

2012 Annual Report

Friends of the Chemung River Watershed

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Friends of the Chemung River Watershed (“River Friends”) was formed in March 2009 as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations to protect and promote the Chemung River and its tributaries and encourage the public to better use, enjoy and respect our waterways.

Board of directors and advisers

- **President Robert Bailey**, Elmira, N.Y.; Elmira city councilman, New York State Athletic Commission inspector and private business owner.
- **Vice-president Donald Hall**, Elmira, N.Y.; retired corporate administrator for Precision Filters, Ithaca.
- **Secretary Thomas O'Brien**, Corning, N.Y.; attorney.
- **Treasurer Jim Ripley**, Pine City, Chemung Canal Trust Company vice president.
- **Past president Lee Hanle Younge**, Big Flats, N.Y.; retired director of Chemung County Environmental Management Committee.
- **Board member Jennifer Fais**, Corning, N.Y.; retired planner with Southern Tier Central Regional Planning & Development Board and co-chairperson of the Chemung Basin River Trail Partnership.
- **Board member Jenny Cole**, Corning, N.Y.; former contract employee with Display Technologies, Corning Inc.
- **Board member Rick Madl**, Elmira, N.Y.; service team leader at Elmira Wegmans.
- **Director Jim Pfiffer**, Elmira, N.Y.; public relations consultant and former newspaper reporter/columnist.
- **Adviser Jim Arey**, Ithaca, N.Y.; senior transportation planner for the Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council.
- **Adviser Richard H. Bean**, Sayre, Pa.; retired production control manager.

Building the future of our rivers

Dear river friend,

In 2012, River Friends made it easier to access and use our waterways.

We helped build public picnic pavilions at boat launches on the Canisteo River in Steuben County. We helped build a safe way for paddlers to get around the downtown Elmira dam on the Chemung River. We helped build a restroom at a town of Chemung boat launch. We removed downed trees and branches from the rivers and trails after a summer tornado.

We led guided paddles, hikes and cross-country ski trips. We helped an Ithaca business expand its kayak tours to the waterways in Chemung and Steuben counties.

Our trash cleanups and trail maintenance removed more than four tons of garbage, tires, downed trees and other hazards. We partnered with Chemung County and a Firestone dealership in Elmira to recycle tires discarded in the rivers and on trails.

Our public education presentation topics included flooding, river safety, ecology, paddling basics and canoe designs. We helped a family resource center lead three guided hikes for more than 50 parents and toddlers.

In partnership with the Chemung Valley History Museum, we designed an online river history and boat launch guide. We improved the River Friends website (www.chemungriverfriends.org) and Facebook page, making it easier to find river maps and to stay updated on river news and events.

River Friends received \$23,550 in grants, more than \$6,000 in business gifts and more than \$10,000 in individual memberships to help make our projects and programs successful.

That success wouldn't be possible without the support of our members and municipal partners, who realize the importance of protecting and promoting our waterways.

All my thanks and respect,

Jim Pfiffer

Executive Director, Friends of the Chemung River Watershed

2012 Accomplishments



Improved river access

Boat launch picnic pavilions

We helped the village of Addison build a 26-foot-by-26-foot wooden picnic pavilion on the Canisteo River. The \$23,000 project was financed with grants and private donations. The Wade's Landing pavilion is named in honor of the Wade family that has owned and run businesses in the village since 1855.

(At right: Wade's Landing pavilion)

River Friends and the town of Rathbone also built a 24-foot-by-18-foot picnic pavilion at the confluence of the Canisteo River and Tracy Creek. The project included a stone monument and bench honoring the late Gordon Risley of Addison, who died in 1957 while rescuing a child who was drowning in the river.

To date, River Friends has helped communities build five boat launch picnic pavilions on the Chemung and Canisteo rivers.

Don Hall Portage Trail improves river access





Paddlers carry canoes up the portage stairs and along the trail at the Don Hall Portage in Elmira

River Friends and the city of Elmira built a safe passage for paddlers around the Chase–Hibbard Dam in downtown Elmira. The Don Hall Portage opened in June and features a 730–foot river shore trail. The portage allows boaters to paddle the entire 45 miles of the river.

The portage is named for the Elmira man who began lobbying for it in 2006. Don is a paddler and River Friends board member. River Friends helped finance the project with a \$10,112 grant from the Community Foundation of Elmira–Corning and the Finger Lakes.

Encouraging people to use our rivers is part of our mission. So is river safety. We sponsored a June 2 safe paddling class for beginner canoeists. We were assisted by volunteers from the AHWAGA Canoe & Kayak Club of Broome County. We helped guide nearly 100 paddlers during the June 9 annual Elmira River Fest 11–mile paddle from Big Flats to Elmira.

We gave more than a dozen public presentations, lectures and panel discussions about river use, safety, summer boating and ice fishing.

Education, history and tourism

River Driving Guide: River Friends and the Chemung Valley History Museum published an online driving guide to history on the Chemung River. The color guide offers maps and GPS directions for a two-hour driving tour of boat launches, historic sites and scenic views on the river from Big Flats to the town of Chemung. Access the guide online at www.chemungriverfriends.org or http://www.chemungriverfriends.org/pdf/DrivingGuide_History.pdf

“Don’t Blame the River” 1972 Flood Program: As part of the community commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the 1972 Flood, River Friends sponsored a public panel discussion on the cause and solutions of river flooding. Panelists included representatives from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, the Chemung County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Chemung Valley History Museum.

Floating sculpture

The flood commemoration also included a project led by River Friends board member Jennifer Fais. Jen and volunteers built a floating driftwood sculpture that featured votive candles and personal cards and written messages honoring the accomplishments of people and businesses affected by the flood. The sculpture was built June 23 at the Grove Street Boat Launch.

Ben Newton Memorial Civil War Weekend: The river’s rich history came to life during the May 5–6 event at the riverside site of the former Civil War Prison Camp in Elmira. The event drew more than 250 re-enactors and thousands of spectators and tourists. Highlights included army camps, battlefield re-enactments and candlelight tours of the camp. River Friends partnered with the Chemung Valley Living History Center, the event’s sponsor, to help plan and publicize the event.

Canoe designer presentation: River Friends partnered with the AHWAGA Canoe & Kayak Club in Broome County to bring well-known canoe and kayak designer David Yost to Endicott on Oct. 22 for a public talk about purchasing, designing and using canoes and kayaks.



Grants

We received \$23,550 from nine grants in 2012. The funds were used to help build two boat launch pavilions, boat launch restrooms, purchase a utility trailer and sponsor river education and river trash cleanup programs.

Fundraising

We used some of our grant money to hire a professional fundraising consultant to develop a long-range River Friends fundraising program. The program included board and staff training and a mail and corporate development program that helped River Friends raise more than \$12,000 in gifts. The consultant was paid through grants from Parks & Trails New York and the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes.

River Friends purchased a new computer, database and mailing lists for our fundraising program. We trained a volunteer to take over our fundraising programs, working 20 hours a week, to expand our fundraising efforts.

Utility trailer

In May, we purchased a 10-foot-long utility trailer, tool box and tools with a \$1,500 grant from the Chemung Sunrise Rotary Club. Cameron Manufacturing & Design Inc. in Horseheads donated materials and labor to modify the trailer to carry canoes and kayaks. The trailer transports boats, equipment and supplies for trash cleanups and river protection projects.

Promotion and marketing

River Friends used a \$12,953 New York State Department of Economic Development grant to launch a summer publicity and marketing campaign to educate the public about our rivers and our new online river maps and guide (www.chemungrivers.org). The campaign increased website traffic by more than 40 percent and increased the use of the river for recreation and education by an estimated 50 percent. The publicity campaign included billboards, news media, social media, brochures, radio spots and television programming.

Trail and river maintenance

Our staff and volunteers maintained the rivers and river trails to keep them open and safe for public use. A late-summer tornado downed many trees and



branches that had to be cut, cleared and hauled from the trails and waterways. Through a program with Chemung County Probation, River Friends organized cleanups of the Lackawanna Trail in Elmira and public boat launches along the river.



Volunteers remove trees and stumps from the Chemung River in Big Flats

This year saw more organizations adopt boat launches to help keep the launches clean and safe and monitor the sites for needed repairs or problems. The Big Flats Business Association adopted the Bottcher's Landing launch in Big Flats. Employees from Cameron Manufacturing & Design in Horseheads adopted the Fitch's Bridge Boat Launch in Big Flats. This hands-on citizen involvement is important in protecting our waterways. It gives people ownership and pride and encourages them to care for and respect our rivers and streams.

River Friends conducted eight trash cleanups, including a partnership with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to remove more than 1,500 pounds of debris from the eight-acre Jones Island on the Chemung River in the city of Elmira, near Dunn Field.



River trail park benches

River Friends and the Boy Scouts joined forces to install two park benches along riverside recreation trails. Brendon Keller, a 17-year-old Boy Scout in Troop 43 in Pine City, restored and installed the two wooden benches in concrete bases along trails in West Elmira as part of his Eagle Scout project.

Volunteers and interns

Our volunteers included Michael Nichols, a Corning Community College student, who volunteered for one year with River Friends as part of the New York Campus Compact's AmeriCorps Education Award Program. Michael helped maintain our social media network communications, conducted research, and helped with river cleanups and trail maintenance.

Our other 15 to 20 volunteers came from all walks of life and backgrounds and helped with river cleanups and trail maintenance, fundraising, guided eco-recreation events, editing and writing, and publicity and promotion. All of our volunteers exhibited respect for our waterways, environment and community.

The Hilliard Foundation of Elmira, the giving arm of The Hilliard Corporation, was our 2012 River Friend Business of the Year. The foundation donated

\$5,000 to River Friends to help us make the river more accessible and to help continue our environmental education and river safety programs. This is the second year that the foundation has donated \$5,000 to River Friends.

Our 2012 River Friend Volunteer of the Year was Don Hall, a board member, who volunteered at least 20 hours a week to help head our fundraising campaigns. He helped with all our eco-recreation events, including developing our beginners' paddle and our river cleanup events. Don was responsible for persuading the city of Elmira to build a portage around the Chase-Hibbard Dam in Elmira to allow paddlers a safe route around the dam in downtown Elmira.

Don Hall doing what he likes best



Our volunteers were recognized during our Nov. 27 annual meeting at the Chemung Valley History Museum.

Staff and volunteer training

Our staff, board and volunteer training included fundraising, paddle safety, water testing, erosion prevention, trail maintenance, river history and social media promotion.

Long-term Strategic Plans

Our long-term strategic plans include working with our municipal partners to build riverside trails, constructing more boat launches and improving existing launches in Chemung and Steuben counties. Additionally, we intend to develop a volunteer trail stewards program to maintain and improve trails and protect our environment.

2012 revenues and expenses

2012 Expenses	Amount
Fees and licenses	\$178.75
Accounting fees	\$3,900
Fundraising consultant	\$3,034.34
Sub total	\$7,113.09
Property insurance	\$173.25
Rent, parking, utilities	\$1,730
Equip. rental/maint.	\$32.25
Repairs/maint.	\$76.75
Travel and meetings	\$2914.45
Sub total	\$4,926.70
Books/subscriptions	\$558.44
Postage/mailing	\$2,005.02
Printing/copying	\$4,772.19
Program expenses	\$13,912.19
Phone/computer	\$1,515.83
Supplies	\$1,783.13
Subtotal	\$24,546.80
Advertising	\$8,786.72
Meals	\$338.85
Staff development	\$65
Memberships and dues	\$545
Insurance liability, D&O	\$1,520
Other costs	\$133.42
Subtotal	\$11,388.99
Director's retirement	\$250
Directors salary	\$43,921.20
FICA	\$3,359.98
NYS unemployment	\$189.13

Payroll expenses - other	\$6.38
Workers comp	\$507.16
Subtotal	\$48,233.85
Total	\$96,209.43

2012 Revenues	Amount
Checking/savings	\$4,872.03
Payroll	\$7,170.17
Savings	\$92,123.26
Marketable securities	\$2,025
Subtotal	\$106,190.46
Corp. and bus. grants	\$500
Foundation and trust grants	\$18,100
Nonprofit organization grants	\$1,500
Agency grants	\$1,300
Local government grants	\$75,450
State grants	\$700
Subtotal	\$97,550
Business contributions	\$400
Interest-savings	\$45
Misc revenue	\$423.78
Membership dues	\$28,057.75
Spec events contributions	\$65
Subtotal	\$28,991.53
Total revenues	\$232,731.99

Assets	Amount
Unrestricted program funds	\$68,386.32
Unrestricted project funds	\$68,386.32
Total	\$136,772.64

Help us protect our rivers.

Become a member and donate online with a credit card at www.chemungriverfriends.org or send your tax-deductible donations to: Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, 111 N. Main St., Elmira, NY 14901.

To volunteer, contact us at riverfriends@stny.rr.com or (607) 846-2242