



Friends of the Chemung River Watershed

Paddling in the same direction 2013 Annual report



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2013 Board of Directors and Advisers

- President Robert Bailey, Elmira, N.Y.; former Elmira city councilman, New York State Athletic Commission inspector and private businessman.
- 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, N.Y.; 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 Thomas Beecher, Pine City, retired IBEW Local 139 electrician.
- Board member Jenny Cole, Corning, N.Y.; contract employee with Corning Inc.
- Board member Pauline Emery, Elmira, N.Y., library director, Southeast Steuben County Library.
- Board member Jennifer Fais, Corning, N.Y.; retired planner with the Southern Tier Central Regional Planning and Development Board and co-chairperson of the Chemung Basin River Trail Partnership.
- Board member Richard Madl, Elmira, N.Y.; service team leader, Elmira Wegmans.
- Board member William M. McCarthy, Elmira, N.Y., Elmira City Council member and associate with Jubilee Foods, Horseheads, N.Y.
- Board member Melissa Rinker, Pine City, N.Y.; co-owner, Nickel Creek Bait and Tackle Shop, Elmira.
- Board member Dave Rockwell, Horseheads, N.Y., professor of outdoor and environmental education at Corning Community College.
- Executive director James Pfiffer, Elmira, N.Y.; public relations consultant and former newspaper reporter and columnist.

- Adviser Scott Shaw, Horseheads, N.Y.; associate planner one, Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council.
- Adviser Richard H. Bean, Sayre, Pa., retired production control manager.

Building the future of our rivers

Dear river friends,

“Get them on the river.”

That was the 2013 motto of the Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, or River Friends. Few people in the Chemung River Basin own a canoe or kayak and are unlikely to paddle our rivers unless someone makes it easy and safe to do.

That’s what River Friends did in 2013. We sponsored guided river trips and paddle lessons for 132 paddlers – many of them first-timers.

The best way to convince a person of a river’s value is to get them on the water in a boat and let the river work its magic. We showed them how easy, fun and thrilling it can be to enjoy river recreation and a trip through nature. We taught them basic paddling and river safety to build confidence and skills.

We partnered with Southern Tier Kayak Tours, of Ithaca, to bring professional river guides, boats and equipment to the Chemung River to lead private and public river tours.

The number of paddlers, guided tours and private boaters using the river increased threefold over 2012. Professional guides led them on guided paddles to try out their new skills.

The river’s magic turned most of the paddlers into river lovers. Many of them signed up for other River Friends paddles or purchased a canoe or kayak to do their own paddling. They can’t wait for the next River Friends paddle.

They are now river friends, appreciating and respecting our waterways and understanding how our rivers can improve our quality of life and environment.

With the increase in river recreation comes an increase in the need for river safety. That’s why River Friends began a public education program in 2013 to help teach the public about the dangers of swimming in the river and how to practice safe paddling.

We used a grant to purchase a river rescue boat, trailer, engine and equipment, and donated it to the Golden Glow Volunteer Fire Company in Big Flats, to help the fire company provide better river rescue training and conduct river rescues.

After the near-drowning of an Elmira boy in May, River Friends and the Elmira Fire Department collaborated and visited public schools, Summer Cohesion sites and youth centers to give presentations on river safety.

We had a busy and successful year thanks to your support. We are back in the water and paddling toward the same successes for 2014.

All my thanks and respect,



James Pfiffer

Executive Director, Friends of the Chemung River Watershed

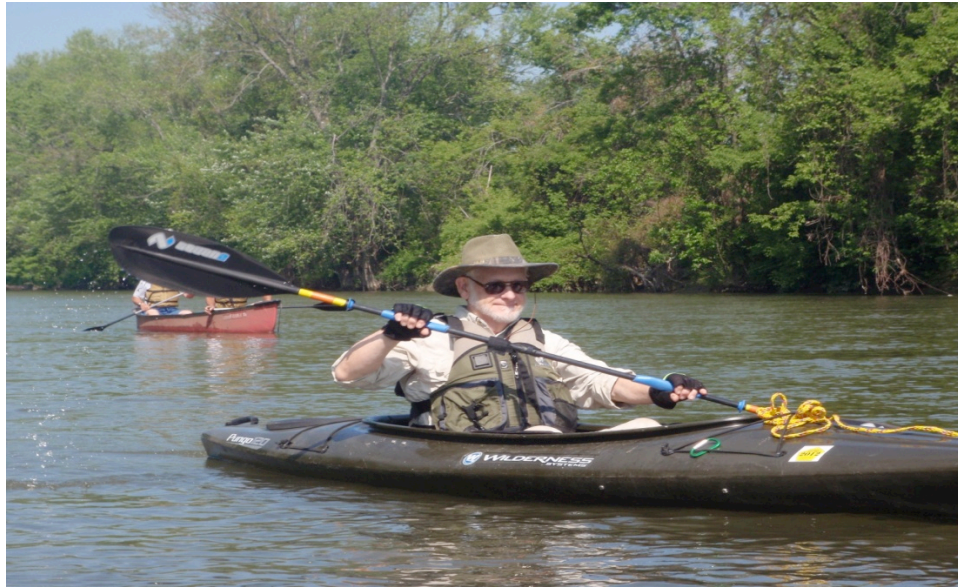
2014 Board of Directors and Advisers

- President and director: Lee Hanle Younge
- Vice-president and director: Pauline Emery
- Treasurer and director: James Ripley
- Secretary and director: Tomas O'Brien
- Director: Jen Fais
- Director: Donald Hall

2014 advisors and committee members:

- Tom Beecher
- Jenny Cole
- Rick Madle
- Bill McCarthy
- Melissa Rinker
- Dave Rockwell

- Scott Shaw
- Richard Bean



2013 River Friends board member and long-time volunteer Tom Beecher paddles the river

2013 Accomplishments



Lackawanna Rail Trail:

The 2.5-mile Lackawanna Rail Trail in Elmira opened in 2013, providing the public with a paved trail that is great for exercise, recreation and communing with nature. The city-owned trail runs over the path of the former Lackawanna Railroad line, between Eldridge Park and East Water Street. In March, River Friends designed and published a trifold color brochure that includes a trail map and information about the use, history and trail attractions. The brochure was funded with \$2,000 from the Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council.

River Rangers: Less than 5 percent of local residents own a kayak or canoe and are unlikely to paddle the river because they don't have the right equipment and training. That's why River Friends started our River Rangers program, offering three free paddles on the river for first-time or novice paddlers. The paddle trips, a River Friends partnership with Southern Tier Kayak Tours in Ithaca, provided equipment, training and guides for the paddles. More than 60 first-time paddlers, ages 14 to 70, participated.

Each paddle included educational programs ranging from river wildlife and the water cycle to river history and recreation. Many of the paddlers later purchased their own boats and paddled in other River Friends events.

The program, sponsored in part by a \$5,000 Xerox Foundation Grant, brought more people to the river and showed them how easy, fun and safe it is to paddle. We helped turn these novices into river users, who now enjoy the river and support River Friends' efforts to make the waterway more accessible to people of all skill levels.

Grants: In 2013, we received \$19,980 in grants and \$5,250 from business and industry to help pay for our projects and programs. The grants and funding helped build a boat launch bathroom; buy a rescue boat, motor and trailer for river rescue responders; purchase equipment and supplies for river and trail cleanups; and provide paddling lessons and guided-paddle trips.

Beginner paddles:

Our free beginner paddle classes taught canoe and kayak basics to 300 people, including 33 kids. Experienced paddlers from AHWAGA Canoe and Kayak Club of Broome County and River Friends volunteers taught the participants basic paddling and river safety and let the students try out their new skills on short paddles on the river.

The beginner paddles helped first-time boaters discover how easy, safe and adventurous it is to paddle the river. Many of these participants later purchased their own boats and/or joined in other River Friends guided paddles.



Our continuing partnership with AHWAGA is benefiting both organizations and helping increase the number of people who are safely and respectfully enjoying our rivers and supporting the work we do to protect our waterways.

Nature Strollers program grows for parents and children:

The popularity of our involvement in the Nature Strollers program for parents and kids encouraged us to expand the two-year-old program to include more hikes. River Friends partnered with the Horseheads Family Resource Center to lead more than 200 parents, grandparents and toddlers on four short nature hikes.



The program allows children and their families to enjoy outdoor exercise, learn about nature and develop a family bond of respect for our environment.

The program is financed by the Chemung Valley Audubon Society and the Horseheads Family Resource Center.

Halloween owls, tombstones and eagles hike:

River Friends and the Chemung Valley Audubon Society led a free Halloween-themed bird-watching hike along the Chemung River at the Grove Street Boat Launch on Oct. 12 that drew 180 hikers of all ages. It included a short hike along the river, a visit by a live Barred Owl from Tanglewood Nature Center in Elmira, view of a hidden riverside tombstone, hoot owl calling and lectures about Eagles and Ospreys.



The event highlighted the public's interest in nature, the river, history and outdoor exercise, all within a 1,000-yard stretch of the river near downtown.

Hikers enjoy bird watching under the Walnut Street Bridge.

The event was part of the Thrills & Chills Halloween and fall-themed events sponsored by the Chemung County Chamber of Commerce.

Ice cream bike rides:

River Friends collaborated with Kingsbury's Cyclery in Elmira to offer three guided bike rides on the Lackawanna Rail Trail in Elmira.

The weeknight evening rides drew 30-80 people of all ages and featured an easy ride along the 2.5-mile trail, lectures on local railroad and trail history, and a stop at an ice cream stand for well-deserved treats.



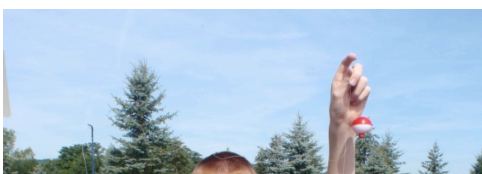
The rides attracted families and tourists and were a great way to introduce the public to the trail, promote outdoor exercise, provide information on local history, and help a locally-owned business, Grand Central Creamery in Elmira Heights.

There's gold in them there river trails:

For the third year in a row, River Friends hid 30 gold painted shoes along river trails for hikers and bikers to find and turn in for prizes. The gold shoe event is run by Tanglewood Nature Center in Elmira, to get people outdoors to enjoy nature and a healthy lifestyle. More than 300 people, from toddlers to seniors, participated.

Youth fishing derby:

We sponsored our first-ever kids' fishing derby at Eldridge Lake in August. The fundraising event drew more than 60 kids and their parents to fish the lake for the



largest fish and for four large tagged and stocked bass.

The event included basic fishing tips and instruction for the first-time anglers, food, beverages and more than \$700 in prizes and awards. The derby was the beginning of a partnership between River Friends and Eldridge Park. The annual derby raised more than \$3,000 to us protect and improve our fishing resources.

Fire department river safety partnership:

Thanks to our work to promote our rivers and make them more accessible, more people are paddling and fishing our rivers and hiking the river trails. That increases the likelihood of river emergencies. In 2013, River Friends began a partnership with the Golden Glow Volunteer Fire Company, which provides river safety and river rescues along the most popular paddle stretch of the river, from Bottcher's Landing to Fitch's Bridge. River Friends received an \$8,425 grant from the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes to purchase a river rescue boat, motor, trailer and equipment to be donated to the fire department. The boat will be used for river rescue training, rescues and possible removal of downed trees and other obstructions in the waterway. The equipment and training will be shared with other fire departments that cover the river.

Some of the grant will be used by River Friends and the fire department to provide ongoing public outreach and education about water safety and river recreation.

River Friends trail stewards and ambassadors:

Our community volunteer river and trail stewards did 12 cleanups in 2013, removing more than three tons of trash from in and along the river and river trails. The cleanups featured an April 27 Earth Week event that saw more than 80 volunteers from Kennedy Valve in Elmira, Access Midstream in Horseheads, the Chemung County Environmental Management Council, Girl Scouts of NYPENN Pathways Troop 41201 of Horseheads, and River Friends.



Our partnership with Chemung County Probation continued with probationers doing more than 50 hours of community service cleaning trash from the river.



For the first time, 2013 saw River Friends volunteers clean up litter from Miller’s Pond, Brick Pond and Eldridge Lake in the city of Elmira.

We are happy to report that 2013 was the first year, since 2004, in which we saw a large decrease in the amount of trash and litter to be cleaned from our waterways and trails, due in part to our cleanups and the public’s help in reducing litter and trash dumping in our environment.

Public education:

As more people than ever used the river in 2013, River Friends responded by expanding our free public water safety programs. We partnered with the Elmira Fire Department, West Elmira Volunteer Fire Department and the Golden Glove Volunteer Fire Company to offer public presentations and informational booths on river safety.

We taught beginner paddle lessons to over 300 people, including children at a summer science and math camp. We visited public schools, youth centers and Summer Cohesion sites and educated more than 200 kids about wearing life vests and river safety. Our partners, the AHWAGA Canoe & Kayak Club of Broome County, helped us teach beginner paddle lessons and rides to 63 people at the 2013 annual Elmira River Fest.

River Friends is donating satellite image maps of the river to emergency river rescue groups to help them with training and river emergencies.

All our eco-recreation events, from paddles to hikes, featured educational themes about Bald Eagles, Native Americans, the river’s Civil War history, river ghost stories and a fun hands-on and feet-wet wade into the water to learn about what lives under river rocks.

River Friends invested more than 50 hours of public education by providing information tables at community events and public presentations.

Partnership with Birdland Brewing:

“Drink a beer and save a bird” is the slogan for a



Birdland Brewing owners Dennis and Susan Edwards and River Friends Director Jim Pffifer toast the partnership to protect the river.

unique fundraising partnership River Friends formed with Birdland Brewing, a locally-owned craft brewery in Horseheads. In September 2013, Birdland began brewing a series of River Friends brews, with a portion of the proceeds donated to River Friends to help protect the clean water used to brew the beer. Those brews, like Osprey Pale Ale, are named for river birds and the funds are used to help protect the waterfowl and birds that live and nest along the river.

Several regional bars and restaurants serve the Birdland and River Friends brews and are donating a portion of the profits back to River Friends. The brewery will continue to produce River Friends beers and help sponsor River Friends events.

“The partnership helps everyone – the brewery, River Friends, the river, our waterfowl, tourism and the local economy,” said River Friends director Jim Pfiffer.

River history driving guide:

We helped print a river history driving guide to make it easy for the public to visit the Chemung River by vehicle, enjoy the natural views and learn about the waterway’s history. The free 12-page “A Driving Guide to History Along the Chemung River” includes maps, photos and GPS coordinates to historic sites along the river.

The full-color spiral-bound guide was written and published in a partnership with the Chemung Valley History Museum to encourage the public to visit the river and learn about its history and natural beauty. It was paid for by a grant through the museum.

2013 annual meeting and river photo contest:

Our 2013 annual meeting at the Golden Glow Volunteer Fire Company in Big Flats featured a river photo contest by our members. The winning photos, selected by those attending the meeting, will be published in a calendar. The meeting highlighted River Friends’ new partnership with the fire company to help improve public river safety and education.

The event included a presentation of 2013



(L-r) Dennis Edwards, Susan Edwards, Jim Pfiffer, Bob Bailey and Brian Pappalardo.

projects and programs by River Friends Director Jim Pfiffer, auctions, raffles and a beer-tasting by Birdland Brewing.

Our 2013 volunteer of the year is Brian Pappalardo, a former Star-Gazette editor, who edits and writes much of the River Friends media releases, reports and other written material.

Our 2013 Business of the Year award went to Birdland Brewing in Horseheads, which partnered with us to brew River Friends-themed beers and will donate a portion of the profits to River Friends.

Chemung White Wagon Boat Launch improvements: River Friends obtained an \$8,000 grant to help the town of Chemung build a stone, wood and steel-roofed restrooms at the White Wagon Boat Launch in the town of Chemung.



The new bathroom at the White Wagon Boat Launch

The grant, from the Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes, was used to construct public restrooms with electric lights and running water. The restrooms are accessible for people with disabilities.

The facilities include an outdoor water spigot to allow river users to wash and clean their boats, paddles, and fishing and hiking

gear.

Town of Chemung employees provided the labor and equipment to build the bathroom to go along with the picnic pavilion, concrete boat ramp, parking area and information kiosks at the launch site.

The launch improvements are part of River Friends' long-term plans to increase river access, use and safety through the construction and improvement of boat launches along the river in Steuben and Chemung counties. One of the most common requests from people using the river is access to public restrooms.

Staff and volunteer training:

Our staff, board members and volunteers received training and/or instruction in: fundraising, board development, trail maintenance, chain saw use, building river bank and stream bank buffers, erosion control, pollution prevention, river safety and flood reduction.

Volunteers and interns:

Community volunteers and River Friends staff and board members invested more than 1,000 hours of volunteer time helping with river cleanups, paddle classes, public presentations and lectures, fundraising and publicity. Interns from Corning Community College, Elmira College and local high schools help maintain and expand our social web outreach.

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Help us protect our rivers

Make a credit card donation at www.chemungriverfriends.org or send your tax-deductible donation to: Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, 111 N. Main St., Elmira, NY 14901. To volunteer, contact riverfriends@stny.rr.com or (607) 846-2242