

Rivers of Montpelier Riverbank Status Evaluation

A Vermont Master Naturalist Project

Prepared for The Vermont River Conservancy and the Montpelier Conservation Commission

The following document contains a summary of riverbank status for three sections of river that flow through Montpelier: 1) The North Branch of the Winooski from the Wrightsville Reservoir to the confluence of the Winooski (the location of the future Confluence Park); 2) The Winooski from the Route 2 Circle to future Confluence Park; and 3) The Winooski from future Confluence Park to the confluence with the Dog River. The purpose of this evaluation was to identify existing and potential public access points along these stretches of the rivers, and to identify natural communities of interest and areas dominated by invasive species. Summaries for each section of river is provided below. Maps identifying areas of interest described in this document are provided as Figures 1 through 3, attached. Photographs are provided in Appendix 1.

Winooski River Riverbank Status: Route 2 Circle to Future Confluence Park

Assessment provided by Stephanie Hunt

General Description

The Winooski River along this section is bordered by Route 2 to the south, and Stone Cutters Way, Barre Street, and Old Country Club Road (from downstream to upstream) to the north. Photographs 1 through 12 in Appendix 1 show the state of the river in this section, and Figure 1 is the map for this section. Note that due to construction blocking Old Country Club Lane, the portion of the river from the Route 2 Circle to what was visible upstream from the Pioneer Street Bridge was not accessible. In general, this section of the Winooski River can be characterized as having a high density of development. The riverbanks have limited to no riparian vegetation, with portions of the river lined with concrete and rock banks. Japanese Knotweed was observed along the south bank near the Granite Street Bridge and Main Street Bridge; invasive Shrub Honeysuckle was observed sporadically. The forested area north of Old Country Club Lane provides a pleasant setting; no additional natural communities of interest were identified.

Public Access Points

No obvious existing public access points were observed along this stretch of the River; however anglers were observed in the water in the vicinity of Shaw's upstream of the future Confluence Park. The southern banks of this section would not be suitable for public access due to the vicinity of Route 2, lack of parking, and steep banks creating dangerous access. Despite the development along Route 2, portions of the northern banks of the Winooski may be suitable for public access points. Three potential public access points were identified during this exercise:

1. Upstream of the Pioneer Street Bridge, along Old Country Club Lane and the newly opened bike path. Photograph 2 in Appendix 1 shows this location. A shallow grade to the Winooski, access via the bike path, and the limited development and forested hillside in the direct vicinity makes this an ideal location. No parcel ID or Owner was available for this location.

2. In the vicinity of the Barr Hill Distillery on Barre Street. Photograph 4 in Appendix 1 shows the conditions in this location. This would be an ideal location for public access due to the presence of the bike lane, available parking, and the distillery provides a natural draw to this area. This parcel was identified as 004-369A00, and the Owner of this property is listed as Zorzi Angeles A Living Trust AJA Family Living Trust.
3. In the vicinity of the Hunger Mountain Co-op. Photograph 9 in Appendix 1 shows the conditions of this location. This would also be an ideal location for public access due to the vicinity of the bike lane, available parking, the vicinity to the core downtown area, and the Co-op provides a natural draw to this area. This parcel was identified as 059-007000, and the Owner of this property is listed as Hunger Mountain Cooperative Inc.

Winooski River Riverbank Status: Future Confluence Park to the confluence with the Dog River

Assessment provided by Bettie Barnes

General Description

The Winooski River along this section is bordered by Route 2 to the south from future Confluence Park to the Bailey Avenue Bridge, by developed parcels from Bailey Avenue Bridge to Dog River Road, and by Dog River Road to the confluence with the Dog River. To the North, the river is bordered by the main downtown area with generally paved lots from future Confluence Park to the Bailey Avenue Bridge, and by Route 2 from Bailey Avenue Bridge to the confluence with the Dog River. Photographs 13 and 14 in Appendix 1 show the state of the river in this section, and Figure 2 is the map for this section. In general, this section of the Winooski River has less dense development than the upstream section described above; the area uphill of the north bank in the area downstream of the Bailey Avenue Bridge is largely undeveloped besides Route 2, some residences, and the Green Mountain Cemetery. Areas of the invasive species Japanese Knotweed and the nuisance Poison Ivy were identified and are shown on the attached map, and non-native Honeysuckle was observed sporadically.

Public Access Points

Existing river access points along this stretch of the river include Gateway Park and Dog River Fields. Peace Park is also along the river, but no river access is present there. Two locations that could be suitable to future public access points are described below:

1. The Montpelier Highschool located at 5 High School Drive. This would be an ideal location for a public access point because there is already a set of steps leading down to the river from the high school property and ample parking, in addition to bike path access. The parcel is owned by the City of Montpelier (see Photo 14).
2. A series of properties along Green Mountain Drive: The Department of Labor at 5 Green Mountain Drive; a warehouse located at 13 Green Mountain Drive, and the State of Vermont Liquor Control Board at 15 Mountain Drive. These parcels are owned by the State of Vermont. This stretch of river would be an ideal location for a public access point due to existing infrastructure for parking and a shallow grade to the river.

In addition, the following actions were also identified that would improve the community space around the river:

- Purchase by the State or City of the Green Mountain Power property at 7 Green Mountain Drive to prevent future spills of hazardous materials into the River, and completion of site remediation upon purchase.
- If/when Bailey Avenue Bridge is slated to be replaced - suggest widening the bridge to allow for walkways and seating on both sides of the bridge overlooking the water
- If/when pedestrian bridge between Bailey Avenue and Taylor Street is slated to be replaced - suggest widening the bridge to allow for seating overlooking the river in addition to the pedestrian traffic.

North Branch of the Winooski Riverbank Status: Wrightsville Reservoir to Confluence Park

Assessment provided by Sandy Parr

General Description

For this stretch of the river north will refer to locations upstream on the North Branch, south will refer to locations downstream, east will refer to the side of the river farthest from Route 12/Elm Street and west will refer to the side of the river closest to Route 12/Elm Street regardless of actual compass orientation. Photographs 15 through 29 in Appendix 1 show the state of the river in this section, and Figure 3 is the map for this section. This section of river can be characterized as largely residential north of intersection of Spring Street and Route 12/Elm Street; south of this intersection is downtown Montpelier, in this section the river bank is composed largely of concrete or stone walls. The river generally runs north to south in a fairly straight line with no serious erosion problems noted. Some stands of the invasive Japanese Knotweed (see Photo 19 and 23) and Purple Loosestrife were identified and are shown on the attached map.

Public Access Points

There are no publicly accessible locations along each bank from the Confluence to Spring Street due to walled banks composed of vertical concrete or stone adjacent to private property; most of it commercial. The Elm Street Cemetery provides access to the river, but is not suggested as an official access point due to the presence of the cemetery. Farther up on Elm Street is Mill Pond Park (Photograph 18) with an access point available on the west bank of the river. North Branch Park is the next existing public access point heading north on Elm Street and has multiple river access points (photos 20 through 22). The Nature Center has the next existing public access point at the bridge that leads to North Branch Park where there is a footpath that leads down to Pebble Beach which is a popular river access point. The Nature Center features a few other river access points where trails wind close to the river (see Photo 26), and a location with a park bench (see Photo 25). Continuing north on Elm Street there is no public access to the river up through Wrightsville Dam. The following improvement to an existing public access point was identified:

1. Enhance North Branch Park at the Poolside Drive Parking Lot by adding a landing or dock on the west bank to facilitate canoe and kayak access. The water is shallow and mostly still. There is a park bench looking out over the river, a shelter, and picnic grills south of the parking lot and this is the location of the municipal pool.

Figures – Riverbank Status Evaluation Maps

Figure 1: Riverbank Status Map Winooski River from Route 2 Circle to Confluence Park



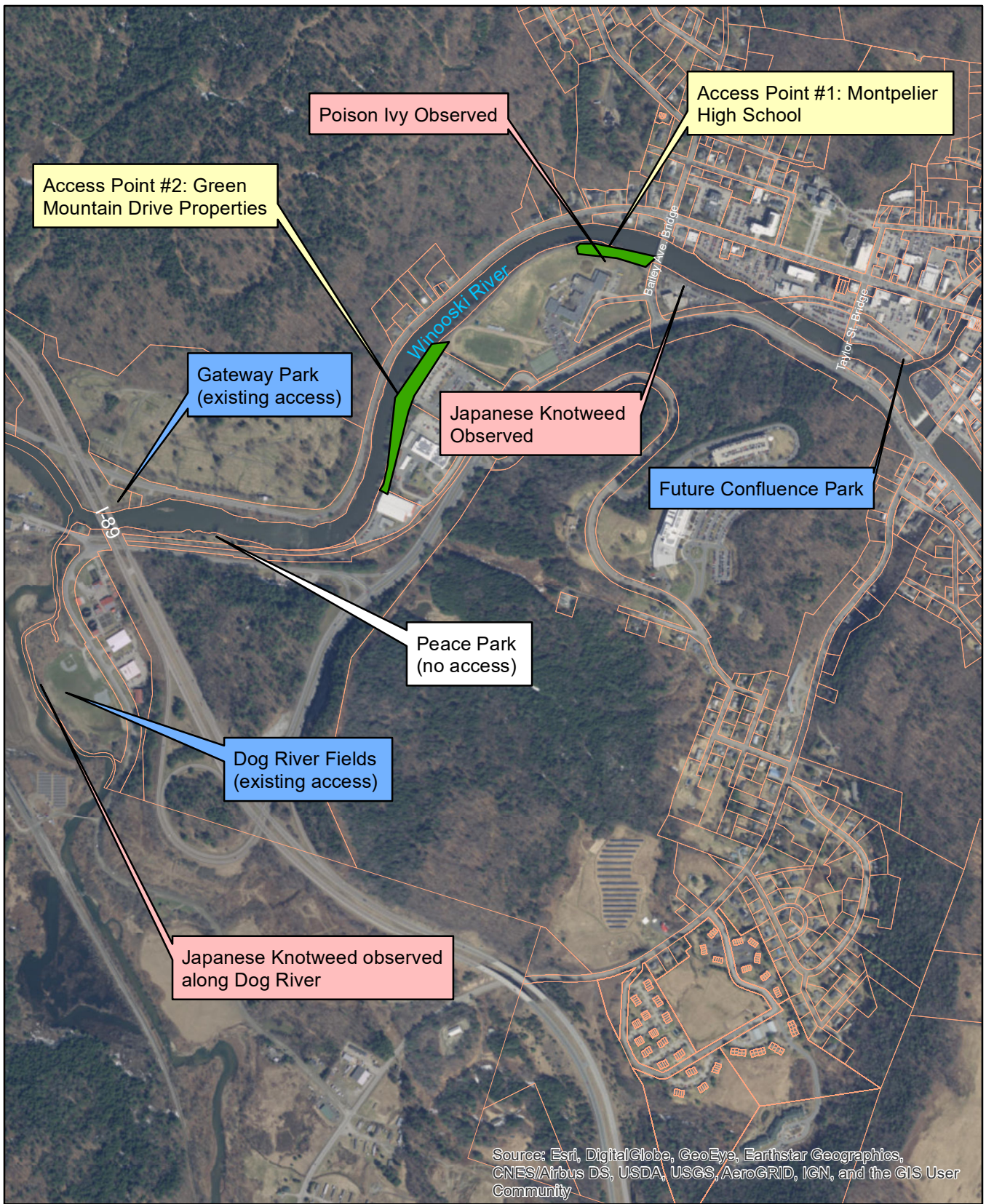
Legend

- Montpelier Land Parcels
- Potential River Access Point

1,100 550 0 1,100 Feet



Figure 2: Riverbank Status Map Winooski River from Confluence Park to Dog River Confluence



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User Community

Legend

- Montpelier Land Parcels
- Potential River Access Point

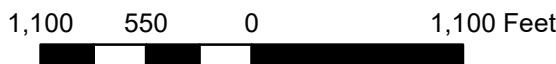
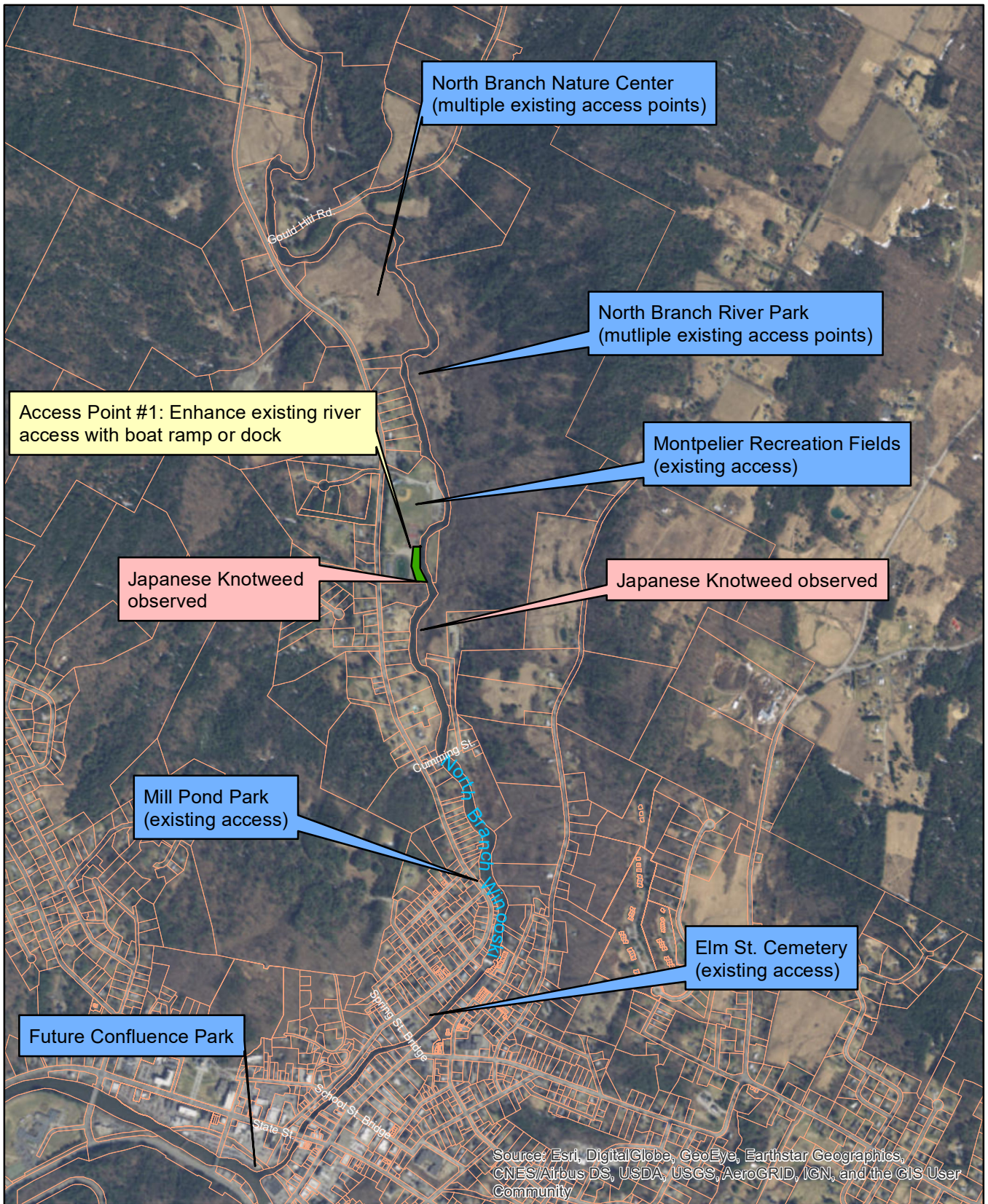
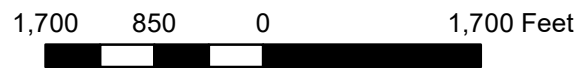


Figure 3: Riverbank Status Map North Branch of the Winooski



Legend

- Montpelier Land Parcels
- Potential River Access/Improvement Point



Appendix 2 – Photographs



Photograph 1: Winooski River behind Vermont Laser Wash on Route 2 (approximately 180 River Street), picture looking at north bank



Photograph 2: Winooski River from Pioneer Street Bridge, photo taken looking east (upstream). Green grassy area upstream of dam could make ideal access point.



Photograph 3: Winooski River from Pioneer Street Bridge, photo taken looking west (downstream)



Photograph 4: Winooski River from 56 River Street, photo taken looking north at Barr Hill. An access point could be constructed along the River by Barr Hill.



Photograph 5: Winooski River from 56 River Street, photo taken looking west (upstream)



Photograph 6: Winooski River from 429 Stone Cutters Way, photo taken looking southwest (upstream)



Photograph 7: Winooski River from 453 Stone Cutters Way, photo taken looking west (downstream)



Photograph 8: Winooski River from 535 Stone Cutters Way, photo taken looking east (upstream)



Photograph 9: Winooski River from Hunger Mountain Co-op parking lot, photo taken looking west (downstream). An access point could be constructed here.



Photograph 10: Winooski River from Hunger Mountain Co-op parking lot, photo taken looking east (upstream)



Photograph 11: Winooski River from Granite Street Bridge, photo looking west (downstream)



Photograph 12: Winooski River from Granite Street Bridge, photo looking east (upstream)



Photograph 13: The Winooski River from the Bailey Avenue Bridge; Photo taken looking west



Photograph 14: Stone steps leading to the Winooski River by Montpelier Highschool



Photograph 15: New footbridge at confluence of the North Branch of the Winooski and the Winooski



Photograph 16: Elm Street Cemetery on the North Branch of the Winooski



Photograph 17: Dam above Vine Street footbridge on the North Branch of the Winooski



Photograph 18: Mill Pond Park Access on the North Branch of the Winooski



Photograph 19: Japanese Knotweed at North Branch Park on the west bank



Photograph 20: River access on the east bank of the North Branch of the Winooski north in North Branch Park



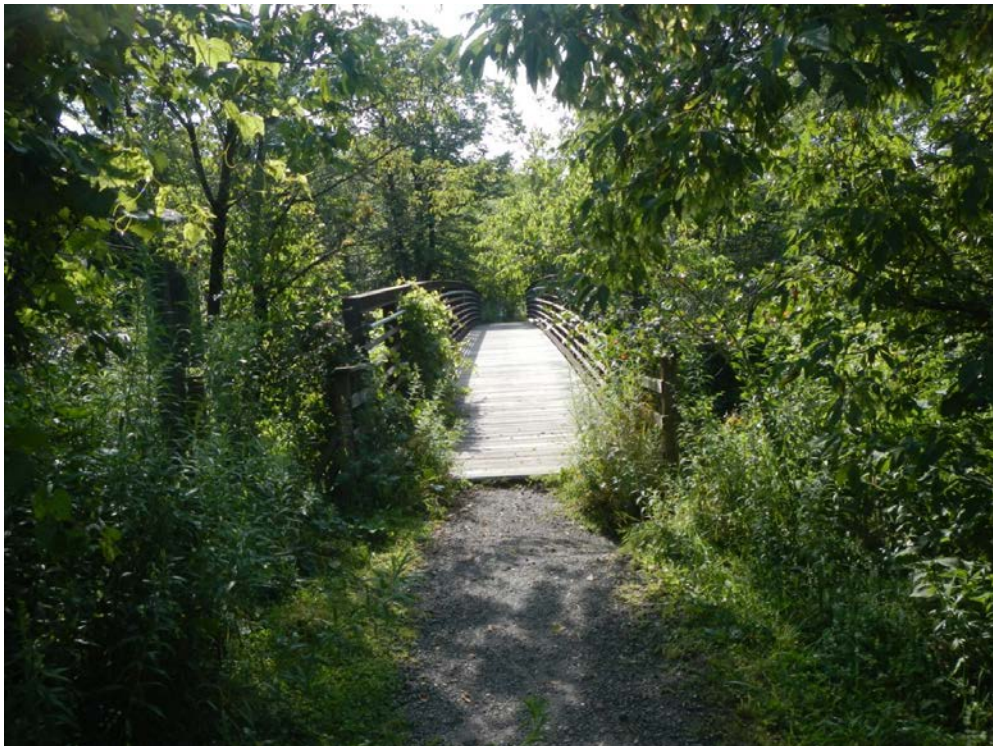
Photograph 21: One of the benches on the riverside trail in North Branch Park.



Photograph 22: Stone benches and river access on the riverside trail in North Branch Park



Photograph 23: Attempted eradication of Japanese Knotweed on the North Branch riverside trail



Photograph 24: Footbridge between North Branch Park and North Branch Nature Center



Photograph 25: Park bench and access at North Branch Nature Center



Photograph 26: Otter Rock at North Branch Nature Center



Photograph 27: Picnic table and hill supporting Gould Hill Road, taken from North Branch Nature Center



Photograph 28: Freshwater mussel shells at North Branch Nature Center



Photograph 29: Small dam above footbridge at the confluence of the North Branch and the Winooski