



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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MERRIMACK RIVER TRAIL PLANNING REPORT RELEASED

Regional Recreational Resource Envisioned

January 4, 2012 - (Haverhill and Salem, MA) -- The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission (MVPC) and the Essex National Heritage Commission (Essex Heritage) jointly announce the release of the Merrimack River Trail Reconnaissance Planning Report. The reconnaissance level planning report focuses on *re-imagining* the existing Merrimack River Trail as one of the region's outstanding recreational assets: a 50-mile long bicycle and pedestrian trail connecting 17 communities along the Merrimack River in Massachusetts. The report was funded by a Recreational Trails Grant from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation.

Developed with input from local trail advocates and planners, the report's findings and recommendations support the overarching goal of re-establishing the 20 year-old Merrimack River Trail in the public's consciousness. Tracing the river's route, the trail will ultimately connect six cities and eleven towns from Tyngsborough to Newbury, effectively creating the backbone of a continuous, non-motorized, on- and off-road trail system. Merrimack River Trail communities include Tyngsborough, Dracut, Chelmsford, Lowell, Tewksbury, Andover, Methuen, Lawrence, North Andover, Haverhill, Groveland, Merrimac, West Newbury, Amesbury, Newburyport, Salisbury, and Newbury.



In recommending a trail alignment through all interested communities the report seeks to broaden the concept of the current trail to include both off-road routes and on-road segments that together will provide the linkages necessary to establish a truly regional trail system. In doing so, regional and community planners believe that the trail will not only improve bicycle and pedestrian access throughout the region, but will serve to increase awareness of the Merrimack River, and better connect the people of the Merrimack Valley.

“Ultimately, the Merrimack River Trail serves both local and regional goals to celebrate the river and support recreation, livability, economic development and non-motorized transportation,” said MVPC Executive Director Dennis DiZoglio.

“This collaboration between the Merrimack River communities, the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission, and Essex Heritage is a critical step towards creating a regional partnership to support the long-term development of the Merrimack River Trail” said Annie C. Harris, Executive Director of Essex National Heritage Commission.

To view and download the Merrimack River Trail Reconnaissance Planning Report, go to mvpc.org/wp-content/uploads/MRT-final-report-and-maps-Dec-2011.pdf or www.essexheritage.org/merrimackrivertrail

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 <p>Merrimack Valley Planning Commission <i>plan • develop • promote</i></p>	<p>About the Merrimack Valley Planning Commission</p> <p>The Merrimack Valley Planning Commission is a public, nonprofit organization whose mission is to foster a cooperative effort among its communities in resolving common, regional problems, to allow its communities to plan jointly, and to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated and orderly development of the region and the general welfare of its residents. For more information, visit the website at www.mvpc.org or call (978) 374-0519.</p>
 <p>ESSEX NATIONAL HERITAGE AREA</p>	<p>About Essex Heritage (Essex National Heritage Commission)</p> <p>The Essex National Heritage Commission (Essex Heritage) is the non-profit management entity for Essex National Heritage Area, one of forty-nine heritage partnership parks of the National Park Service. Working in collaboration with the National Park Service and other partners, the Essex Heritage promotes public/private partnerships and develops and implements programs that enhance, preserve and encourage regional awareness of the unique historic, cultural and natural resources found within the Area. For more information, visit the website at www.essexheritage.org or call (978) 740-0444.</p>