Action for the Environment (SAFE)  
Taconic Chapter of Trout Unlimited  
Trout Unlimited (TU).

Members of the Steering Committee met with the Lenox Board of Selectmen on July 10, 2008, and with the Lee Board of Selectmen on August 19, 2008, and received the strong endorsement of both boards. The *Berkshire Record* published an article about the Lee Selectmen meeting on August 20, 2008. Meetings were held with Pittsfield City Councilors Jonathan Lothrop and Mike Ward, and with state legislators Senator Ben Downing and Representatives Denis Guyer, Smitty Pignatelli, and Christopher Speranzo in late May-early June. Members of the Committee also met with U.S. Representative John Olver. All of these local, state, and federal legislators expressed support for the nomination.

The Steering Committee anticipates that the list of supporters will continue to grow over the coming weeks and months.

#### **G.1.4 August 7, 2008 Public Meeting in Lenox**

As suggested by ACEC Program guidelines and ACEC Program staff, a public meeting was organized and held on the evening of August 7, 2008 in the Lenox Town Hall, an easily-accessible and central location for the area of the ACEC nomination. Approximately 135 people attended the meeting. Strong support was voiced for the ACEC nomination. Copies of the agenda and handouts are included in this appendix. Advance publicity for the meeting included published advertisements in the *Berkshire Eagle* on July 21 and 27 and August 3 and 4, 2008. A July 21, 2008 article and a July 21, 2008 editorial appeared in the *Berkshire Eagle* prior to the meeting, and an August 8, 2008 *Berkshire Eagle* article was published following the meeting. In addition, public radio station WMAC included a story regarding the nomination effort on July 23, 2008.

#### **G.1.5 Letters Sent to Landowners and Town Officials**

Also, as suggested by ACEC Program guidelines and ACEC Program staff, in advance of the public meeting, the Steering Committee sent a letter on August 1, 2008 to owners of property of 10 acres or more located within the proposed ACEC. The letter included a map of the proposed ACEC boundary, a two-page summary of the nomination, and an ACEC Program Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) handout. A similar letter with the same enclosures plus a separate meeting announcement flyer was sent to community leaders in Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Washington.

#### **G.1.6 Media Coverage**

As indicated above, several news articles, an editorial, and a radio story covered the proposed ACEC nomination. A list of this media coverage is included below, and copies of this material are included in this appendix. In addition, members of the Steering Committee met with the editorial board of the *Berkshire Eagle* on July 18, 2008.

## **G.2 List of Materials Included in the Appendix**

### **G.2.1 News articles and advertisements appearing in local media outlets**

**G.2.1.1** July 21 and 27, 2008 advertisements in *Berkshire Eagle*.

**G.2.1.2** August 3 and 4, 2008 advertisements in *Berkshire Eagle*.

**G.2.1.3** Kevin Moran, “Conservation groups seek special label for Housatonic,” *Berkshire Eagle*, July 21, 2008.

**G.2.1.4** Editorial, “Seeking a better cleanup,” *Berkshire Eagle*, July 21, 2008.

**G.2.1.5** Carrie Saldo, “New Conservation Group Seeks Protective Designation for Housatonic,” WAMC, July 23, 2008.

**G.2.1.6** Gene Chague, “ACEC would be aces for Berkshire waters,” *Berkshire Eagle*, July 27, 2008.

**G.2.1.7** Jack Dew, “Housatonic PCB Cleanup Coalition moves to preserve river,” *Berkshire Eagle*, August 8, 2008.

**G.2.1.8** Michael Kelley, “Local group petitions for special designation for Housatonic River,” *Berkshire Record*, August 22-28, 2008.

### **G.2.2 Letters to Landowners and Community Leaders**

**G.2.2.1** Letter to landowners

**G.2.2.2** Letter to community leaders

**G.2.2.3** Enclosures for both letters

**G.2.2.3.1** Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination summary

**G.2.2.3.2** ACEC Frequency Asked Questions (FAQ)

**G.2.2.3.3** Proposed ACEC Boundary map

**G.2.2.3.4** August 7, 2008 public meeting announcement flyer (sent to community leaders only)

**G.2.3 August 7, 2008 Public Meeting Agenda and Handouts**

**G.2.3.1** Agenda

**G.2.3.2** Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination Summary

**G.2.3.3** ACEC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

**G.2.3.4** Proposed ACEC Boundary map

## **Save the Housatonic!**

The proposed plan for PCB cleanup will end the Housatonic River's life as a natural ecosystem while disrupting neighborhoods for years to come.

*We must do better.*

Please join us to put the Housatonic River on track for a healthier, more natural future.

**Thursday, August 7th, 7:00 p.m., Lenox Town Hall**

*Your voice matters — let it be heard!*

Berkshire County League of Sportsmen  
Berkshire Natural Resources Council  
Green Berkshires  
Massachusetts Audubon Society

**[www.SaveTheHousatonic.org](http://www.SaveTheHousatonic.org)**

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# The Berkshire Eagle

Housatonic River

## Conservation groups seek special label for Housatonic

By Kevin Moran, Berkshire Eagle Staff

Article Last Updated: 07/21/2008 10:18:58 AM EDT

Monday, July 21

PITTSFIELD — Several conservation groups are seeking a special environmental designation for the upper stretch of the Housatonic River, a move that could shape the PCB cleanup and restoration by giving the state a larger say in the process.

If successful, the state designation — called an Area of Critical Environmental Concern — would also add a layer of conservation standards, raise the levels of environmental review and encourage stewardship of the nearly 1,300-acre parcel.

It would also bar dredging the river and landfilling the contaminated soils on the site without a state-granted waiver. This alone would prompt rethinking the cleanup and restoration methods like those carried out in the Housatonic in Pittsfield, according to Save the Housatonic, an organization comprised of the Berkshire League of Sportsmen, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Green Berkshires Inc., and Massachusetts Audubon Society. The group plans to unveil its plan at a public meeting on Thursday, Aug. 7, at 7 p.m., in the Lenox Town Hall.

The area's boundary would encompass the river south of Memorial Park in Pittsfield to about two miles south of Woods Pond in Lenox and includes October Mountain to the east — all land located in Pittsfield, Lenox, Lee and Washington.

"Everyone wants to see the river cleaned," said George S. Wislocki, a director of Green Berkshires. "But we want to do it thoughtfully and carefully — that's the urgency."

The group is the latest to surface in opposition to a GE plan to remedy PCB — or polychlorinated biphenyl — pollution found in the Housatonic below the point where the east and west branches meet. GE's proposal calls for dredging the first five miles of river and covering the next five miles and Woods Pond with a thin layer of sand.

The EPA has said it would seek major changes to GE's proposal, but growing public opposition to an invasive cleanup has delayed the agency's response. Last month, state Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles asked the EPA to wait so that alternatives could be discussed. Meanwhile, nearly three dozen citizen groups and civic organizations have formed the Housatonic Clean River Coalition to demand that new cleanup methods be considered and that the public be granted a larger role in the coming decisions.

All of the cleanup is being performed under the terms of a settlement that was finalized in October 2000. GE, the EPA, the state and the city of Pittsfield all signed onto that deal, which has guided the cleanup of the river and GE's plant since.

But Tad Ames, president of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, said the cleanup that has already been performed along a two-mile stretch of river in Pittsfield is not an appropriate way to fix the rest of the river.

GE and the EPA dredged the first two miles over a six-year period. They then armored the banks with rip-rap — heavy stones and soil — to prevent erosion. Critics have said the river now looks "channelized" and lost its natural beauty.

"No otter is going to want to walk the walk on a thing like that every day," said George Darey, of Lenox, who is also chairman of the state Fisheries & Wildlife Board.

An ACEC "would not prevent a cleanup, but it would make the cleanup pay more attention to the delicacy of the river," Ames said. "We need to take from what we learned in Pittsfield ... and do it better. It doesn't change the fundamentals of the cleanup, but (it makes one ask) what can we do better?"

At the end of August, Save the Housatonic will file the nomination paperwork for the Area of Critical Environmental Concern with state Environmental Affairs Secretary Bowles. After that, a public hearing will be held on it. Bowles will have final say on the designation.

Eagle reporter Jack Dew contributed to this story.



# The Berkshire Eagle

## Seeking a better cleanup

Editorial

Article Last Updated: 07/21/2008 03:00:11 AM EDT


Monday, July 21

The proposal by Save the Housatonic, a coalition of four Berkshire environmental groups, to seek a special designation for the Upper Housatonic River that will raise the standards for the anticipated cleanup, has considerable potential given the growing consensus that General Electric's plan is inadequate. This designation would give the state a role in the process, a role it should be willing to play.



Save the Housatonic is seeking an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) designation for a roughly 1,300-acre parcel that encompasses the river south of Memorial Park in Pittsfield to roughly two miles south of Woods Pond in Lenox, and includes October Mountain to the East. The environmental review standards would be raised and ideally, consideration would be given to possible alternative cleanup methods, as well as the impact of the cleanup on wildlife and even the proposed bike trail through Pittsfield and Lenox.

The cleanup procedure for the river worked well enough for Pittsfield, but as the work proceeds south, aesthetic considerations enter the picture, as well as concerns about the impact upon the abundant wildlife. ACEC designation could help assure that those concerns are addressed and lessons learned from the cleanup in Pittsfield are applied to the rest of the river.

ACEC designation bars dredging without a state waiver, and it would be counter-productive if ACEC in any way hamstring a cleanup indefinitely. This concern and others can be raised at a public hearing August 7 at the Lenox Town Hall, but if ACEC can facilitate a cleanup of the river that will assure that the cure is not worse than the disease, that designation will be well worth pursuing.


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
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### New Conservation Group Seeks Protective Designation for Housatonic

**Carrie Saldo**

 Listen
  MP3

LENOX, MA (2008-07-23) There's a push by four conservation groups in the Berkshires to designate the PCB polluted upper Housatonic River an Area of Critical Environmental Concern. And WAMC's Berkshire Bureau Chief, Carrie Saldo, reports on why such a determination would be a first;

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# The Berkshire Eagle

Berkshire Woods & Waters

## ACEC would be aces for Berkshire waters

By Gene Chague

Article Last Updated: 07/28/2008 01:51:11 PM EDT

Sunday, July 27

LENOX

The recent news that the newly-formed organization called Save the Housatonic is attempting to establish an area of critical environmental concern in the Housatonic River watershed comes as good news to local sportsmen and conservationists. (See July 21, 2008 Berkshire Eagle article entitled Groups seek special label). Hats off to the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Mass Audubon and Green Berkshires for heading up this project.

Although the details will be unveiled at an Aug. 7 meeting at the Lenox Town Hall, it was disclosed that the ACEC would cover the area from Memorial Park in Pittsfield to about two miles south of Woods Pond. Some of the brooks that feed the river in this stretch from north to south are: Sackett, Sykes, Yokum, Mill, Roaring, Sawmill, Felton, Woods Crossing, Washington Mountain, and several others that are unnamed or their names are unknown to me. There are many smaller streams that feed the above listed ones, too. Undoubtedly, there are ponds such as Felton Pond on October Mountain that will also be included in this area. Think of all of the plants and wildlife that these water bodies support. Most of these brooks contain populations of wild brook trout and they could certainly benefit by the additional layer of environmental review.

Included in this area are thousands of acres of open space owned and managed by the Massachusetts Department of Fisheries and Wildlife, the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, the Massachusetts Audubon Society, Berkshire Natural Resources, and the lands preserved and/or protected by the various towns in the area, such as the Post Farm in Lenox. According to Fish and Wildlife Board Chairman, George Darey, the area is unique in that it contains the largest contiguous wetland that is open for passive recreation west of the Connecticut River. According to the DFW, the area from New Lenox Road in Lenox to Woods Pond in Lenox Dale is considered the second-best warm-water fishery in the commonwealth.

What effects, if any, this designation would have on the General Electric Polychlorinated biphenyls clean up is unclear at this point, but no matter. Sportsmen and conservationists should seize the moment and give moral and financial support to the proposed ACEC. This river, its

watershed and the critters that live in it deserve nothing less.



Because of past GE discharges of PCBs into the 26-acre Silver Lake in Pittsfield, it was required by a consent decree between the Environmental Protection Agency and GE to remove about 400 cubic yards of contaminated sediments from a section of the lake and then cap the entire lake bottom. In a recent report to the Citizen's Coordinating Council, Kenneth Munney from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service reported that based on fish tissue (which showed PCB levels from 24 to 168 parts per million) some fish removal is warranted. The fish targeted for removal will be the larger sized carp, goldfish, largemouth bass, yellow perch, white sucker and sunfish. They will be removed, dispatched and disposed at an out-of-area toxic waste dump.

According to Munney, two reasons for the fish removal (which will be conducted by electroshocking and gill netting) are to eliminate the possibility of PCB recontamination when the older, larger fish die and drop to the bottom, and also to eliminate the possibility of the larger fish stirring up the sediment when they are poking around (presumably for food or spawning). The lake will not be restocked, but rather the smaller fish will be left to repopulate it naturally. The fish removal operations are scheduled to begin this summer and continue through the fall.

Local environmental groups such as the Berkshire Environmental Action Team and the Housatonic River Initiative are upset because habitat restoration was also spelled out in the consent decree along with the destruction of the fish. They believe that neither GE, nor the USFW, plan to restore the habitat because they might be liable if the cap fails because of the restoration. (Some feel it is likely that plants would eventually penetrate the cap). Because of the change of the remediation plans, a modification to the consent decree was required.

Some environmentalists feel that GE should be required to clean up the lake at least enough to restore habitat all along the shoreline. They are hoping that the Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection will intervene and insist on a restoration which would then require a better cleanup.

One can't help but wonder what kind of remediation will take place on Silver Lake when there is concern that poking fish or plant growth could undo some of the remediation effort.



There is one other Housatonic River related matter that I would like to pass on. A few weeks ago I bumped into Jack Teahan, an old fishing friend from the Springfield area who I had not seen in 10 years. After exchanging the usual niceties and silently observing how each of us had aged, he couldn't wait to tell me about a wonderful experience he had recently when he took a day off to do some fishing in the Housatonic River catch-and-release area in Lee.

Yes, he caught some nice fish, but what really made his day was how friendly and helpful the people were that he met on different sections of the river. They unselfishly told him where to fish and what flies to use and also suggested where to have lunch. Jack remarked that the whole day

was a wonderful, memorable fishing experience in the Berkshires.

With treatment like that, it's no wonder that the catch-and-release area is becoming a destination point for more and more out-of-area visitors.

To reach Gene Chague: [berkwoodsandwaters@adelphia.net](mailto:berkwoodsandwaters@adelphia.net), (413)637-1818.

# The Berkshire Eagle

## Housatonic PCB Cleanup Coalition moves to preserve river

Jack Dew, Berkshire Eagle Staff

Article Last Updated: 08/08/2008 03:04:47 AM EDT

Friday, August 08

LENEX — Seeking a stronger local voice in the cleanup of the Housatonic River, a new coalition of conservation groups last night unveiled plans to seek a special designation for the heavily polluted river.

The group — Save the Housatonic — will nominate the river as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern, or ACEC. If successful, the designation would add conservation standards to a 12.9 mile stretch of river and roughly 1,300 surrounding acres, likely requiring special permission from the state for any dredging or landfill within those boundaries.

"We want to give (the state) a tool to negotiate for the best possible cleanup," said Eleanor Tillinghast of Green Berkshires, one of four groups that constitute Save the Housatonic. "And we want to use this tool to encourage people to evaluate cleanup options and how they might affect the river and surrounding lands and neighborhoods."

The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, and Massachusetts Audubon Society have joined Green Berkshires in the new group. They will send the ACEC nomination to the state Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, which is expected to hold several public information sessions before rendering a decision, which could come late this year or early next.

The move is the latest iteration of intense local opposition to a proposal by General Electric to remove PCBs from the river as it runs out of Pittsfield and through South County. GE is required to perform the cleanup by the terms of a settlement finalized in October 2000.

The company used PCBs, or polychlorinated biphenyls, until 1977, when the government banned the chemical, which is considered a probable cause of cancer and has been linked to a host of health problems. The EPA's studies have concluded that the pollution in the Housatonic threatens people, wildlife and the ecosystem.

Last night, as more than 100 people filled the auditorium in the Lenox Town Hall, a panel of proponents made the case for the ACEC designation. They projected two pictures on a movie screen: The first showed a stretch of river in Pittsfield that has already been dredged and restored.

The stripped banks were lined with sun-bleached rocks and newly planted trees protected against beavers by rings of chicken wire. The next frame showed a verdant curve of Housatonic, shade trees leaning gently over dark undergrowth and green lily pads.

George Wislocki, the former president of the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, said the Pittsfield cleanup was "the turning point. It was plainly clear that this was not what we wanted for this river."

GE is proposing to dredge the first five miles of river south of Fred Garner River Park on Pittsfield's Pomeroy Avenue. It would cover the next five miles and Woods Pond with a thin layer of sand. South of Woods Pond, it would do nothing.

The EPA is the final authority on the cleanup and has already said it will seek major changes to GE's proposal. But opposition from local groups and the state Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs has created a standstill, with the EPA delaying its response to GE.

It is not clear how the ACEC designation would interact with the cleanup settlement. When that deal was finalized in a federal court in 2000, the state signed on, as did the EPA, General Electric, the city of Pittsfield and several additional federal agencies.

While the supporters of the new designation said it would force the EPA to respect the state's wishes, they acknowledged there is a possible loophole: The EPA can waive the state's restrictions, allowing GE to go forward. The state would have the right to appeal, they said, but it is not certain that a court would look favorably on a state that is trying to make changes in 2008 to a deal it signed in 2000.

There are also fears that the push to restrict dredging could stop the cleanup altogether. Benno Friedman, an environmentalist with the Housatonic River Initiative, said that won't happen.

"This is a very useful, very powerful addition to the arsenal" used to fight for the river, he said. "It will help shape the cleanup that is most definitely going to occur. The ACEC will not stop the cleanup, and that is not the intention of anyone associated with the ACEC."

To reach Jack Dew: [jdew@berkshireeagle.com](mailto:jdew@berkshireeagle.com) (413) 496-6241

# Local group petitions for special designation for Housatonic River

By Michael Kelley

LEE— A group of environmentally minded individuals from the Berkshire County League of Sportsmen, the Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Green Berkshires and the Massachusetts Audubon Society, are teaming up to bring an added sense of protection to the Housatonic River.

The group, Save the Housatonic, is in the midst of nominating a stretch of the river as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC), a designation bestowed by the state because

of an area's quality, uniqueness and significance of its natural and cultural resources.

The purpose behind designating the area an ACEC is to protect the natural resources of the river, which Green Berkshires President Eleanor Tillinghast said houses 31 rare species and includes breeding ground for 30 fish species.

The section of the river being nominated is a 12.9 mile, 12,280 acre stretch running through Pittsfield, Lenox, Washington and Lee from the east and west branches of the river in Pitts-

field to Golden Hill Road in Lenox.

The ACEC, Tillinghast said, includes both public and private, developed and undeveloped and residential and commercial properties and does not limit development within its boundaries or supercede local regulations.

Since its inception in 1975, 28 ACECs have been named covering 73 communities in Massachusetts. There are three ACECs in South County including Kamposa Bog in Stockbridge, Karner Brook in Egremont and Schenob Brook in Mt. Washington.



**Save The Housatonic  
P.O. Box 501  
Great Barrington, MA 01230**

Friday, August 1, 2008

Dear Landowner:

As you may know, under a Consent Decree, General Electric has agreed to clean up the polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) from the Housatonic River south of Pittsfield, under the direction of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

PCBs have already been removed from two miles of the Housatonic River in Pittsfield. The result is that section of the river today looks like an industrial drainage ditch.

The next stretch of the river passes through Canoe Meadows, the wildlife sanctuary owned by the Massachusetts Audubon Society, and through the George L. Darey Wildlife Management Area owned by the state Division of Fisheries & Wildlife. In addition, the river runs through Post Farm, owned by the town of Lenox, and through neighborhoods in Lenox and Lee.

Many of us feel that this stretch of river -- with over 1,000 acres of protected conservation land -- should be cleaned with greater care, so that this river corridor will continue to serve as an outstanding natural area.

The Berkshire County League of Sportsmen, Berkshire Natural Resources Council, Green Berkshires, and Massachusetts Audubon Society have joined forces in a coalition, "Save The Housatonic," to nominate a 12,280-acre area of the upper Housatonic watershed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC). As shown on the enclosed map, the ACEC will extend along the river from South Pittsfield to North Lee, covering 12.9 miles of the river, and land in Pittsfield, Lenox, Lee, and Washington.

An ACEC is a state designation that will provide the Massachusetts Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs a stronger role in the cleanup of the river. ACECs enable a more thorough environmental review for large projects that require state review or funding. ACECs do not generally affect owners of single-family homes. Today, there are four ACEC areas in Berkshire County within the towns of Egremont, Hinsdale, Mount Washington, Sheffield, and Stockbridge.

To date, we have received support and encouragement from the Berkshire legislators representing the area, as well as from Congressman John Olver. Town officials have expressed support, as have numerous environmental and sportsmen groups which for generations have enjoyed and protected the river.

More information about the ACEC program and about this particular area being nominated for designation can be found on our website [www.SaveTheHousatonic.org](http://www.SaveTheHousatonic.org). You can also find the list of supporting groups in the Supporters section of the website.

We are also hosting a public meeting about the ACEC at the Lenox Town Hall, Thursday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, at 7:00 p.m. If you have any questions beforehand, please feel free to contact any of the sponsoring groups through the website, or call me at home, (413) 443-1855.

We hope you will attend this informational meeting to hear more about the proposal and to hear answers to any questions you may have. We look forward to seeing you there, and hope that you will lend your support to this critically important effort.

Cordially yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "GEORGE S. WISLOCKI". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

George S. Wislocki  
Green Berkshires, Inc.

Mark Jester, Berkshire County League of Sportsmen  
Tad Ames, Berkshire Natural Resources Council  
George L. Darey, Green Berkshires, Inc.  
René Laubach, Massachusetts Audubon Society

**Save The Housatonic**  
**P.O. Box 501**  
**Great Barrington, MA 01230**

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Mark Jester, Berkshire County League of Sportsmen

Tad Ames, Berkshire Natural Resources Council

George L. Darey, Green Berkshires, Inc.

René Laubach, Massachusetts Audubon Society

**Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination – Summary**

August 7, 2008

**Area of ACEC Nomination**

The primary focus of the Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination is the 12.9-mile corridor of the Upper Housatonic River from south Pittsfield to north Lee, and portions of the critical supporting watersheds that drain into the river from the east and west. This stretch of the Housatonic is comprised of a complex and rich ecosystem that includes the river itself, adjacent wetlands and floodplains, several tributary streams, abundant wildlife, concentrations of rare species, and the steep, forested, western slopes of October Mountain State Forest. The river and its adjacent uplands also provide an array of dramatic scenic vistas and a wide range of public educational and recreational activities on protected lands, and include important historical and archaeological resources.

- The nominated area covers approximately 12,280 acres in portions of four Berkshire communities – Lee, Lenox, Pittsfield, and Washington. The respective approximate acreage of the nominated area within each community is:
  - Lee, 1,610 acres;
  - Lenox, 3,545 acres;
  - Pittsfield, 3,155 acres; and
  - Washington, 3,970 acres.
- Protected open space covers 7,730 acres or 63% of the nominated area. The approximate breakdown of open space within the nominated area within each community is:
  - Lee, 1,055 acres or 66% of the nominated area within Lee;
  - Lenox, 1,270 acres or 36% of the nominated area within Lenox;
  - Pittsfield, 1,490 acres or 47% of the nominated area within Pittsfield; and
  - Washington, 3,915 acres or 99% of the nominated area within Washington.
- According to available land use data, over 80% of the area is undeveloped.

**Resources of the Upper Housatonic ACEC Nomination****Wildlife Habitats**

- Include 31 State-listed Rare Species and 44 Certified and Potential Vernal Pools. Rare Species include seven Endangered, 13 Threatened, and 11 Special Concern species. Rare Species habitats cover approximately 3,440 acres or 28% of the nominated area.
- Include portions of three separate Biomap Core Habitats, delineated for six exemplary communities, 22 rare plants, two rare butterflies, one rare damselfly, three rare birds, one rare turtle, and four rare salamanders. The area includes 4,600 acres (or 37% of nominated area) of Biomap Core Habitat (plus another 27% of Supporting Natural Landscape).
- Include 3,600 acres (or 29% of nominated area) of Living Waters Core Habitat and Critical Supporting Watershed.

- Include at least 21.5 river miles of Cold Water Fisheries, with breeding populations of native brook trout, and abundant fishery resources, with approximately 30 fish species.
- Include a regionally significant bird habitat and migratory corridor and an Important Bird Area (IBA) designated by Mass Audubon, with more than 200 species recorded since 1970.
- Include a diversity that supports wildlife species both common and rare, such as black bear, moose, deer, coyote, bobcat, fisher, otter and mink.
- In addition, the state is undertaking a two-year, \$556,950 state survey to identify previous unknown rare species locations and sites for land acquisition and rare species restoration.

#### **Surface Waters**

- Include approximately 12.9 miles of the Housatonic River, and portions of at least eight named tributary brooks and creeks, all highly important to the water quality, wildlife habitat, and overall resource quality of the nominated area. The area also includes several ponds, lakes and reservoirs.

#### **Wetlands**

- Cover approximately 1,445 acres or 12% of the total proposed area.

#### **Agricultural Areas**

- Include farmland and forest land, and cover approximately 9,360 acres or 76% of the entire nominated area.
- Include designated Forest Reserves, covering 1,120 acres of the west slopes of October Mountain State Forest.
- Include 1830s Forest Land (land inventoried as forest in 1830), a valuable forest and habitat resource, covering approximately 3,450 acres or 28% of the nominated area.

#### **Natural Hazard Areas**

- 100-year flood zones and steep slopes (greater than 25%) cover approximately 56% of the nominated area.

#### **Public Recreation Areas**

- Cover approximately 6,800 acres or over half (55%) of the nominated area.
- Include the 262-acre Mass Audubon Canoe Meadows Wildlife Sanctuary, the 818-acre Division of Fisheries and Wildlife (DFW) George Darey Wildlife Management Area, the 200-acre Lenox Post Farm, several boat access sites, and approximately 5,520 acres of the Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) October Mountain State Forest.

#### **Scenic Sites and Views**

- Are located throughout the nominated area, ranging from the river corridor to the upper reaches of October Mountain State Forest.

#### **Historical and Archaeological Resources**

- The nominated area is part of the Upper Housatonic Valley National Heritage Area, extensive historic and archaeological resources have been documented, and *A History of the Upper Housatonic River Corridor* by local historian Bernard Drew was prepared for this nomination.

### **Proposed ACEC Boundary**

- The proposed boundary addresses the guidelines set forth by the ACEC Program, and is intended to be as conservative as possible. The guidelines state that the proposed boundary should include the minimum area necessary to protect and preserve the critical resources of the proposed ACEC, and that it should be easily recognized by the general public and local and state regulatory agencies working in the area, such as roads or other rights-of-way.
- The northern extent of the proposed boundary of the Upper Housatonic River includes the confluence of the East and West Branches of the Housatonic River in Pittsfield. The southern extent runs to the Golden Hill Road bridge in Lee. The westerly boundary generally follows roadways that generally run north-south parallel to the Housatonic in Pittsfield, Lenox and Lee, and includes gently rolling uplands that drain into the river. The easterly boundary generally includes and follows critical tributary streams and sub-watersheds that drain into the river, located mostly in the steep western slopes of October Mountain State Forest, in Lee, Washington and Pittsfield.

## **Area of Critical Environmental Concern Program Frequently Asked Questions (from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, ACEC Program)**

### **What is an ACEC?**

An Area of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) is a place in Massachusetts that receives special recognition because of the quality, uniqueness, and significance of its natural and cultural resources. Such an area is identified and nominated at the community level and is reviewed and designated by the state's Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. ACEC designation creates a framework for local, regional, and state stewardship of these critical resources.

### **What is the purpose of the ACEC Program?**

The purpose of the Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC) Program is to preserve, restore, and enhance critical environmental resources and resource areas of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The goals of the program are to identify and designate these ecological areas, to increase the level of protection for ACECs, and to facilitate and support the stewardship of ACECs.

### **What is the ACEC Program's background?**

The ACEC Program was established in 1975 when the Massachusetts Legislature authorized and directed the Secretary of Environmental Affairs to identify and designate areas of critical environmental concern to the Commonwealth and to develop policies for their acquisition, protection, and use. Since that time, 28 ACECs have been designated covering approximately 241,000 acres in 73 communities, from the Berkshires to the North Shore and Cape Cod. The Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) administers the ACEC Program on behalf of the Secretary.

The ACEC Regulations (301 CMR 12.00) describe the procedures for the nomination, review, and designation of ACECs. The ACEC Regulations also direct the agencies of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs (in 2007 renamed Energy and Environmental Affairs, or EOEEA) to take actions, administer programs, and revise regulations in order to preserve, restore, or enhance the natural and cultural resources of ACECs. As a result, DCR has a close working relationship with many state agencies. Together these agencies can provide information on a variety of resource management issues, grants to communities and organizations, and technical assistance for planning, research, and project design and permitting. In particular, DCR coordinates closely with the Office of Coastal Zone Management regarding all aspects of coastal ACECs.

### **How are ACECs nominated?**

An ACEC nomination is usually prepared by citizens and communities and involves extensive public input and discussion. Public outreach and community meetings help inform citizens about the nomination review



process, and identify local and regional goals for resource management of the area. A nomination describes the area's natural and cultural resources and its ecological relationships; discusses potential benefits of and reasons for designation; identifies goals and objectives for stewardship; describes the process of public outreach and education prior to submitting the nomination; and proposes a potential ACEC boundary to the Secretary for public review. More detailed information is provided in the ACEC Nomination Guidelines page.

## **What are the effects of ACEC designation?**

An ACEC designation recognizes significant ecosystems and is intended to foster appreciation and stewardship of the unique natural and cultural resources in an area. The designation works through the existing state environmental regulatory and review framework. Projects within an ACEC that are subject to state agency jurisdiction or regulation, particularly those that are initiated by an agency, require a state permit, or are funded by a state agency, are reviewed with closer scrutiny to avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts. Ultimately, the designation provides a framework for citizens, communities, and agencies to work together and ensure the long-term preservation and management of these areas. It is also important to understand what ACEC designation does not do. It does not supersede local regulations or zoning, change or affect land ownership, allow public access on private property, or prohibit or stop land development.

More detailed information is available in the ACEC Program Regulatory Summary page and the ACEC Guide to State Regulations and Programs.

## **Why is ACEC stewardship important?**

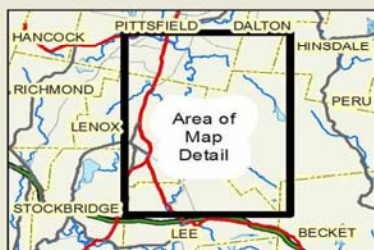
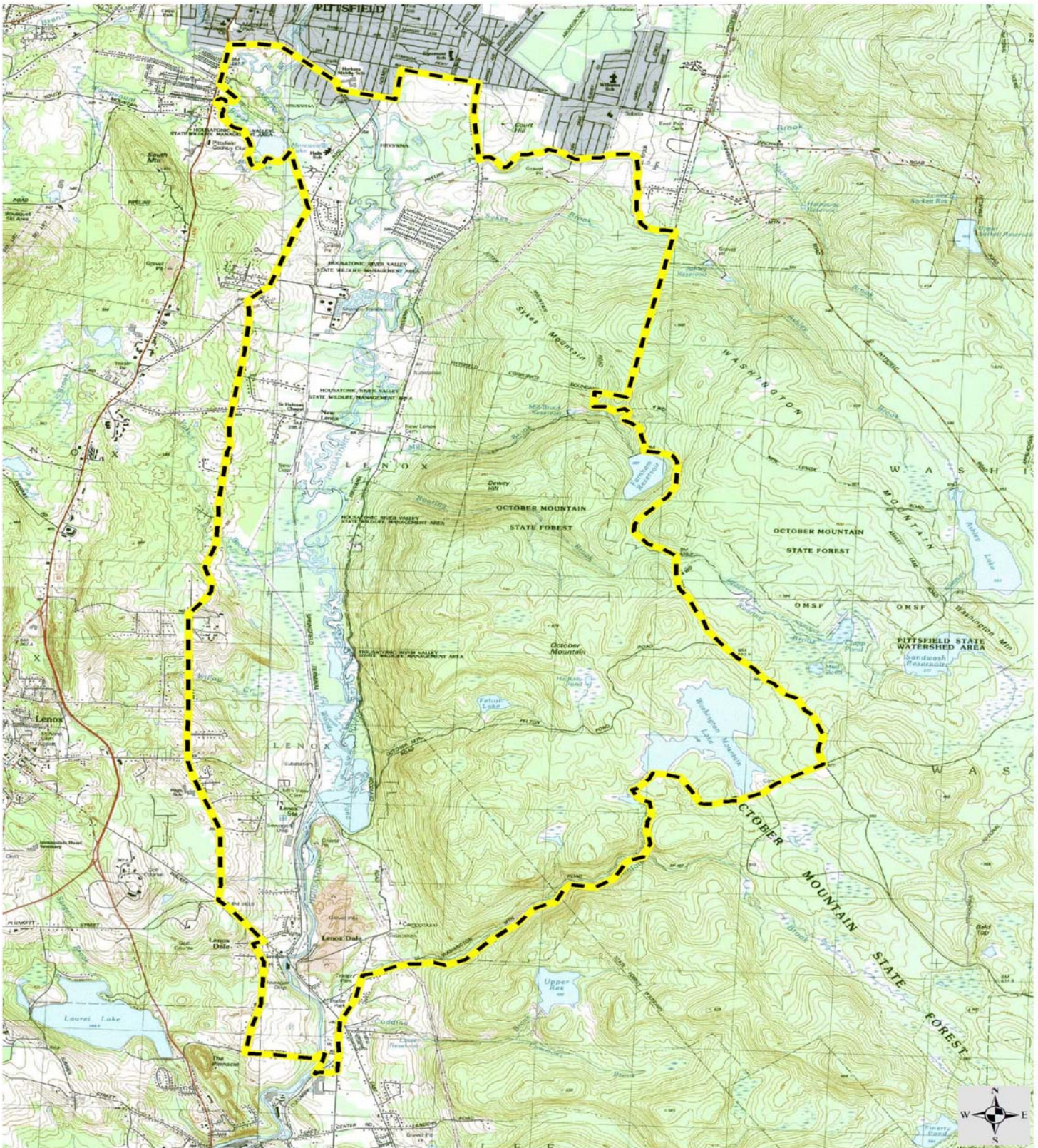
Proactive stewardship and collaboration is essential to achieve the purpose and goals of ACEC designation. State agency programs and actions alone cannot successfully preserve and manage these resources and ecosystems. ACEC communities, local citizens, agencies, and organizations can work together to identify problems, develop stewardship goals, collect information about natural resources, design management approaches, monitor resource quality, and conduct public outreach to protect, restore, and enhance the ACEC resources. For stewardship to be effective, a variety of strategies must be considered. These approaches range from education and advocacy to land protection, research, and formal management planning. The variety of available stewardship techniques is often as diverse as the ACECs themselves. Further suggestions are described in the ACEC Stewardship fact sheet.

## **Where can you get more information?**

ACEC Program staff provide information and technical assistance to citizens, communities, and other agencies and organizations; promote and support stewardship activities at the local and regional levels; participate in state regulatory reviews; and review ACEC nominations, amendment proposals, and resource management plans on behalf of the Secretary of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Other state agencies and nonprofit organizations recognize the special value of ACECs and often collaborate through informal networking as well as through planning committees, natural resource mapping and research, grant programs, land protection projects, and other technical assistance.

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### Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination Proposed ACEC Boundary

 Proposed ACEC Boundary

USGS 1:25000 Quadrangle Maps for this area  
last revised, 1987 and 1988

1 0.5 0 1 Miles





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## Save the Housatonic!

The proposed plan for PCB cleanup will end the Housatonic River's life as a natural ecosystem while disrupting neighborhoods for years to come.

*We must do better.*

Learn how an ACEC could help create a healthier, more natural future for the Housatonic River.

**Thursday, August 7th, 7:00 p.m., Lenox Town Hall**

*Your voice matters — let it be heard!*

Berkshire County League of Sportsmen  
Berkshire Natural Resources Council  
Green Berkshires  
Massachusetts Audubon Society

**[www.SaveTheHousatonic.org](http://www.SaveTheHousatonic.org)**

## **Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination**

Public Meeting, Lenox Town Hall, August 7, 2008

### **Meeting Agenda**

1. Welcome and Overview of Meeting  
George Wislocki, Green Berkshires
2. General Purpose of the Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination  
Narain Schreoder, Berkshire Natural Resources Council
3. The Upper Housatonic River ACEC: Significance and Threats  
Kathy Sferra, Director of Stewardship, Mass Audubon
4. Why ACEC Designation?  
Eleanor Tillinghast, Green Berkshires
5. The Value of Preserving the Upper Housatonic River  
George Darey, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife
6. Questions and Answers  
An opportunity to ask questions and learn more about the Upper Housatonic River ACEC nomination, the ACEC nomination process, and the effects of ACEC designation

### **Meeting Handouts**

- ✓ 11x17 map of proposed ACEC nomination
- ✓ Summary of Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination
- ✓ ACEC Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **For Further Information**

About the Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination and the proposed General Electric clean-up of the Housatonic River:  
[www.savethehousatonic.org](http://www.savethehousatonic.org)

About the Massachusetts ACEC Program:  
[www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acec/acecProgram](http://www.mass.gov/dcr/stewardship/acec/acecProgram)  
Liz Sorenson, ACEC Program Director  
617-626-1394 or [Elizabeth.Sorenson@state.ma.us](mailto:Elizabeth.Sorenson@state.ma.us)

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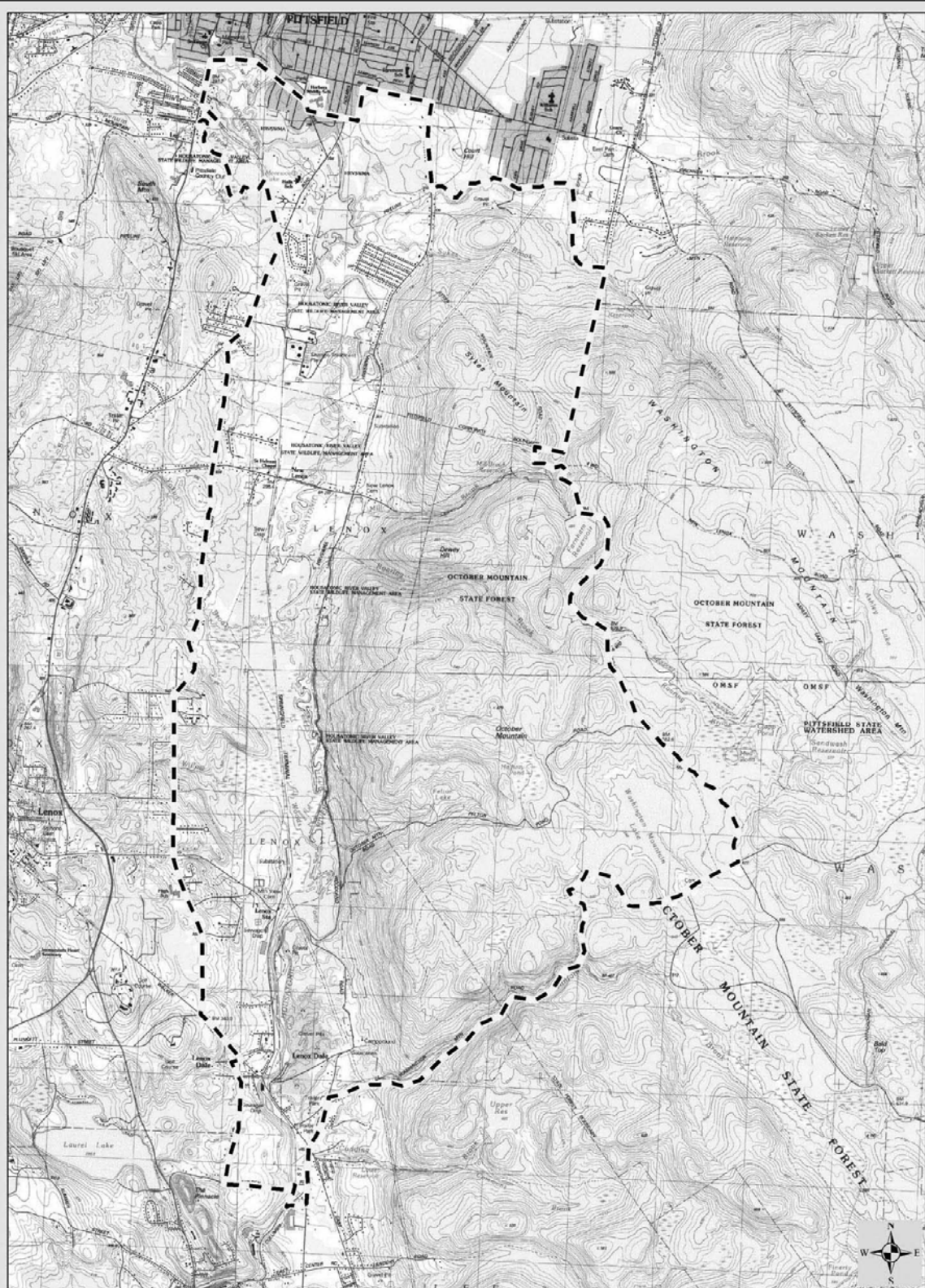
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
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Upper Housatonic River ACEC Nomination  
Proposed ACEC Boundary

 Proposed ACEC Boundary

USGS 1:25000 Quadrangle Maps for this area  
last revised, 1987 and 1988

1 0.5 0 1 Miles



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