

**Greenwords:  
Trails for all**

In this election year with budgets tighter than ever, we need to stay focused on doing things that are meaningful for our families, ourselves, and those around us, both near and far. Recent studies show that obesity-related health impacts are the second most costly expense on our health care system. Indications are that these costs will only escalate. It is more important than ever that we begin to reverse this trend by engaging in regular physical activity and enjoy the benefits, both physical and emotional, that such activity can bring.

This is especially important when it comes to children. The current epidemic of obesity is a direct result of poor dietary and lifestyle habits. Encouraging them to build physical activity into their daily routines is important, and great way to do this is to lead and accompany them on walks and bike rides. By introducing children to these activities early in their lives, they will be far more likely to continue them into adulthood, and reap the many benefits along the way.

Another very important thing we can do is to make our voices heard to our many elected representatives. We need to tell them to continue to support the projects and programs that bring the walking and biking paths that we all enjoy so much. In survey after survey, public support for these recreational facilities has been extraordinarily high.

People feel that tax money is *continued on page 2*

**Greenway Challenge returns to the Blackstone Valley in September**

A unique team triathlon returns to the area early this fall as The Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge will have some 500 participants navigating their way along the Blackstone River in two states on bike, on foot and by paddle.

This year marks the fourth running of the Challenge, slated to kick off on Sept. 25. Teams of all sizes will work their way through the course in seven segments or "legs." These include three paddling legs, two cycling legs and two running legs.

For the first time in its inception, the course has been altered significantly. The event will start and end at River Bend Farm in Uxbridge, Mass. (A Worcester-to-Pawtucket routing was standard.)

Each year the course has been changed to take cyclists over new roads, paddlers down new portions of the Blackstone River and runners along newly-completed sections of the Blackstone Bikeway. As always, the Greenway Challenge includes a wonderful finish line picnic with food, music, and prizes.

While the Greenway Challenge is recognized as a fun relay for teams, it has become much more than a sporting event. The intent of the

Greenway Challenge is to introduce participants to the recreational opportunities in the Blackstone River Valley watershed. The event celebrates and honors the hard work of thousands of people that have

brought the Blackstone River back from the abused condition it was in 30 years ago to the condition it is in today. It's also an opportunity to encourage people to get active in the continuing effort to restore the watershed.

The Greenway Challenge is a project of the Corridor Coalition whose mission is to advocate for the continued preservation of the Blackstone Valley's significance as the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The

*continued on page 6*



**In this Issue:**

- TAC awards grant for X-C groomer .....2
- Dear Dr. Sprocket .....3
- Profile: A Fellowship of Equestrians .....4
- Summer on the Greenway: Calendar of Events ...5
- Webmaster's Corner ...7

# Greenwords

continued from page 1

well spent when it is used to build and maintain bike/walking paths and greenways in our state. An extra benefit is that we will be reducing our need for imported petroleum.

If you don't know how to contact your officials, just visit the advocacy section of our web site ([www.rigreenways.org/news/advcy.htm](http://www.rigreenways.org/news/advcy.htm)). There you will find links to sites that provide contact information as well as biographies of your legislators. By calling and/or writing, you will ensure that your tax dollars will be applied to those projects that are important and useful to everyone.

**Richard F. Santopietro**

**GARI Chair**

Trail Mix is the quarterly newsletter of the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island (GARI).

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# TAC awards grant for X-C groomer

As a sign that bike paths are being used in all manner of ways, the Rhode Island Trails Advisory Committee recently approved a grant that will be used to buy a grooming machine to allow cross-country skiers to use the South County Bike Path.

The TAC received the request at its February meeting and voted the following month to grant \$1,505 to the town of South Kingstown to buy the groomer. The machine will make the South County Bike Path the second place in Rhode Island to offer groomed surfaces for cross country skiers. The only other is at Pulaski Park in Burrillville.

Rex Eberly, South Kingstown park superintendent, explained that the machine will be towed behind a four-wheel ATV and will pack the snow and set tracks for skiers. The machine has numerous adjustments and can be set to avoid contact with the paved bike path surface.

In other business at the TAC's meetings in February, March and April:

> Approved a \$1,000 grant to Friends of Blackstone Park to help rehabilitate some trails in the 45-acre park. The money will go toward the purchase of wood chips, a wheel barrow and tools. The grant comes with the stipulation that if the Friends group dissolves, the

tools would be turned over to the Appalachian Mountain Club.

> Approved a \$1,200 grant to the Pawtuxet River Watershed Council to repair a 12-year-old boardwalk close to the northern trail head of its Arkwright Riverwalk in Coventry. The money also will pay for the installation of some signage. At a later meeting, the TAC granted the council \$1,200 to make improvements for a building used to store boats and tools.

> Approved a grant for \$2,400 to Tiverton to repair a trailhead observation tower at Fort Barton, which offers a view of the Sakonnet River.

> Approved a grant of \$1,200 to Johnston to be used for correcting soil erosion problems on trails at the Johnston War

Memorial Park.

> Approved an \$800 grant to a Boy Scout to be used to rebuild a footbridge along Tippecanett Trail in Hopkinton.

> Approved a \$550 grant and the usage of \$350 in unspent money from a 2001 grant award to the Rhode Island chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association. The money will be used to replace a 70-foot-long bridge/boardwalk on Sand Hill Trail in the Arcadia Management Area.



The grooming machine will make tracks for cross country skiers in South County next winter.



Help Make Greenways in Rhode Island Happen:

# Dear Dr. Sprocket,

*Dr. Sprocket will answer questions in each issue of Trail Mix.*

Dear Dr. Sprocket,

I've been wanting to take up biking again, but I don't know how to go about buying a new bike. I see ads for bikes in the newspaper from mass merchants that show bikes costing less than \$100. Will one of those bikes be good enough for me to begin?

Aspiring in Ashaway

Dear Aspiring:

If you haven't been riding for years, you're in for a pleasant surprise. Bikes have evolved a lot in the past 20 years. The new technology and materials have made bikes lighter and more versatile than ever. While I can't go into much detail in advising you on finding the best bike for you, I can suggest some basic guidelines.

No bike will help you to get physical activity and pleasure if it isn't ridden. Any bike that doesn't fit your body, is awkward to use, or just doesn't feel right will likely spend its days parked in your garage or basement. A bike that is fun to ride will send a welcome call to you every time you see or think about it.

It's a good idea to think about the kind of riding you will do. Off-road riding requires a very different bike than riding on a local bike path or on smooth roads. Your physical condition and past biking experience should be considered, along with the facilities and roads that are available in your neighborhood. It's much easier to just go out your door, jump on your bike and ride, rather than load the bike onto your car and drive to a distant spot. You'll be more likely to ride regularly if it's easy and convenient.



Bike design hinges on two basic factors. These include the position your upper body takes while riding (upright vs. horizontal), and tire characteristics (fat vs. skinny and knobby vs. smooth). These two items make the biggest difference in a bike's character, and it's important to know how to choose which type of bike is best for you.

The inexpensive bikes (\$80-\$150) that are advertised are generally lower quality, heavy, and intended for kids who will outgrow them quickly. They are usually not fun to ride because of the way the components operate, nor are they likely to last more than a few years without requiring lots of maintenance. Also, it is unlikely that you will be able to test ride any of the cheap models or change any of the components that come as standard equipment on the commodity bikes.

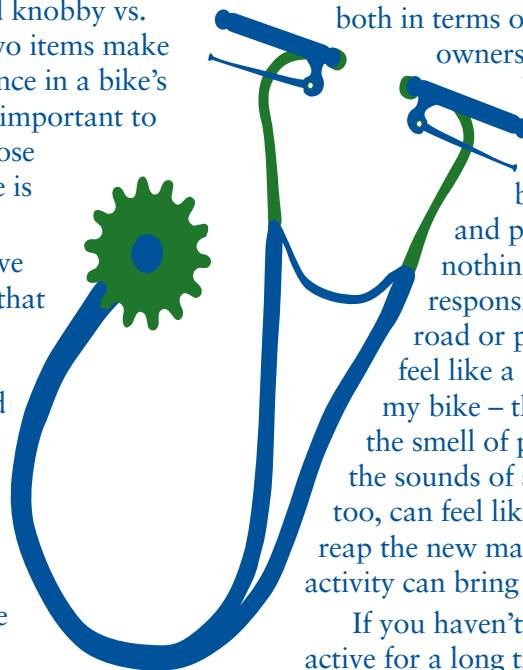
Local bike dealers carry a broad range of types and models, have a stake in keeping customers happy, and are usually willing to modify a new bike to fit and satisfy any reasonable request. The bikes that they sell generally will be better designed and assembled and have higher quality components than those sold in mass markets. In addition, a dealer will be able to guide you in selecting the right type of bike and helmet to fit your body size and the kind of riding you will be doing. Quality accessories usually can be purchased at a discount when you buy a bike from a dealer, and the dealer will usually install them

for free when you buy the bike.

The price difference between a cheap commodity bike and a good quality bike is tiny over the long-term, both in terms of maintenance and ownership satisfaction. A bike that beckons you to ride and enjoy yourself will bring lasting benefits and pleasure. There's nothing like the feel of a responsive bike on a smooth road or path on a nice day. I feel like a kid while I'm riding my bike – the wind on my body, the smell of plants and flowers, the sounds of singing birds. You, too, can feel like a kid again, and reap the new magic that physical activity can bring into your life.

If you haven't been physically active for a long time, it's important to get an OK from your primary care physician beforehand. Biking is a great way to get some of the much-needed physical activity that has all but vanished from our lives.

*Send your Dr. Sprocket questions to [rigreenways@rigreenways.org](mailto:rigreenways@rigreenways.org)*



**Look for our new feature in the fall issue of Trail Mix!**

Join the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Today!

# A Fellowship of Equestrians



One of the lesser-known outdoor groups in Rhode Island is actually one of the largest since it represents some 1,000 members - actually twice that many if you count their method of transportation.

The R.I. Federation of Riding Clubs is an umbrella organization representing the interests of equestrians. It operates with seven major sub-groups and is involved in many areas of the sport, including trails access, maintenance and legislative issues affecting those who board and ride horses. If there is a trail network near you that has bridle trails, chances are the Federation or one of its sub-groups is involved. Among them are the West Greenwich Horsemen's Association, South County Bridle Lanes and the Rhody Riders 4H Club.

"One of the main purposes of the Federation is to provide the network that is necessary," President Beth Stone said.

The group's membership brochure states that the organization "shall unite all the organized horse clubs and individual horse people of Rhode Island and bordering states into a single body." It also states that that such an organization creates "co-operative thought and action towards establishing and maintaining suitable control of bridle trails, horse, and equine activities, etc."

The Federation has some significant roots in Rhode Island, dating back to 1965.

Then equestrians were seeking to establish better facilities in the Arcadia Management Area in Exeter and West Greenwich for horse riders. Their early efforts lead the establishment of a facility in the Escoheag area of Exeter that is unique in the state. It's called the LeGrande Reynolds Horseman's Area, named after a long-time member who lived nearby.

The area contains a dedicated camping facility open only to those riding horses. Stone noted that people come from all over New England to ride the extensive trail network in Arcadia and stay at the campground. The facility is primitive in nature and price (\$3 per night, and non-potable water and composting toilets only). Each site has a hitching post.

The area also features an Olympic size riding ring and accompanying benches, all of which was paid for and built by volunteers. There also is a handicapped mounting block, and a new pavilion is being built there.

"The Federation is a working club that produces great results," member Linda Krul said.

Like many outdoor groups, the majority of its events take place in the spring and fall. The biggest has to be the annual Blessing of the Horses

event at the LeGrande area, Stone said. The event draws numerous people and the participants (including the horses) even dress in costume.

At regular meetings, the group addresses a number of issues and plans work parties to help maintain trails and the horsemen areas. It even has a disaster preparedness plan in conjunction with the state.

Accessibility to trails is a major concern to Federation members, Stone said. The group tracks any legislation that may affect this access, and looks at areas where horses may be shut out - even temporarily - from where they have been allowed in the past.

The group is active with the R.I. Trails Advisory Council, and Stone says that she sees all users of outdoor spaces making the effort to get along and work together toward keeping things open.

"We really want to work cooperatively for the common goal of maintaining trails availability,"

Stone said.



*Those interested in learning more about the Federation can attend monthly meetings, which take place on the second Tuesday of the month at 7:30 p.m. (no meeting in July and August) at the West Greenwich Town Hall on Route 102..*

*Linda Krul, a member of the Federation, contributed to this article. For more information about the group, contact Stone at 397-9242 or Krul at 397-5768*



Help Make Greenways in Rhode Island Happen: Join the Gre

# What's Happening on Our Trails:

## Rhode Island Greenways and Blueways

### Summer Calendar of Events

In the summertime there are numerous events taking place throughout Rhode Island, and the promise of good weather means many chances to spend time in the great outdoors. Below is just a sampling of what's happening. Visit GARI's web page at [www.rigreenways.org](http://www.rigreenways.org) for more information as it becomes available.

#### > Nature Conservancy nature walks:

A summer-long series of walks is taking place every Wednesday from June 16 through Aug. 18 (excepting June 30) at the Carter Preserve on Route 112 in Charlestown. They typically last an hour and a half and begin at 9 a.m. The walks are free, but registration is requested. Call 331-7110 or send e-mail to [ri@tnc.org](mailto:ri@tnc.org).

#### > Summer Splendor on the Wood

**River:** Set for Aug. 2 from 5-8 p.m., the event will provide information on the natural history of the upper Wood River during a relaxed evening paddle. A limited number of boats are available for rent. Pre-registration is required and there is a \$5 fee. Call 539-9017 or send e-mail to [info@wpwa.org](mailto:info@wpwa.org).

#### > The Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge:

This event returns on September 25 with a new format. See related

story on page 1. Visit [www.greenwaychallenge.org](http://www.greenwaychallenge.org) to learn more.

#### Ongoing events:

##### > Ocean State Bike Path Association:

Casual bike rides on tap each Wednesday night of approximately 15 to 20 miles in length and lasting about two hours. All ages and riding abilities are included and all participants are invited to join the group for dinner and camaraderie afterward. Meet at Your Bike Shop, 51 Cole Street, Warren at 6:15 pm. Ride begins promptly at 6:30 p.m. Visit <http://members.cox.net/osbpa> to learn more and see pictures of past rides.

> **Summerwalks Providence:** These series of 90-minute interpretive walks are hosted by the R.I. Historical Society and run several times a week from June 15 through Oct. 15. Detailed information and a schedule are posted on-line at [www.rihs.org](http://www.rihs.org). These fee-based tours generally leave from the John Brown House on Power Street on the east side of Providence. The walks this year include: "Benefit Street: A Mile of History," "Enterprising Women: A Women's History Walk," "Providence Artwalk," and a tour of the Providence Riverwalk, which begins at the R.I. Convention Center on Sabin Street. Call 438-0463 for more information.

> **Newport Historical Society:** This organization provides guided tours



Enthusiastic participants in The Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge in 2003.

and has information on self-guided tours to many historical neighborhoods of Newport. Like the tours in Providence, detailed information about these tours can be found on the Internet at <http://newporthistorical.org>. These fee-based tours include such areas as the Historical Hill, the Point and Cliff Walk. Special walks focus on the city's African-American and religious heritage. Call 846-0813 for more information.

> **Blackstone Paddlers:** The Blackstone Valley Paddle Club meets on Tuesday and Wednesday evenings from May through August to explore different waterways in the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. National Park Service Rangers and volunteers lead the tours. A limited number of free boats are available on Tuesdays only, and must be reserved. Call 762-0440 for weekly locations. Also, click on the Flatwater tab on [www.ricka.org](http://www.ricka.org)



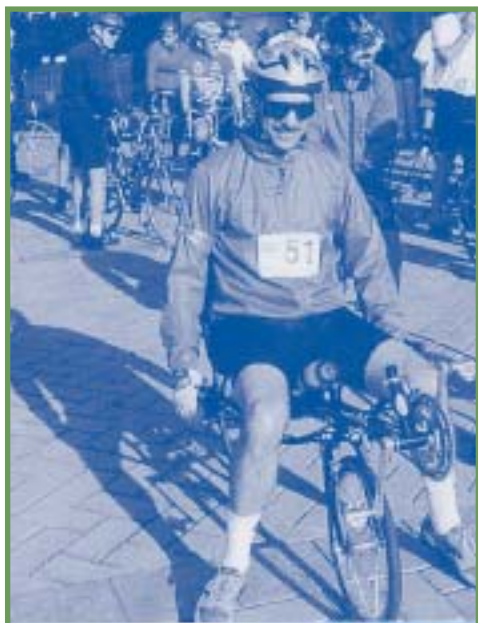
# Bike path construction update



The heart of the 2004 riding season comes with signs of progress on various bike paths, but those signs also mean some inconvenience for those who use the paths. The rewards of which will not be seen until next year and the year after, but the end result will be safer and smoother riding surfaces.

➤ **Blackstone River Bikeway:** The biggest news is a closure of a segment of this bike path where a bridge is being replaced. After a short pedal from the main parking lot off Route 123 in Lincoln, riders will find the path closed just shy of the Martin Street crossing. There is no detour in place and this means the path will be a virtual dead-end until the bridge project is done two years from now.

When the work is complete, the bike path actually will pass underneath Martin Street. Right now poor sight lines at the crossing make it a bit hazardous. R.I. Department of Transportation Bicycle Coordinator Steven Church said his department has placed a computer animation on the



A recumbent bike rider at the start of The Blackstone River Valley Greenway Challenge in 2003.

DOT's web site ([www.dot.state.ri.us](http://www.dot.state.ri.us)) that shows what the final project will look like.

For the next two years, those looking for a longer ride should make use the trailhead off Route 116 in Lincoln. The lot is smaller there, so parking might be tough. Those who aren't used to starting their ride from here should note that the path is a bit steep heading from the parking lot to the main path. Once there, one can ride south to the closure, turn back, cross the bike path bridge over the Blackstone and pedal about three miles on the other side for a decent ride.

In other areas of the proposed 18-mile path from Pawtucket to the Massachusetts line, a 1-mile section is being built alongside an upland area near the former Lonsdale drive-in. This will include a seven-span bridge on existing piers and abutments from a former railroad bridge.

➤ **Washington Secondary Bicycle Path:** Last year the DOT completed re-decking of three old railroad bridges, allowing for a connection between a 2.5-mile paved section of the Coventry Greenway and 10 miles of continuous path in extreme eastern Coventry, West Warwick, Warwick and Cranston. The dirt surface is suitable for walkers and mountain bikes, but in some places the large diameter stone used on the former rail line makes for a bone-jarring ride.

The unpaved sections were slated to be paved this year, yet sewer construction in Coventry has postponed this (in one area, the new sewer pipe actually runs down the center of the greenway). Plans are still in the design stage, and work may begin by the end of this season. Expect to see pavement in 2005.

Once paved, this will make 15-mile continuous paved path, slightly surpassing the East Bay Bike Path in length. Design work is still underway for 10 miles of path in central and western Coventry. The first five miles on the eastern end of the path will go out to bid next spring and the western portion will go out to bid in the summer of 2006.



A computer rendering of work on the Blackstone Bike Path.

➤ **South County Bike Path:** The Narragansett Town Council and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service continue to work on a land-swap deal to extend the existing 5.5-mile path into Narragansett. The path was set to be extended to a local street, but sharp opposition nearly killed the plans. Additional design work would be needed before the project could be put out to bid.

The town and DOT also are working on a bike path along the Narrow River. Another study project is looking at the possibility of building a spur from the South County Bike Path to the University of Rhode Island.

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## Greenway Challenge

*continued from page 1*

Coalition brings organizations together that share similar goals for the Blackstone Valley and helps them pool valuable resources for the benefit of the entire watershed.

Supporters of the Greenway Challenge include the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, UniBank for Savings, Providence & Worcester Railroad and many other companies and individuals who support the restoration of the Blackstone River Valley Watershed.

More information about the Greenway Challenge can be found online at [www.greenwaychallenge.org](http://www.greenwaychallenge.org) or by sending e-mail to [greenwaychallenge@cox.net](mailto:greenwaychallenge@cox.net).

# Bike survey identifies support and needs in bicycling resources

The Advocacy Committee of the Narragansett Bay Wheelmen this past spring completed a survey of its members and other riders – representing all levels of cycling experience – regarding how they viewed cycling resources and what improvements are needed.

The full results of the survey taken in April can be found on-line at NBW's web page at [http://nbwclub.org/survey/results\\_04apr\\_survey.html](http://nbwclub.org/survey/results_04apr_survey.html). The 215 respondents from Rhode Island, Massachusetts and Connecticut combined log about a half a million miles each year.

The survey found more than half choose routes to avoid busy or hilly streets, preferred riding on state or town roads, and preferred bike lane striping, especially when designed to avoid dismounting. About 55 percent were inconvenienced by lack of bridge access. The committee supports access to all bridges save the Pell Bridge in Newport, where "Rack N' Ride" bus and ferry service, especially on weekends, could be scheduled.

More than 70 percent of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that bike paths "spell tourism

dollars," but are justified by health concerns and as a means of access to allow people to enjoy wildlife areas. They disagreed that bike paths are a "waste of money," even if they might not use paths themselves, and suggested that more money should be spent both on bike paths and road repair and upkeep. The overwhelming majority however (more than 90 percent) said they strongly opposed being restricted to bike paths.

"We strongly recommend actual roads be part of any bikeway plans," the report said. "State and towns should adapt quiet side roads for bicycles but divert motor vehicles onto main roads."

Maintenance was a big issue among respondents, and more than 85 percent asked that storm grates be fixed, potholes be filled, and sweeping be done more frequently. They also said they would commute by bicycle more often if there were bike-friendly traffic controls. The committee said the addition of chest-high, on-demand pushbuttons at crossings and intersections would be a good step to take.



## Webmaster's Corner

Put your trust in these folks

OK, you've hiked in all the state management areas in Rhode Island and maybe a wildlife refuge or two. What's left you may ask? Plenty, and by learning of the work of the many land trusts that operate in Rhode Island, you may find a new favorite spot for a stroll.

Land trusts generally work as a body to which someone can donate land or as a means to obtain grant funding to buy land. In some cases, they work with the state, a city or town or another non-profit group to pool money to buy larger tracts of land.

To get a feeling for what these organizations are doing, check out the web page of the Land Trust Alliance at [www.lta.org](http://www.lta.org).

Once you've got your fill on what land trusts are all about, head for the page with Rhode Island information ([www.lta.org/findlandtrust/RI.htm](http://www.lta.org/findlandtrust/RI.htm)). There you'll find links to land trusts, conservancies and other organizations that seek to preserve land as open space. There's basic contact information for those groups who don't have web sites.

Some have trails open to the public. These little undiscovered nuggets include the Oakland Forest and Meadow Trail in Portsmouth. Owned by the Aquidneck Island Land Trust ([www.ailt.org](http://www.ailt.org)), the half-mile loop trail offers an up-close look at an old-growth American beech forest. The trails were dedicated in 2001, marking the end of a plan to clear the property and build 38 condominium units.

Across the bay in East Greenwich, is the East Greenwich Land Trust ([www.eastgreenwichri.com/land\\_trust.htm](http://www.eastgreenwichri.com/land_trust.htm)). In the last 17 years this group has worked to help preserve more than 300 acres of land. A great place to check out is Boesch Farm. This 90-acre parcel just last year was added to the National Register of Historic Places.



Vandals have been busy on the Cranston Bike Path.

## Get on the trail!

### Our recent accomplishments:

- Organized a grassroots effort to support the extension of the South County Bike Path in the face of NIMBY opposition.
- Organized walking and cycling events with organizations including the AARP and the International Rails-to-Trails Conference.
- Developed a cycling map of the Blackstone Valley area in conjunction with the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council.
- Continued to serve as the state representative of the East Coast Greenway Alliance.

Join the only organization dedicated to statewide advocacy of bike path and greenway development in Rhode Island. Your membership dues help make publication of this newsletter possible and will enable us to continue our mission of working with state and local leaders to ensure Rhode Island has an integrated, well-maintained network of alternative transportation and recreation corridors.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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[www.rigreenways.org](http://www.rigreenways.org)

### Annual Membership enclosed

- Individual \$15
- Family \$25
- National\* \$50
- Supporting Organization: \$100
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

\* Dual membership in the East Coast Greenway Alliance and GARI.

Please return membership form with check payable to the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island to GARI, 31 Stanchion Street, Jamestown, RI 02835

All GARI memberships expire on Dec. 31 each year.

Summer 2004



Join the Greenways Alliance of Rhode Island Today!