

2021 CT Greenways Council Awards
Accepted by CCG on April 13 and awarded on June 4

John Hankins
Nominated by Bill O'Neill

For decades, John Hankins has supported, and continues to support, greenways in many ways.

As a professional environmental scientist he has provided pro bono services for Phase I studies and beyond for various trails including the Cheney Rail Trail.

He is a major contributor to the activities of Bike Walk Bolton. He participated in all of BWB's CT Forest & Park Assoc Trails Day Events, describing the geology of Bolton Notch. He participated in ditch-cleaning efforts along the Hop River Trail and is helping organize BWB's attempt to form an alliance with all the towns along the Hop River Trail. John completed a photographic documentation of the Hop River Trail conditions from Vernon to Willimantic. These photos (more than 100) are labeled with associated maps and became the basis for the before/after photo comparison that has been part of the CT Trails Day event that BWB organizes and which documents the horrible condition the rail bed was in before it was turned into the resource it is today.

John coordinated a trail counter validation effort during the spring of 2020 to estimate the number of trail users at Bolton Notch and he helped advocate for the construction of a new section of the East Coast Greenway in Bolton by coordinating participation from Thread City Riders.

He is a Nipmuck Trail Steward and manages/maintains a major section of this trail which involves making and maintaining foot bridges and trail clearing from downed trees. He was a Volunteer Ride Leader on the Manchester Rotary in Motion ride on the Charter Oak and Hop River sections of the East Coast Greenway in 2020 and is a volunteer trail steward of the ECG in the Willimantic area and on the Airline Trail North and South.

Neva Taylor
Nominated by Stacey Stearns

In May of 2020, Neva was hired as an undergraduate student summer intern by the Connecticut Trail Census, a non-profit working with volunteers to collect statewide trail data, to create a podcast about nature trails and trail related information. The Connecticut Trail Census is facilitated by the University of Connecticut (UConn) Extension. Neva created a podcast called "On the Trail," where she interviews people about conversation, land trusts, and other nature topics.

On May 25, 2020 George Floyd was killed by police in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This murder was filmed on a phone and shown nationwide, inciting protests, vigils, and marches. A social justice movement to combat systemic racism was reinvigorated as people chanted “enough is enough.” Floyd’s death was a catalyst that hopefully will inspire cultural and systemic change within our society forever.

Through her work with the Connecticut Trail Census, and her ability to connect and engage with the community through my podcast, Neva wanted to start a new series focused on elevating people of color’s voices. She wanted to give them the platform to talk about their issues, wants, and needs. The “Walk With Me” series was created in order to symbolize an informal chat you would have if you went for a walk with someone. It is about learning, representation, and gaining a new understanding about other people’s experiences. Neva wanted to reach out to people from different jobs and backgrounds in order to get a wide variety of perspectives. She has interviewed people who work with youth engagement, sustainability, recreation, trail maintenance, and mental health. All have provided different insights from their varied backgrounds, history, and exposure. The outdoors is a place that we take for granted, a place we may feel is equal to all, but it is not.

Creating a more equitable outdoors community, can start by having these informal conversations and learning more about what we can do to make our communities a better place. Neva’s ultimate goal for the podcast was to act as a megaphone for BIPOC’s voices. She wants underrepresented voices to be heard in the greater outdoors community. By broadcasting their voices she hoped that she could bolster conversation, understanding, and acceptance.

Listen to “Walk with Me” - As of the writing of this submission the podcast has been listened to 680 times since June of 2020 when the first episode was posted.

Podcast Reception:

“Walk with Me” was featured in a UConn Today article in October of 2020 where Elaina Hancock wrote about Neva’s series exploring the experiences of people of color with nature and outdoor spaces. The article, “Walk with Me – A Podcast Series to Elevate BIPOC Voices in the Outdoors,” highlighted the importance of education in order to bring understanding. Hancock writes about how uneducated people can be about the inequities BIPOC people face in outdoor spaces. By gaining a new level of understanding through listening to the podcast, maybe people will be more aware and make more of an effort to create accepting spaces.

“Since the ‘Walk With Me’ miniseries started, Taylor has connected with and interviewed people of color engaged with and working in communities through means ranging from increasing inclusivity in the bicycling world, organizing to revive green spaces, to connecting with nature through art. Each episode is filled with information about organizations and projects from across Connecticut and the positive work they do,” Hancock writes.

“Through describing their organizations and missions, Taylor’s guests have confronted issues like racism in the workplace, how lack of public transportation to green spaces means unequal access to those spaces, unequal access to freshly grown food, and how, in order to effectively engage a community, it is vital to look for representation from within that community.”

Tom Nosal
Nominated by Laurie Giannotti

Tom has collected GPS data for every trail that appears on CT State Park & Forest Maps! He is also the author and maintainer of all of those maps. Having all of this digital trail location and attribute information has put CT in an ideal position to quickly achieve our goals to launch The CT Trail Finder. Tom has also facilitated State Parks utilization of the Avenza mapping app providing national availability of our maps. He is also a trail advocate in that he communicates conditions he finds along the trails to DEEP managers.

Vevette Greenberg
Nominated by Stacey Stearns

Vevette is an active member of the Connecticut Horse Council (CHC) Volunteer Horse Patrol, Middlebury Bridle Lands Association, Cross State Trail Ride Inc., and the Connecticut Trail Riders Association (CTRA). Vevette rides throughout the state, in state and local forests, parks, foundation lands, as well as on private lands.

Vevette’s contributions and volunteer time are a valuable asset to the trails work statewide and she helps us collaborate with DEEP to maintain and improve our equine and other trail systems.

Vevette has been employed by The Connecticut Hospice as a nurse since 2003. She is a resident of Oxford and owns 4 horses that she keeps and cares for on her farm in Oxford. She enjoys riding all the trails that the State of Connecticut has to offer, along with the local parks and forest. She has been a member of the CT Horse Council Volunteer Horse Patrol for over 12 years and helps monitor and maintain the trails in her town and surrounding towns.

She serves as an Area Vice President for the CTRA which involves scheduling approximately ten rides annually throughout the state, in state parks and local forests, parks, foundation lands, as well as on private lands with permission.

Vevette grew up being involved in the various aspects of horses, including cleaning, training, teaching and barn management. She understands the importance of volunteering and is very involved in the numerous groups she belongs to.

In her various activities, she has realized the importance of educating the public to equines. This education includes protecting, preserving and maintaining trails and open spaces while promoting equestrian use on our Connecticut trail systems.

As an avid trail rider, she greatly appreciates the land that is available for outdoor recreation in Connecticut. Vevette feels that her contributions as a volunteer help promote state-owned lands and local open spaces. She continues educating the public on the importance of promoting and protecting our open spaces and trails within Connecticut. Her goal is that our equestrian residents and our future generations will be able to enjoy the wonderful opportunities that this state has to offer.

Housatonic Valley Association Nominated by Laurie Giannotti

HVA is a tri-state nonprofit citizen's environmental group that has been protecting the natural character and environmental health of the entire Housatonic Watershed for over 40 years. They work with partners to balance important economic and environmental needs allowing for smart growth that protects water quality and encourages open space, wetland habitats, recreation areas and scenic vistas. In addition, between 2017 and 2018, the Northwest Hills Council of Governments worked with HVA to develop a Regional Trails Connectivity report and Interactive Regional Trails Map (IRTM). The IRTM project was led by HVA staff Tim Abbott, Regional Conservation and Greenprint Director, and Stacy Deming, GIS Manager. This project paved the way for our in-process CT Trail Finder.

Norbrook Brewery Nominated by Rista Malanca

Norbrook Brewery, situated on 450 acres of land in Colebrook and Norfolk CT, has built a modest sized brewery building, grow their own hops and raise farm animals. In addition, they have developed a recreational trail network on which they allow the public to visit, free of charge, for recreation purposes. You do not need to visit the brewery in order to access this trail network. They encourage walking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, mountain biking, disc golfing.

According to their website, they are currently in the "frontier stage" but have already developed a three-mile disc golf course, which is becoming well known among disk golfers. In 2021, this course was ranked the 65th best disk golf course in the world. Mountain bike trails on the property are becoming increasingly popular and were maintained throughout the winter which attracted fat tire bikes in addition to snow shoers and cross country skiers.

Not only is this multi-use property in-line with the CT Greenways mission, it is a good example of how private property can add to the State's recreational trail system, set an example for how public use of private land can be beneficial to the State's economy and foster conservation efforts.

Norbrook Farm Brewery should be recognized their hard work in developing recreational trails and for setting an example of how private property can be used for a public use in Connecticut.

Town of Manchester Nominated by Bill O'Neill

In 1971, Manchester was recognized by Time Magazine for its use of an I-384 cloverleaf for town recreation facilities which includes a multi-use trail.

In 1970, then-State Senator John Larson funded the multi-town Hockanum River Linear Park. Frank Belknap and Congressman Larson just celebrated the 50th anniversary of the linear park. Manchester volunteers remain active in the care of this facility.

In 1996, Manchester was No. 4 on the American Hiking Society's Top 10 Trail Towns list.

Around 2000, the Manchester Land Trust acquired a corridor of land and built a section of the Cheney Rail Trail aided by a grant from the CT DEEP.

Around 2015, the Town acquired the last gap in the Cheney Rail Trail and with Town forces completed construction around 2019.

Town forces constructed an extension of the Hop River Trail from Vernon south to Colonial Rd.

The Town worked with Beth Shluger, President of the Hartford Marathon Foundation, to support her 90-mile running relay, RiMaConn, which used Manchester's trail system.

The Town worked with the Rotary to support its 2019 Tri-Town Rotary In Motion 21-mile loop and leg cycling and walking event which also used Manchester's trail system.

Multi-use trails are included in Manchester's Town Planning and CRCOG's Regional Planning.

In 2000-2019, the Town worked with CT DEEP and ConnDOT to include a multi-use trail in the sanitary sewer connection to Bolton and closing the gap in the Charter Oak Greenway to Bolton Notch.

In 2021, there is a current proposal to include bike/ped accommodations in the Gardner St. road project leading to Charter Oak Greenway.

Bill O'Neill worked with the Town, East Coast Greenway, SBM Charitable Foundation to revise, print, and distribute 10,000 copies of a regional multi-use trail maps.

Sen. Steve Cassano of Manchester, Bike/Walk Bolton, CT DEEP, and ConnDOT have worked together at public hearings to extend the multi-use trail from the Bolton Notch to the Bolton Post Office.

The Town of Manchester has hired a consultant to do a town-wide study including linear parks and connectability for bike/walk trail users for park destinations, commuter lots, schools, and inter-town links.

The Town is participating with CRCOG regarding the placement of bike/share pods.
The Town placed bike/share units in Charter Oak Park.