

Blackstone Canal Preservation Study

The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, in partnership with the Worcester Historical Museum, have undertaken the Blackstone Canal Preservation Study to facilitate a better understanding of the character and condition of the extant segments of the Blackstone Canal in Massachusetts. The goals of the Study are to assess opportunities for preservation, restoration, and interpretation of the Canal and its history, and to recommend key canal segments for such action. The following five key segments of the Canal were selected for further evaluation because of their high degree of preservation, unprotected status, accessibility to the public, proximity to other protected segments of the Canal, and high interpretive value.

MILLVILLE LOCK AREA, MILLVILLE



The Millville Lock Area of the Blackstone Canal in Millville is a half-mile long segment of well-preserved, dry canal and towpath beginning at the Millville Lock in the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park and extending west to the Central Street Bridge over the Blackstone River. This structurally intact section of the Blackstone Canal presents a prime opportunity for restoration and potential re-watering. The proximity of this canal segment to the established Millville Lock interpretive site also presents a prime opportunity to expand the interpretation of the lock to include a restored canal segment.



SKULL ROCK AREA, UXBRIDGE



The Skull Rock Area of the Blackstone Canal is a half-mile long segment of watered and dry canal trench and intact towpath that bypasses a bend in the Blackstone River off Old Millville Road and extends north to Millville

Road (Route I22). The area contains remains of Skull Rock canal lock and a towpath bridge that used an innovative design to cross tow animals over the Canal without unhitching them from the boats or barges. This area will soon become accessible to the public with the completion of the Blackstone River Bikeway and presents outstanding opportunities for interpretation and/or restoration of notable canal features such as the Skull Rock lock and towpath bridge. The watered segment of the Canal cutting the river bend at Skull Rock could also be reopened to water flow for interpretive and recreational use.



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PLUMMER'S LANDING-RIVERDALE MILL AREA, NORTHBRIDGE



The Plummer's Landing-Riverdale Mill Area is a nearly one-mile long segment of well-preserved, dry canal and visible towpath beginning at Plummer's Landing in the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park

and extending north to the Riverdale Mill. The Plummer's Landing-Riverdale Mill Area presents a prime opportunity for restoration of a dry segment of the Blackstone Canal and the potential restoration and watering of the former boat basin at Plummer's Landing. Increased public access to the Plummer's Landing-Riverdale Mill Area via the Blackstone River Bikeway, the proximity of the area to the Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park, and the presence of historic industrial properties also make this area a key site for expanding interpretation of the history of the Blackstone Canal and regional industrial history.

FISHERVILLE AREA, GRAFTON



The Fisherville Area of the Blackstone Canal in Grafton consists of a one-mile long segment of watered canal and visible towpath beginning south of the Main Street (Route I22A) crossing of

the Blackstone Canal and extending under the former site of the Fisher Manufacturing Company north and west to Pleasant Street. This area will soon become more accessible to the public through local planning efforts for a multi-use trail system along the Blackstone River and Canal and the Fisherville Mill Pond, and the planned redevelopment of the Fisher Manufacturing Company site. The remarkable state of preservation of the canal trench and portions of the towpath in this area and the plans for increased public access make the Fisherville Area a priority for preservation, interpretation, and restoration. Restoration opportunities include uncovering and restoring the watered canal segment under the Fisher Manufacturing site, restoration of a partially intact canal lock believed to be on the Canal under the mill, and stabilization and repair of the extant watered canal trench and towpath within the segment.

CROSS ROAD - GRAFTON STREET AREA, MILLBURY



The Cross Road-Grafton Street Area of the Blackstone Canal is an approximately one-mile long segment of dry canal and visible towpath beginning at the Millbury-Sutton town line near Cross Road and extending north to Grafton Street. This canal segment is the only visible remains of the Blackstone Canal in Millbury. The well-preserved condition of the Canal in this area, the rarity of its survival in the town, and the public access to the segment that will be facilitated by the Blackstone River Bikeway make this area a key segment for preservation, interpretation, and restoration. Restoration opportunities include stabilization and potential re-watering of the Canal and restoration of a partially intact canal lock structure south of Grafton Street.