
2009 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 organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the Chemung River and its tributaries. We encourage the public to better use, enjoy and respect our waterways.



The 45-mile-long Chemung River meanders through Big Flats on its way to the Susquehanna River in Athens, Pa. It provides drinking water, recreation, wildlife habitat and serene beauty.

River Friends Board of Directors

President: Lee Hanle Younge, Big Flats, N.Y.; retired director of the environmental management council with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Chemung County.

Vice-president: Robert Bailey, Elmira, N.Y.; Elmira city councilman, New York State Athletic Commission inspector.

Secretary: Thomas O'Brien, Corning, N.Y., attorney.

Treasurer: James Ripley, Pine City, N.Y.; vice president, Chemung Canal Trust Co., Elmira.

Board member: Robert Butcher, Elmira; architect, Foor & Associates, Elmira.

Board member: Jennifer Fais, Corning, co-chairperson, Chemung Basin River Trail Partnership; principal planner with the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board, Corning.

Board member: Jennifer Salley Ruland, Corning; grant writer, office manager/constituent services representative for U.S. Rep. Eric Massa in his Corning office.

Board member: Scott A. Shaw: Horseheads, N.Y.; associate planner II, Chemung County Planning Department, Elmira.

Director: James Pfiffer, Elmira, former Chemung River Council member and a newspaper reporter/columnist and public relations consultant.

Adviser: James Arey, Ithaca, N.Y., Chemung Transportation Council, Elmira.

Adviser: Richard Bean, Sayre, Pa., retired manufacturing supervisor.

Getting River Friends flowing

The Chemung River flows through three counties, two states and more than a dozen towns and cities. It offers 90 miles of some of the most scenic waterfront property in the region.

We depend on the river and its tributaries for food, drinking water, recreation, natural beauty, biodiversity and our sense of regional identity.

Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, or River Friends, was formed in 2009 to help build appreciation and respect for the river. Our nonprofit organization is supported with \$70,000 in combined annual funding, through 2013, from Casella Waste Systems, Chemung County, the city of Elmira and the towns of Big Flats, Elmira, Southport and Chemung.

Our first goal in 2009 was to educate and inform the public about River Friends and our beautiful river. We did so with an extensive media campaign and public speaking presentations to more than 50 organizations, clubs and civic groups.

We also:

- Improved and expanded our Web site (www.chemungriverfriends.org).
- Established a Facebook page to reach a younger audience.
- Introduced a four-color logo designed and donated by Howell, Liberatore & Wickham of Elmira to give River friends an easily identifiable brand.

River Friends has grown into an organization that serves as a river development consultant for our municipal partners. We are an information source and clearinghouse for the media and public. We provide information and advice on river-related issues, from recreation and pollution to river history and river stewardship.

In 2009, we sponsored eco-recreation events, from paddle trips and hikes to bike treks and cross-country skiing trips along the river. We removed more than two tons of trash from in and along the river. We sponsored several safe boating and river safety educational programs.

We partnered with the Chemung Valley History Museum in Elmira to hold public river walks and talks and we organized two free concerts by the river on Elmira's Southside.

We received grants and donations of materials and time to build an emergency boat launch in West Elmira and to construct two public picnic pavilions at boat launches in 2010.

We increased the public's use, knowledge and respect for our waterways. Many individuals and organizations approached us volunteering to do river-related projects, donate money and materials, develop ecological improvement programs and to say "Thank you. We like what you are doing. Keep it up."

We will. With your help.

Jim Pfiffer

Director of the Chemung River Friends



The health of our river reflects our commitment to our environment

Keeping the river clean



(Volunteers removed more than two tons of trash from in and along the Chemung River in 2009)

A river flows more easily, safely and gracefully when it is free of debris. More than 450 people, mostly volunteers, helped with 12 cleanups in 2009. Nearly 230 of those volunteers were children.

These are examples of how River Friends built partnerships that benefit the community and environment:

The Elmira Fire Department assisted River Friends volunteers in a Sept. 29 cleanup that led to the removal of 19 tires, shopping carts, bikes and other debris from the river beneath the Lake Street Bridge in downtown Elmira.

Chemung County Transit provided free bus transportation for volunteers during community cleanups. The city of Elmira and Chemung County hauled the trash to the landfill free of charge.

River Friends began a partnership in 2009 with the Chemung County Probation Department. Individuals on probation, completing community service hours, participated in four weekend cleanups along the river in Chemung County. Plans call for probationers to continue cleanups and to help repair and maintain boat launches and other river-related projects in the coming years.



(The Chase-Hibbard Dam in Elmira keeps river levels high enough to provide drinking water for more than 65,000 Elmira Water Board customers)



(Youth from the Southside Alliance Church in Elmira hike the West Elmira river trail)

Eco-recreation

Promoting the river's recreational use demonstrates its value and beauty to the community and makes people more aware of the waterway's easy access.

River Friends organized and led 10 group paddles, hikes, bike treks and cross-country skiing trips along the river trails in 2009. More than 400 people participated in these eco-recreation events, including the June 6 River Fest paddle with more than 250 paddlers.

Each eco-recreational event included an educational theme, from river history to river protection. These trips attracted people of all ages and featured a licensed guide, educational lecture, lunch and beverages.



(A river is a great hands-on and feet-wet classroom. You meet nature's wildlife, like this great blue heron in full breeding plumage.)

2009 Projects

Public picnic pavilion: River Friends served as a project coordinator in 2009 to obtain donated materials, labor to build a \$20,000 picnic pavilion and grill at the Grove Street boat launch in Elmira, and donate it to the city. The pavilion is scheduled to be constructed in spring 2010. It will serve as shelter for paddlers, during lightening storms and it can be used by residents for family gatherings, meetings and other events.

Electronic wayfinding kiosk: We helped finance and build a \$10,000 solar-powered wayfinding kiosk to be installed at the Grove Street boat launch in 2010 in Elmira. The kiosk includes a river map, a deposit bin for recyclable materials and a solar-powered weather station. When completely outfitted it will provide information on river levels, water speed, water temperature, emergency contacts and other electronic data for paddlers, anglers and hikers. The kiosk is the first in a series of kiosks to be installed on the Chemung and Susquehanna rivers and their tributaries.

New boat launch: River Friends acted as project coordinator, with the town of Elmira and the Chemung County Soil & Water Conservation District, to build a \$3,000 emergency boat launch behind the Elmira Town hall in West Elmira. The concrete launch allows emergency personnel to respond more quickly to river rescues and conduct onsite training.

Riverside music: We held two free acoustic music-by-the-river festivals (July 10 and Sept. 19) at the river's edge on Elmira's Southside. Nearly 200 people attended the family-oriented concerts presented by eight musicians who donated their time.

Steuben River visioning project. We assisted six municipalities in southeast Steuben County in devising a river vision development plan. The project will eventually connect river trails in Steuben County to trails in Chemung and Bradford counties.

River bridge wayfinding signs: River Friends is helping the Upper Susquehanna River Coalition install nine wayfinding signs on bridges over the Chemung River to help paddlers, anglers and hikers better navigate the river. The 3-foot-wide aluminum signs include the name of the municipality, route number and the distance to the Chesapeake Bay. The Chemung is one of eight rivers to get 45 signs installed on bridges in 2010.

4H daffodil planting: On Nov. 2, River Friends helped an Elmira 4H club to plant 120 donated daffodil and other perennial flower bulbs along the river trail in West Elmira.

Public safety

As we promote the safe recreational use of the Chemung River, we face greater risk of injuries or deaths by more people using the river. We want to reduce the dangers through education. That's why River Friends has taken a proactive approach in educating the public about responsible river use.

We discussed river safety and zero tolerance for swimming in the river in all of our public lectures, presentations, eco-recreation trips and media events. River Friends sponsored the following safe river educational programs:

July 18, Grove Street boat launch, Elmira: The West Elmira Volunteer Fire Department and River Friends conducted a river rescue drill as a public educational program. Nearly 50 people attended the two-hour event. Firefighters demonstrated and explained how they rescue endangered paddlers and anglers from the river.

Aug. 29, Brick Pond, Elmira: Offered a free safe paddling class for beginning kayakers and canoeists. The four-hour class was taught to 24 paddlers by the Sullivan Trail Chapter of the American Red Cross in Elmira. The free class was sponsored by River Friends and four area credit unions: ServU Federal Credit Union, First Heritage Federal Credit Union, Solutions Federal Credit Union and Finger Lakes Health Care Federal Credit Union.

July, River and Boating Safety Guide: Assisted Environmental Emergency Services in Chemung, Steuben and Schuyler counties in the production and distribution of a free safe river and boating guide.

Education

Education is a part of all our public programs, presentations and eco-recreation events. We connect people to the river by showing them how we depend on it for drinking water, recreation, natural beauty and economic growth. The river depends on all of us to protect and improve it. Education is the best way to get the public interested and involved in understanding, enjoying and protecting the waterway.

Our free monthly noon river walks-and-talks attracted 40 people. Topics included river history, the water cycle, riverside plant and animal life, flood control and Mark Twain's connection to the river. The walks-and-talks provided exercise, knowledge and the opportunity to enjoy nature's beauty.

Our more than 60 public presentations and lectures educated and informed more than 900 people about the river and River Friends. Those presentations were given to college, high school and elementary school classes, Boy Scouts and civic and community organizations

Volunteers and interns

More than 750 volunteers provided 1014 hours of service in 2009 doing clerical work, designing and updating our Web site, writing media releases and brochures, taking photographs and assisting with cleanups, eco-recreation events, riverside concerts, public safety, and educational programs.

Three Elmira College interns and one Rochester Institute of Technology intern completed 83 hours of volunteer work.

Fund raising and grants

River Friends raised more than \$10,000 through memberships and donations, including a \$5,000 donation to help improve and maintain a primitive grass trail along the river in Steuben County.

River Friends received \$22,155 in grants, including funds to build a boat launch picnic pavilion, sponsor a youth environmental education/exercise program and to buy a camera, life preservers and equipment and materials for river cleanups.

We received more than \$15,000 in donations of materials, services and goods.



You can paddle and pedal the river. Grass and packed dirt river rails make for a great ride

2010 Projects

- Build picnic pavilions at the Grove Street boat launch in Elmira and Bottcher's Landing boat launch in Big Flats.
- Begin preliminary development of a section of a multi-use trail along the river.
- Sponsor a fishing derby.
- Build a community vegetable garden at Katy Leary Park on the river in Elmira to provide fresh produce to food pantries.



Long-range plans include multi-use trails like this artist's drawing of a trail on the south shore of the Chemung River in downtown Elmira.

- Assist the city of Elmira in building a fish ladder and portage on the Chase-Hibbard Dam in downtown Elmira.
- Assist the town of Chemung in building a river trail and improving the White Wagon boat launch.
- Build a primitive hiking/biking/cross-country skiing trail along the grass river levees in Steuben County.
- Survey and improve existing boat launches on the Chemung, Cohocton, Tioga and Canisteo rivers.
- Expand and improve eco-recreation events, river cleanups and Red Cross safe paddling classes.



(Sun, friends and kayaks. A great way to enjoy a summer day.)

2009 Financial Report

(May 9- Dec. 31)

Revenues:

Local government grants.....	\$70,000
Memberships.....	\$5,664
Program service fees.....	\$191
Savings account interest.....	\$75.80
Business contributions.....	\$600
Donated service.....	\$5,570
In-kind goods.....	\$1,157
Individual contributions.....	\$721
Corning river trail contribution.....	\$5,000
Grants.....	\$21,558
Capital funds and grant reserve.....	\$59,452
Total.....	\$169,988

Expenses:

Payroll	\$35,959
Fees/licenses.....	\$1,017
Legal/accounting.....	\$370
Outside contract services.....	\$2,175
Insurance.....	\$1,897
Rent/utilities.....	\$1,125
Repairs/maintenance.....	\$100
Postage/printing.....	\$774
Telecommunications.....	\$1,371
Programs.....	\$1,447
Supplies.....	\$1,305
Advertising.....	\$765
Staff development.....	\$174
Travel/meetings.....	\$1,613
Other costs.....	\$962
Books, subscriptions.....	\$13
Meals/entertainment.....	\$18
Total.....	\$51,085



We look to our rivers for beauty, inspiration and life. The rivers look to us for their survival.

Help us protect our rivers. Send you tax-deductable donations to:

River Friends

111 N. Main St.

Elmira, NY 14901

Or donate on line with a credit card at www.chemungriverfriends.org

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