

CHEMUNG RIVER FRIENDS 2019 ANNUAL REPORT NOTES

RIVER DEVELOPMENT/ACCESS:

River Friends led a project to make badly needed improvements at the Fitch's Bridge Boat Launch in Big Flats. Improvements included: installing a concrete boat ramp, grading and paving the badly rutted and pot-holed access road and parking lot and installing a drainage pipe to reduce erosion and storm water damage.

“The scores of potholes, ruts and pooled water made it one of the worst launch sites on the river,” said River Friends Executive Director Jim Pfiffer. “It was impossible to drive a vehicle on the access road and parking lot without hitting potholes. It was so bad motorists were driving off the road and onto the grass causing more ruts and drainage problems in the turf.”

The project was a community partnership that involved River Friends, the Sportsmen's Federation of Chemung County, an Elmira Heights contractor, an Elmira fabricating business and a municipality. The launch is owned by the nonprofit Sportsmen's Federation of Chemung County. The town of Big Flats paved for free and Edger Contractors in Elmira installed the concrete ramp for free. River Friends financed the \$16,627 cost of materials.

The 30-foot concrete ramp was installed in July and features a plaque honoring the late Tom Beecher, a former River Friends board president who died in 2017 and who enjoyed fishing and paddling on the river. The plaque was created and donated to River Friends by Southern Tier Custom Fabricators in Elmira.

CORNING RIVER DEVELOPMENT: We worked with City of Corning officials on their 10-year river/parks development plan. They hope to improve access to the river, and conditions in the city's parks, trails and river/fishing access. The city hired an engineering firm to seek the public's input in developing the plan.

River Friends provided advice, data and PowerPoint presentations to city officials about our plans to create a 10-mile, primitive and mowed grass trail loop on the grassy Chemung Riverbanks spanning six municipalities in Steuben County.

OSPREY NESTING CAMERA: We installed a camera on a third-floor rear porch of the Finger Lakes House, adjacent to the Chemung River in Elmira to provide 24/7 free public online webcam access the ospreys living on a nesting pole on Clinton Island in the river. The \$12,000 project was a partnership involving River Friends, Finn Academy in Elmira and grants from the Anderson Foundation and Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger



Lakes. We held a press conference at the Finger Lakes House to announce the project and unveil the camera. We use the amazing ospreys as calling cards to get people, who might not otherwise care about the river, interested in the river and in protecting the ospreys and the clean water.

Each year, River Friends helps other organizations erect osprey nesting poles along the river – including the island at Dunn Field in Elmira --and area lakes

and marshes. The nesting pole near Dunn Field is one of four erected in Chemung County by River Friends and other organizations. The ospreys nest here because of the clean water, plentiful fish and available nesting sites. They are a sign that our river habitat is healthy and clean.

CHOOSE CLEAN WATER LOBBY DAY IN D.C.

Chemung River Friends Executive Director Jim Pfiffer was invited by the Choose Clean Water Coalition to be part of an annual March 6 lobby day in Washington, DC to advocate for laws, funding and support for clean rivers and streams stretching from the Chemung River to the Chesapeake Bay.



Jim Pfiffer, (far right, back row) and other coalition members met with Congressman Antonio Delgado (D-NY), (middle back row)

Pfiffer and more than 100 coalition members met with 40 congressional offices to seek support for improving and protecting the waterways in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, which includes The Twin Tiers, and is home to more than 18 million people. We requested that Congress increase funding for the Chesapeake Bay restoration effort, specifically \$90 million for the Environmental Protection Agency Chesapeake Bay Program, up from \$73 million.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION – WATERS AND LAND



Nearly 20 volunteers from Chemung River Friends and Southern Tier Fabricating in Elmira removed more than 500 pounds of trash and litter and 1,000 pounds of brush and trees from tiny Heller Creek on Elmira's Northside.

The litter included plastic bottles and bags, lottery tickets, food wrappers and containers, a TV set, tires, a wooden chair, metal pipes, metal grates, cinderblocks and wood scraps. The group used a tractor, chains, chainsaws, garbage bags, and five-gallon buckets to complete the project.

The creek empties into Eldridge Lake, home to many youth fishing derbies and one of the gems of Elmira's historic culture.

HOMELESS CAMPSITES: We worked with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and area local law enforcement to clean up more than 1,800

pounds of debris and garbage at two secluded homeless tent camps along the river. One was near Dunn Field in Elmira and the other near a riverside trail in West Elmira. This Dunn Field camp was the largest homeless camp River Friends has encountered in its 11 years. The site was badly trashed and full of stolen bicycles and other items.



Some of the trash at the camp site

DEC employees used a bulldozer to build a primitive dirt road to the camp and used a dump truck and a front-end loader to clean up the debris.

The dirt road will make it easier for law enforcement officers to patrol the area to reduce future similar camps. We are not opposed to camping along the river if the campers get the landowners permission and they don't

trash the place.

EDUCATION

LEARNING ROCK: Partnership with the Finn Academy and Town of Big Flats to use 13.5 tons of large 360-year-old limestones to build a semi-circle classroom at Bottcher's Landing Boat Launch in Big Flats. The outdoor classroom will be used by schools and residents for environmental classes, reading, writing or enjoying a peaceful rest in the shade under a large maple tree overlooking the Chemung River. Seneca Stone in Seneca Falls donated the two-to-three-foot-wide stones.

SAVE THE SALAMANDERS

We helped a fifth-grade class at Horseheads Elementary School plan and publicize a public event in May at Tanglewood Nature Center and Museum in Big Flats to raise awareness and funds to help save the hellbenders that have disappeared from the Chemung River. A few have been found in the Susquehanna River.

BUTT OUT ANTI-POLLUTION PROGRAM: We worked in partnership with a local tobacco awareness organization to educate several hundred high school students about how cigarette butts – the most littered item in the world – harm wildlife and our clean water. The

students spent May 11 cleaning up butts from community streets and parks and made them into a work of art.



TREE PLANTING: We donated and helped Big Flats Elementary School students on April 25 plant two hardwood trees on school property as part of an Arbor Day celebration and program to educate the students about the importance of trees, pollinators and clean water.

2019 WATERSHED FORUM: River Friends developed a four-member education panel to give an Oct. 4 presentation to participants in the 2019 Upper Susquehanna Coalition Clean Water Forum at Binghamton University. The topic was educating the public and municipal officials about the EPA's anti-pollution program to clean the Chesapeake Bay and all watershed (ours included) that drain into the bay.

LEARN ABOUT RIVER ANIMALS PROGRAMS: River Friends director gave eight public presentations to more than 160 people, about animals that live near the river. The popular programs were held at the Finger Lakes House in Elmira and helped raise more than \$800 in donations.

ECO-RECREATION

NATURE STROLLERS: We led six Nature Strollers hikes (May through until October) at boat launches, nature trails, creeks and other outdoor locations for more than 80 children, parents and grandparents. Each hike had an educational theme we discussed with the hikers and we introduced people to new place to go enjoy nature. The programs raised \$450 in donations.

LACKAWANNA RAIL TRAIL MILE MARKERS: In October, River Friends painted mile markers and installed fence mile markers on the five-miles of the eight-mile Lackawanna Rail Trail from the Town of Ashland to Eldridge Park in Elmira. Yellow paint and metal stencils, made and donated to River Friends by Vulcraft of NY in Chemung, were used to apply the markers.

The mile marker project was a partnership involving River Friends, Chemung County, the City of Elmira and the Elmira-Chemung Transportation Council. The metal stencils were fabricated and donated to River Friends by Vulcraft NY in the town of Chemung. The markers are part of a plan to determine how and where to place more permanent distance markers and see how they will be used by the public. Additional distance markers – installed on posts or fences along the trail – may be installed in the future.



SAFETY



The Chemung River became safer, cleaner and better patrolled in May thanks to a new swift-water rescue boat, motor and equipment purchased for the Elmira Fire Department through a partnership with Chemung River Friends.

The 14-foot, eight-person, inflatable boat and 25-80 horsepower jet-drive motor was purchased by Chemung River Friends and donated to the fire department, thanks to a \$9,600 grant from the Community

Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes. The fire department and River Friends each invested \$250 in the project. The cost of the total project, including safety equipment, totals more than \$14,000.

The inflatable boat will make it easier, quicker and safer for firefighters to access the river. The propless (jet) motor will allow the boat to safely travel in shallow and rocky river bottoms,

where a propeller-driven motor would be damaged or destroyed. The Chemung River is especially rocky and water levels are low during the summer months.

The new equipment will be shared in partnership with River Friends for other uses, including:

- Monitoring and cleanup of river pollution and dump sites.
- Removal of paddling hazards (downed trees, flotsam piles and other obstructions).
- Teaching public paddling and water safety classes.
- River water testing and monitoring.
- Riverbank erosion monitoring.
- River rescue training for firefighters.

LAW ENFORCEMENT BOAT LAUNCH INSPECTION PROGRAM

The Chemung County Sheriff's Department, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and River Friends began a joint effort to visit boat launches during the year to talk with river users about boating safety and conservation laws. The boat launch inspection program is designed to connect law enforcement and River Friends with river users, in a positive and friendly manner, and to teach river safety.

River Friends purchased life vests and donated them to the sheriff's department to be given to boaters who are found on the waterways without life vests. The law enforcement boat launch inspections continued periodically throughout the summer, and expanded to Park Station Lake in Erin and other public bodies of water in Chemung County,

NATIVE AMERICAN RIVER HISTORY

History begins at our rivers. That's where the first indigenous people built their villages and where the first European settler to our area, Col. John Hendy, built his log cabin. Rivers were a source of food, water, transportation, bathing and spiritual connections for the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) in New York. River Friends works to preserve that historic connection to our waterways and the indigenous people who lived along the river.



We helped 63 third-grade students from Big Flats Elementary School plant a school garden with the staples of the Haudenosaunee diet – corn, squash and beans in a raised bed on school grounds. The students learned how the Haudenosaunee built, planted and maintained their gardens and how they stored and cooked the corn, beans and squash. River Friends co-sponsored a project with Elmira High School students to create a 12-foot-long painted mural reflecting the culture, history and life of the Haudenosaunee in our area. Over 35 students spent more than a year researching and creating the colorful and detailed mural that will hang in the school library.



Held a unique blanket ceremony under pine trees at Big Flats Community Park, partnership with Chemung Valley History Museum in Elmira. Used blankets in a circle to demonstrate 500 years of indigenous history in North America.

2019 Grants

| Source | Amount | Purpose |
|--|---------|---|
| Anderson Foundation | \$7,500 | Install osprey camera |
| Arts Council of the Southern Finger Lakes | \$3,347 | Native American mural at Elmira High School |
| Rose's Youth Philanthropists | \$500 | River canoe summer camp |
| Hilliard Foundation | \$5,000 | General operating programs and projects |
| Community Foundation of Elmira-Corning and the Finger Lakes | \$530 | River and boat launch trash and illegal dump sites clean ups. |

Chemung River Friends 2020 budget

| Expense | Amount |
|--|-----------------|
| Fees and licenses | \$350 |
| Accounting fees | \$4,600 |
| Sub total | \$4,950 |
| | |
| Property insurance | \$200 |
| Rent, parking utilities | \$1,800 |
| Repairs/equip/maint. | \$200 |
| Sub total | \$2,200 |
| | |
| Books/subscriptions | \$1,500 |
| Postage/mailing | \$900 |
| Printing/copying | \$3,800 |
| Program expenses | \$15,000 |
| Supplies | \$1,000 |
| Phone/computer | \$2,000 |
| Subtotal | \$24,200 |
| | |
| Advertising/marketing | \$1,200 |
| NYS disability | \$1,800 |
| Liability and D&O insurance | \$1,700 |
| Meals/entertain | \$500 |

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|---|------------------|
| Staff development | \$900 |
| Subtotal | \$6,100 |
| | |
| River trail website development | \$7,500 |
| Prefab restroom | \$6,500 |
| South Corning Boat Launch improvements | \$12,000 |
| Administration of the 3 projects above | \$3,000 |
| Subtotal | \$29,000 |
| | |
| Retirement | zero |
| Directors salary | \$51,935 |
| FICA/med | \$3,973 |
| NYS unemployment | \$92 |
| NY income tax w/h | \$101 |
| Mileage | \$3,200 |
| Subtotal | \$59,301 |
| | |
| Total | \$125,751 |

2020 Revenues Chemung River Friends

| Source | Amount |
|------------------------------------|------------------|
| Municipal funds | \$31,500 |
| Mail fund-raising | \$20,000 |
| Room tax | \$22,000 |
| Grants | \$5,000 |
| Program/presentation fees | \$4,000 |
| Business and industry donations | \$5,000 |
| Guided paddle fees | \$4,000 |
| Board fundraising | \$1,000 |
| Bank savings interest | \$65 |
| CD interest | \$1,500 |
| Subtotal | \$94,065 |
| Contingent funds (savings account) | \$33,686 |
| Total | \$125,751 |

Bank funds: as of Dec. 2019

DIRECTORS CHECKING: \$8,312

PAYROLL CHECKING: \$5,946

SAVINGS: \$60,854

CDs: \$101,355

TOTAL: \$176,467