

2022



# ANNUAL REPORT

Friends of the Chemung River Watershed  
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# A Letter from the Former Executive Director

On February 13, 2023, we initiated a flawless transition to our new interim executive director, Elizabeth Zilinski. The Board and I provided guidance as Liz took the reins, and she hit the ground running! Liz has over a decade of experience working in various roles with nonprofit organizations. We are confident that our partners, donors, and members are in great hands while we search for a permanent director.

When Liz and her family relocated to the Southern Tier almost a decade ago, she says she was immediately struck by the natural beauty of this region: the green, hilly landscapes; the rich diversity of wildlife; and especially, the river. She was introduced to many of her favorite parks and trails through programs provided by Friends of the Chemung River Watershed (FCRW) and its membership.

We had so many great programs last year, it was difficult to choose which ones to feature. In 2022, pandemic restrictions came to an end and people were eager to return to group activities. This meant that our outdoor recreation programs generated waiting lists and our River Guardians had their hands full with clean ups and maintenance. With so many more people out on the river, our need to get life jackets on every boater, big and small, was more important than ever. Environmental education and safety programs encouraged river-side camaraderie and the importance of many small efforts when it comes to preventing water pollution.

We brought our message of responsible river stewardship to our youngest river friends through summer camps and riverside hikes. Watercolor workshops with local artist, Bridget Bossart van Otterloo,

and fly-fishing classes with Jim Emmick had everyone smiling and learning new skills. Local artist Shannah Warwick installed eco-friendly art installations along the riverside trails, and a community-wide scavenger hunt to find these hidden gems was met with great success.

Thanks to our donors, we were able to continue funding a full-time executive director and all of our community outreach programs, employ a marketing intern to streamline our social media engagement, and fund all of our programs for the year.

We gained new members, reached new audiences, and had a documented positive impact on the community. Most importantly, we completed our five-year strategic planning process, which will inform our future programming with input from community stakeholders, donors, and government agencies.

Our mission is nothing without the dedication of our members and your participation in our programming. As I did, Liz looks forward to engaging with the people of Elmira, Corning, Horseheads, and surrounding areas as we all work together to share our love of the Chemung River and ensure that our children and grandchildren will have clean water and a safe place to boat, float, fish, and play. So, my message this year is the same: sign-up for our quarterly digital newsletter, follow us on Facebook or Instagram, subscribe to our Nature Blog, and sign-up for as many programs as you can!

Sincerely,

Emily J. Marino  
Former Executive Director  
Friends of the Chemung River Watershed



# Friends of the CHEMUNG RIVER W A T E R S H E D

*"We must begin thinking like a river if we are to leave a legacy of beauty and life for future generations."*

- David Brower -



Friends of the Chemung River Watershed [FCRW] is a 501c3 non-profit organization that partners with municipalities, sponsors, and members to protect these waterways and use them to improve the quality of life, economy, and natural environment of our communities. Since 2009, we have worked to make our rivers and waterways easier, safer, and more fun to use and enjoy.

Through education, outreach, and stewardship programs, we've worked tirelessly to protect, promote, and preserve the 45-mile-long Chemung River, its tributaries (the Canisteo, Cohocton, Cowanesque, and Tioga Rivers), and the greater watershed.

## **OUR MISSION GUIDES OUR DAILY WORK. OUR VISION GUIDES OUR FUTURE WORK.**

The mission of the FCRW is to protect the Chemung River Watershed while promoting the responsible recreational enjoyment of its waterways and riverbanks.

Our vision is a world where the natural beauty and health of the river's ecosystem is valued and maintained by students, the community, and the regional policy makers; and where the public enjoys regular outdoor recreation on the river and riverside trails supported by local infrastructure and regional business.



Friends of the  
**CHEMUNG RIVER**  
W A T E R S H E D

## Our Core Values

### COMMUNITY & QUALITY OF LIFE

Rivers that are used frequently make it easier for businesses to attract and keep employees and help keep people invested in these areas.



01

#### **WE HOSTED A WEEK-LONG ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION SUMMER CAMP FOR CHILDREN.**

Children in our week-long day camp in the Town of Elmira (pictured above) learned about river safety and environmental stewardship from our educators. Our camp featured a pool large enough to have children learn important safety skills in a kayak without any fear or danger and ended with a fun Chemung River kayak tour. Little river enthusiasts grow up to be big river friends!

02

#### **WE HOSTED THE AGNES FLOOD MEMORIAL PADDLE. HOW FAR WE'VE COME!**

The Agnes Flood Memorial Paddle and Community Concert was a two-day event with our partners the Cantata Singers, Endless Mountain Outfitters, artist Erica Unterman, Link Movement, Los Panchos, and representatives from Corning Community College, Elmira College, and the Museum of the Earth, highlighting our community's amazing natural outdoor recreational resources and how far we have come as a region since 1972.

03

#### **WE PARTNERED WITH LOCAL ARTISTS TO INSPIRE YOUR RIVER-SIDE CREATIVITY.**

Local fiber artist Shannah Warwick created art installations along the river trails and we launched a community-wide scavenger hunt to find these installations.

*#FascinationsByTheRiver*. As summer breezes called folks out to the water, local artist and instructor Bridget Bossart van Otterloo hosted the Riverside Watercolor Painting Workshop, a plein air painting workshop focused on landscape watercolor painting. At the Corning Museum of Glass's exhibit, *Reused Restored Rethought: Glass After the 1972 Chemung River Flood*, we held an interactive demonstration of how land use and weather conditions affect river flooding.



*Friends of the*  
**CHEMUNG RIVER**  
W A T E R S H E D

## Our Core Values

### CONSERVATION

Rivers account for much of the world's drinking water and feed biodiversity and agriculture. The Chemung River contains some of the cleanest water in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, and more than half the local drinking water is supplied by the river.



01

#### **WE PARTNERED WITH LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS AND GOVERNMENTS TO DO RIVER CLEAN-UPS ALL YEAR LONG.**

Pictured above, the Corning Rotary Club is all smiles after a full morning of river beautification in May 2022! Not only does our organization partner with other local groups, we also work with local government to ensure that our river stays clean and accessible. This includes boat launch sites, river-side trails, and other locations close to the Chemung River. In 2022, more than 100 volunteers picked up litter with us.

02

#### **WE INSTALLED MORE RIPARIAN BUFFERS AROUND CHEMUNG COUNTY.**

A riparian buffer consists of plants--trees, shrubs, and perennials--alongside the river that help provide shade and filtration. In partnership with the Eldridge Park Carousel Preservation Society, Inc., and with the help of the Upper Susquehanna Coalition, we planted 180 trees around Eldridge Lake, providing shade, wildlife habitats, and natural water filtration for the lake.

03

#### **WE EDUCATED HIKERS, BIKERS, AND OTHER TRAIL USERS ABOUT TRAIL ETIQUETTE.**

Partnering with Eagle Scout Jacob Miller and Chemung County Highway Superintendent Chris Doane, we completed the installation of the White Wagon Nature and Education Trail, educating hikers about trail history, trail etiquette--especially Leave No Trace--ticks, local birds, animals, and fauna. We'll be doing a ribbon cutting this spring. Meanwhile, Eagle Scout Lucas Drapikowski worked with us to map out and mark a two-mile section of unmarked river-side trail in West Elmira which continues to assist hikers, bikers, and cross-county skiers; and Milo Miller installed bird boxes at Seeley Creek.



*Friends of the*  
**CHEMUNG RIVER**  
W A T E R S H E D

## Our Core Values

### ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION, ADVOCACY, & RIVER SAFETY

Rivers offer an easy and fun way to see and learn more about wildlife and nature, but rivers are wild natural resources and must be enjoyed safely and with respect.



# 01

#### **WE OUTFITTED 200 RIVER FRIENDS WITH FREE LIFE JACKETS.**

Our life jacket giveaways are always popular, but this year was exceptional. In a single day at the Wisner Farmer's Market in Elmira, we gave away 200 life jackets to families and their children in less than 90 minutes! Life jackets came with whistles, a small but important safety device when out on the water.

# 02

#### **WE FIXED SOME MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT WASTE MANAGEMENT AND TAUGHT OUR RIVER FRIENDS WHAT THE BUZZ WAS ALL ABOUT.**

We held two Science Café Speaker Series around the community, allowing local experts to present on topics of science and nature. We hosted a group tour of the Chemung County Landfill, run by Casella, which included a presentation on beekeeping and a bus ride through the site. Participants were educated on correctly managing waste and the processes used for reducing storm water runoff, as well as the importance of local pollinators.

# 03

#### **WE OUTFITTED LOCAL FIRE DEPARTMENTS WITH WATER RESCUE EQUIPMENT.**

The Gibson Fire Department, Campbell Fire Department, and Painted Post Fire Department were outfitted with water rescue equipment, including life jackets, throw bags, and helmets through our safety program. We also paid for four firemen from Chemung County to receive low-head dam rescue training in Oriskany, NY, at the Swiftwater Training Facility. While we hope that our education and outreach will reduce the need for river rescues, we know the importance of having the right equipment when out on the river.



*Friends of the*  
**CHEMUNG RIVER**  
W A T E R S H E D

## Our Core Values

### EGO-TOURISM & OUTDOOR RECREATION

Rivers attract tourists and businesses to the region and encourage growth, sharing of services, and connections with other river communities; and they offer family-oriented recreation that helps improve health and wellness.



01

#### **WE SOLD OUT OF TICKETS FOR OUR KAYAK RENTAL PROGRAM.**

In partnership with Endless Mountain Outfitters, we launched our Kayak Rental Program, pairing guided tours of the Chemung River with food and entertainment from local business, including Finger Lakes House and Diversion Brewery. We had over 100 people sign up for these events. For many, this was their first river tour, but it certainly won't be their last! They now have all the knowledge they need to enjoy the water trail, and where to park their watercraft to dive into local eateries.

02

#### **WE SOLD OUT OF TICKETS FOR OUR INTRODUCTION TO FLY-FISHING CLASS.**

Not only did our fly-fishing class spots sell out, we had a waiting list! The people have spoken, and they say, "blub, blub." Participants were taught basic strategies for fly fishing, including how to fish for trout, bass, and other game fish that inhabit our local waters. Equipment was provided by our organization and the classes, which also taught basic fly fishing knots and tools of the trade, were led by avid fly fisherman and FCRW board member (and 2023 board president), Jim Emmick.

03

#### **WE SWAPPED STORIES AND KAYAKS WITH THE COMMUNITY.**

As paddling season came to a close, we invited everyone down to a 9-mile float paddle that ended with our Outdoor Recreation Flea Market/Kayak Swap. Kayaks, canoes, bicycles, fishing poles, and more were available to sell and swap while local vendors sold food and Italian ice. Donors at this event were gifted a hula-hoop and hooping lessons from Filomena Jack of Hoop Happy! It was a great end to the season, and a wonderful way to share our mission and values with the community.

# Financial Report

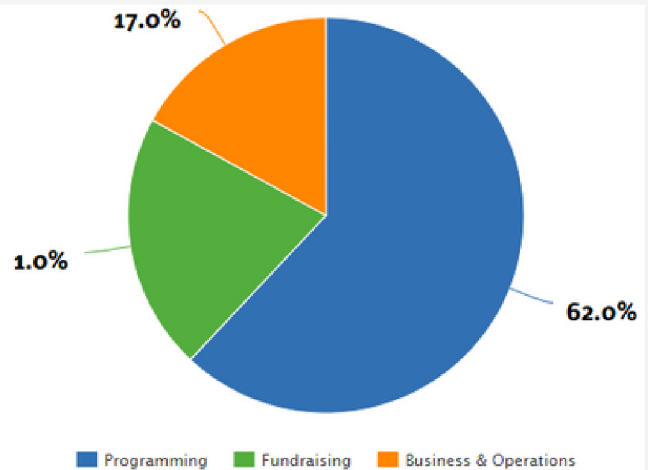


## 155% Increase in Program Spending in 2022

Thanks to generous grants and donations, we were able to greatly increase our program budget for the year. This included hiring a full-time executive director to plan and provide programs for our community, recruiting local talent to host educational workshops and recreational activities, and purchasing safety equipment for successful river programs. In total, \$98,035 (62%) of our \$159,290 budget was used for programming expenses.

The remainder of our budget was used for fundraising and business expenses, including postage and mailings, rent, insurance, accounting fees, and training for our board and staff.

In 2022, we really stepped up our effort to be more self-sufficient, and what a successful year we had!



*Most of our programming expenses were funded through individual donations.*

While 31% of our program funding came from public and government grants, 49% (\$46,450.50) of our programming costs were covered by individual member donations, events, and other fundraising programs. The remaining expenses were covered through board donations and other income. The support we had from the community this year was wonderful and really encouraged our organization to develop more educational and recreational offerings going forward. That includes two hundred and sixty nine active donors, over a thousand newsletter subscribers, and nearly five thousand followers on social media.



# Financial Supporters

*Our organization depends on support from members, individuals, corporate giving, and foundation and municipal grant funding. We could not have met all of our goals this year without your generous contributions.*

*We have so much gratitude for the foundations and sponsors who provided invaluable support to our organization in 2022, helping us keep the Chemung River safe and accessible.*





# Friends of the CHEMUNG RIVER W A T E R S H E D

## 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Lee "Rip" Doud, President**  
*Owner, Bulkhead Hardware (Retired)*

**Jim Emmick, Vice President**  
*Science Teacher (Retired)*

**Austin Farrell, Treasurer**  
*Relationship Manager, Chemung Canal Trust Company*

**Don Hall, Secretary**  
*Treasurer, Chemung Valley Audubon Society*

**Jeff DeMeritt, Board Member**  
*Engineer, Corning, Inc. (Retired)*

**Monica Li, Board Member**  
*Air Traffic Controller, Federal Aviation Administration*

**Dave Pindel, Board Member**  
*Biology Dept. Chair & Professor, Corning Community College*

**Kyle Reynolds, Board Member**  
*Analyst, NYS Off. of Temporary & Disability Assistance*

**Emily Smith, Board Member**  
*Assistant Registrar Loans, Corning Museum of Glass*

**Robert Switala, Advisor**  
*Planning and Economic Development Director, Town of Big Flats*

**Tanya McGee, Advisor**  
*MRP Associate Planner, Chemung County*

**Nikole Watts, Advisor**  
*Storm Water Educator, Chemung County Soil and Water*

**Patrick Wood, Advisor**  
*Attorney, Welch Law Firms*



*Pictured above is FCRW Board President, Rip Doud, volunteering at our new pollinator garden at Botcher's Landing.*



## **EMILY J. MARINO** **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

A veteran of the nonprofit sector and native of the Southern Tier, Emily has served with a variety of local nonprofit organizations in the Corning/Elmira area. She holds an MBA from the Simon School of Business with the University of Rochester and an MA from Syracuse University. Emily is an avid runner, hiker, kayaker, and gardener.