

2015

2015 River Friends Annual Report



Prepared by:
Chemung River Friends
Executive Director James Pfiffer



We take on a friendlier name



We shortened our name to Chemung River Friends on March 31 when the Division of Corporations of the New York State Department of State issued our “Assumed Name Certificate.” Our official and incorporated name is still **Friends of the Chemung River Watershed**.

The shorter name will be used for easier name recognition, outreach and publicity. Our logo remains the same with the longer name.

Our original name was adopted six years ago to reflect the Chemung River Friends’ mission to protect and promote all of the waterways in the Chemung Watershed (Cohocton, Tioga, and Canisteo and Susquehanna rivers).

Our name changed, but not our mission. We still cover the same watershed and will continue to encourage public use, enjoyment and respect for our rivers and environment.

Drone camera to help improve river safety and recreation

With the help of a Community Foundation grant and business donations, River Friends purchased a battery-operated quad-copter drone with a camera. The two-foot-long aircraft will be used to help with river rescues and in locating hazards and pollution in the river.



We will use the equipment to scout out the river prior to public paddles and to create virtual video tours of the river for viewing on our website.

Trails



- Began planning for 1 mile Seeley Creek nature Trail in Southport.
- Removed 400 pounds of trash during Earth Day Lackawanna Rail Trail cleanup with Kennedy Valve employees.
- Building and creating four educational kiosks on White Wagon Trail in the town of Chemung. Partners: The Hilliard Corp., Chemung Valley History Museum, Chemung Town Historian.
- Cleared brush/downed trees from West Elmira river trails.
- Built wooden swings to be installed in West Elmira trails in spring 2016.
- Partnered with Steuben County to help plan for river development and construction of a Cohocton River nature trail.



Clean water and banks



- In June, more than 12 volunteers cleaned 600 pounds of trash from Newtown Creek in the Town of Horseheads.
- In July we partnered with a Big Flats mosque to remove more than 800 pounds of trash from Carpenter Creek in Big Flats.
- The ARC of Chemung adopted a stretch or riverbank in Elmira and cleaned it four times.
- Volunteer groups adopted and cleaned five Chemung River boat launches during the summer.
- In September River Friends did a river cleanup with Copy Express employees.
- During Earth Week we helped 30 volunteers from Kennedy Valve remove more than 200 pounds of trash from the Lackawanna Rail Trail in Elmira.
- River Friends staff and board members cleaned trash from in and around Brick Pond in Elmira.

Osprey nesting poles



- Eagle Scout project researched, financed and installed two osprey nesting poles
- One at Bottcher's Landing Boat Launch on the Chemung River in Big Flats.
- The other at the Dunn Field Boat Launch in Elmira.
- 4-foot-by-4 foot nesting platform on 50-foot tall utility pole.
- 15-year-old Eagle Scout candidate Jason Drapikowski, Troop 3097 in Big Flats.

Eldridge Lake Eagle Scout project

- Eagle Scout candidate Brian Kazmark of Troop 3097 in Horseheads researched, financed and installed four informational signs around Eldridge Lake in Elmira.
- The signs feature information and fun facts about the plants, animals and fish seen in and around Eldridge lake.
- The project is part of River Friends' mission to engage and educate the public about nature and the plants and animals that exist in our waterways, ponds and lakes.



Downtown Elmira Business and River Friends work together to protect, promote and enjoy our rivers



- We partnered with Copy Express and Office Equipment Source in downtown Elmira to receive a \$5,000 Xerox Foundation grant.
- The store employees help with cleanups, environmental education and river promotion.
- River Friends does all our printing with Copy Express, thereby supporting a locally-owned business.
- The store helps sell our calendars and has posted a River Friends banner in the store.
- We use the fifth story roof of the business – with a spectacular view of the river – for board meetings and other events.
- This is the first step in encouraging other locally-owned businesses to partner with River Friends.



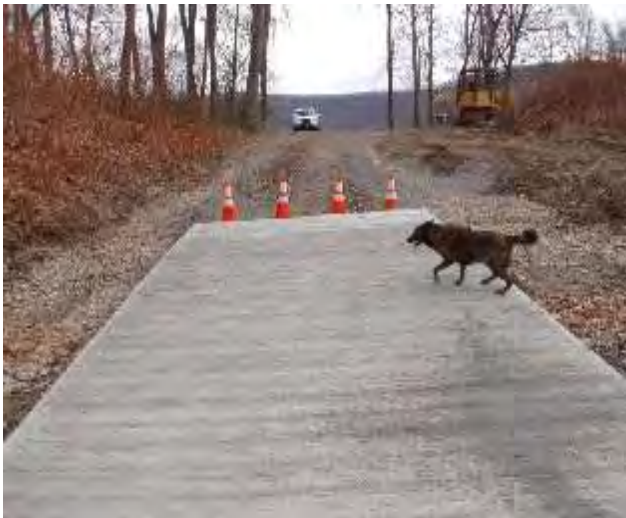
River education

- All our eco-rec programs (paddles, hikes, bike treks) had educational themes.
- We taught environmental and river related programs to more than 300 people at public schools, colleges and organizations.
- We used live and stuffed animals as part of the education programs.
- We continued our Nature Strollers walks (eight of them) for 130 parents, grandparents and kids with Horseheads Family Resource Center and Chemung Valley Audubon Society.
- Partnered with NYS DEC to hold a July 14 public education program at Grove Street Boat Launch on invasive aquatic species.





Minier's/Sen. Smith concrete boat ramp and access road



Community project

- River Friends.
- Towns of Big Flats and Chemung
- Chemung County.
- Big Flats Community Days Committee.
- New York State DEC.
- Community Foundation Elmira-Corning and Finger Lakes.

Results

- Addition of another boat ramp/road on the river.
- Safer and easier to use boat launch.
- Another river rescue access point.
- Less erosion and pollution.
- More attractive boat launch.

Our river is a point of interest

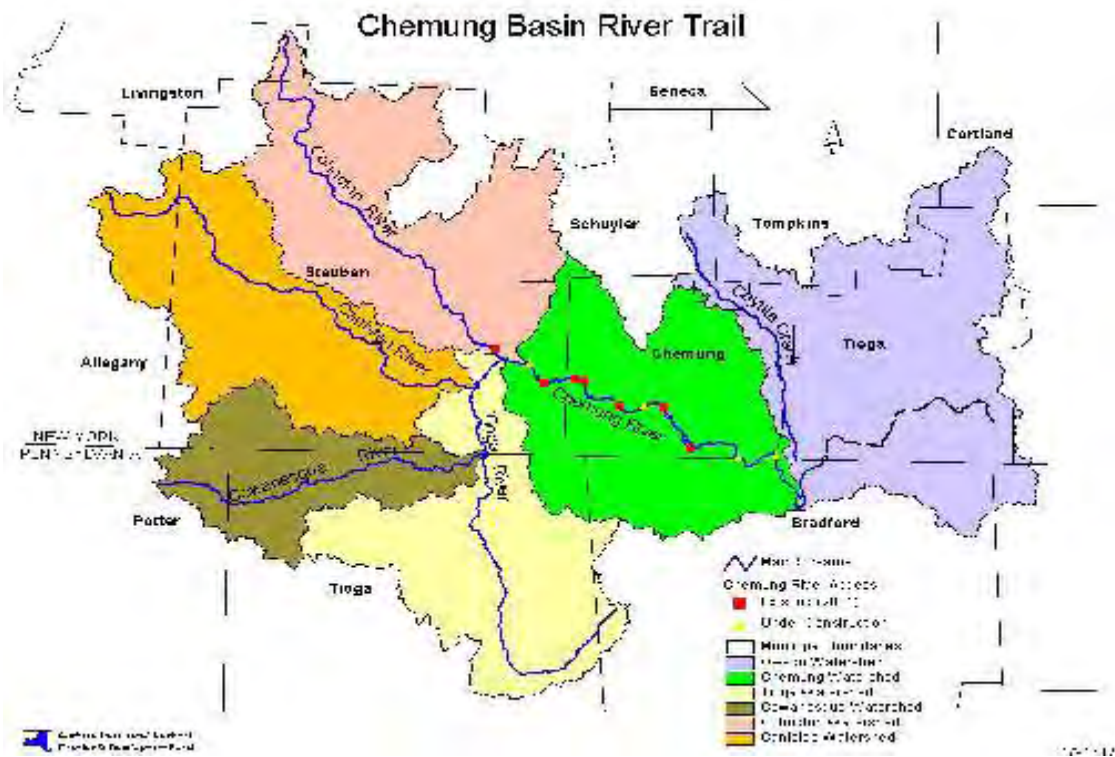


- Points of Interest Scenic Driving Trail through Chemung, Steuben and Schuyler counties.
- Location of scenic, historic and architecturally unique locations.
- Flags and maps for motorists.

Bottcher's Landing picnic pavilion

- Thanks to our partners, the ARC of Chemung.
- Built three years ago by River Friends and Town of Big Flats.
- Used for picnics, lunches, boat paddle registrations and a quite place to relax.





Flowing into Steuben County

- Helped the Finger Lakes Land Trust protect a beautiful a 120-acre piece of riverfront property in the Town of Corning, from development.
- Partnered with the Steuben County Visitor's Bureau help Steuben communities (Campbell, Cohocton and Addison)with river development plans for recreation, education, tourism and environmental stewardship.
- We participated in the Taste of Summer event on Corning's Northside with a community river paddle and information tent during the event.

2016 River calendars

Nature's picture perfect beauty all year long



- Our local photographers provided 24 beautiful photos of our rivers for our calendar fund-raiser.
- Local poets and writers contributed verses to it.
- We printed 300 calendars and sold them through locally-owned retail businesses
- We charged \$15 for each calendar.
- The money raised stays in the community to help River Friends protect and promote the river

Fishing derbies



May 16 Pike Derby Eldridge Lake:

- 44 anglers
- 31.5 inch pike winner
- Raised \$700



Aug. 15 family fishing derby

Brick Pond:

- 35 children competed
- \$100 1st place for 14.5 catfish caught by 6-year-old Elmira girl.
- Raised \$1,960



Money raised will be used to continue to promote fishing, water safety and environmental education.

Finances

“We run a tight canoe.”

- Lean and efficient \$120,000 annual budget.
- Low overhead.
- One full-time employee/no health care benefits.
- We are a small organization that is able to successfully develop programs and projects through partnerships.
- We finance our projects through grants, in-kind donations of labor, equipment and supplies.
- All the money we raise stays in the community.



Hope to see you on the water or a riverside trail in 2016

- *J. Pfiffer, executive director Chemung River Friends*

