

A Seasonal Publication of The Friends of the Shiawassee River • Founded 1995 • Autumn 2007 • Vol. 11, Issue 3

A New Look for the Friends!

Have you noticed? Thanks to the help of Norman Moats of Architectural Images in Southfield, the Friends of the Shiawassee has a new logo! The great blue heron, a long-time symbol of the wildlife and habitat found on the river, is featured along with our tagline: “care, share, enjoy”. Let us know what you think!



Thanks to Community and Local Business, Shiawassee River Cleanup a Success!

by Heidi Frei, Program Coordinator, TNC & FOSR

Despite high water levels and rain, over 115 community volunteers gathered the morning of August 25th to care for the Shiawassee River. Volunteers gathered at sites along the river, including Geeck Rd. Park near Bancroft, Heritage Park in Corunna, the Oakwood St. Bridge in Owosso, and Henderson Park, to remove debris from the River’s banks and adjacent parks.

A Community Effort

The Owosso Rotary Club, working from Harmon Patridge Park, turned out the most volunteers of all participating groups. Others participating include: Shiawassee Conservation District, City of Owosso, Caledonia Charter Township, the City of Corunna, Knights of Columbus, OMS Builders Club, Owosso Kiwanis, Cub Scout packs #240 and #387, Shiawassee Community Mental Health, Shiawassee Family YMCA, and The Nature Conservancy. Owosso area students also improved the James Miner Walkway by painting over graffiti on bridge underpasses.

Local Business Support

Volunteers received a free t-shirt, compliments of Citizen’s Bank, and were treated to lunch, courtesy of Mancino’s of Owosso and the baking talents of several local volunteers from Corunna and Caledonia Charter Township. Thanks are also in order to Waste Management, which has continuously provided trash disposal over the years. Please also support Gilbert’s True Value Hardware, Meijer, Cheff’s Canoe Rental, and Mid-Michigan Screen Printing of Birch Run. Don’t miss out on the fun next year! The Friends will again host the annual cleanup in August of 2008.



Alaina Kraus, Boy Scouts of America, and Rep. Dick Ball, Laingsburg, join the cleanup effort. © TNC Archives.

Goals of the Friends of the Shiawassee River

Care for the River

Maintain and improve the River’s water quality, habitats, and natural banks. walkway users, park visitors, and others who enjoy the River.

Share the River

Enhance the community’s appreciation and knowledge of the River, especially among our youth.

Enjoy the River

Increase recreational access and responsible use of the river for anglers, canoeists,

Become a ‘Friend’ on page 4. For more information about the Friends of the Shiawassee River and membership, contact Heidi Frei at 989.723.9062 or shiawassee_mi@tnc.org.

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Dates with Friends November 7

FOSR Annual Meeting,
6:30 p.m., Baker College Welcome
Center, Owosso. All are welcome to
attend & dinner will be served.
Cost is \$10/person.

November 10

(Tentative) Riverside tree planting
of 180 trees near the Owosso Steam
Railroading Institute. 40-50
Volunteers with shovels are
needed!! Experience planting trees
desirable but not necessary. Please
contact Heidi Frei, 989-723-9062
for more information or to sign up.

November 29

Don Simons presents: History of
Shiawassee River, as part of Winter
Speaker Series.
7:00 p.m., Baker College Welcome
Center. More dates and speakers
TBA. Contact Heidi Frei, 989-723-
9062.

'Friends' Old and New Make Wine Tasting a Success!

by Heidi Frei, Program Coordinator, FOSR & TNC

The Friends of the Shiawassee River,
with support from The Nature
Conservancy in Michigan, held their 10th
Annual Wine Tasting Fundraiser and
Celebration at the DeVries Nature
Conservancy in Owosso on September 14,
2007.

Guests enjoyed a wonderful outdoor
setting along the River at DeVries. The
Friends were joined by many members of
the community who enjoyed a great
selection of red and white wines, gener-
ously donated by VG's of Owosso, and
appetizers provided by Eddie O'Flynn's
and the Courtside Café, both of Owosso.
Other businesses supporting the event
include: Big John's Steak & Onion / KFC
or Owosso, Owosso Organics, Owosso
Country Club, and Poorman's Ponderosa
farm of Laingsburg.

In addition to the wine,
appetizers, and other items,
area businesses and artists
supported the event through

the silent auction, which raised funds for
next year's River Cleanup. Contributions
were made by the Dimnick House Bed &
Breakfast of Owosso, Capstone Financial
Planning of Okemos, David-Lorne
Photography, Stephanie Judd of Fawn
Lake Photography, the Shiawassee Arts
Council, the Shiawassee Conservation
District, Studio G. of Fennville, local artist
Jeanne Curtis, and other private dona-
tions.

Please support these businesses and
artists that support our River and efforts
to improve its water and habitat. The
Annual Wine Tasting is the largest
fundraiser for the Friends and proceeds
will support conservation activities, such
as the Annual River Cleanup and water
quality monitoring in 2008.



Finished raingarden near Shiawassee River,
along Jerome St. © Andrea Berry, SCD.

Bio-Retention Rain Gardens Planted

by Andrea Berry, Watershed Project
Manager, Shiawassee Conservation District

A key project under the Mid-
Shiawassee River Restoration Project
was recently implemented at the Comstock
Center parking lot behind Roma's
Backdoor and NCG Cinema north of the
Shiawassee River in Owosso. Two bio-
retention rain gardens were put in place to
treat stormwater runoff that empties into
the Shiawassee River.

Stormwater Treatment

Stormwater runoff is rainwater that
falls onto all surfaces and does not seep
into the ground. This water flows across
surfaces, such as roads and parking lots,
picking up debris and other pollutants
before it empties, untreated, into our
waterways. Rain gardens address polluted
stormwater runoff by filtering this water
through specially mixed soils planted with
hardy native plants that are adapted to our
climate. These gardens capture
stormwater runoff from the Comstock
Center parking lot, filter it naturally, and
slowly release clean water to the

Shiawassee River. Be sure
to visit the gardens as they
bloom, demonstrating a
Best Management Practice
that addresses the problem of urban
stormwater runoff.

Goal to Improve Habitat

The primary goal of the Mid-
Shiawassee River Watershed Project is to
move toward the restoration of fisheries,
aquatic life and wildlife. This is being
achieved through the implementation of
Best Management Practices throughout the
project area such as these innovative bio-
retention rain gardens.

Local Partners

This watershed restoration effort
was made possible by a Clean Michigan
Initiative grant awarded to the Shiawassee
Conservation District, with additional
contributions from the City of Owosso.
Recognition for volunteer efforts go to
AmeriCorps Members with the Michigan
Groundwater Stewardship Program,

Friends of the Shiawassee River,
Shiawassee Master Gardeners, and staff
from the Natural Resource Conservation
Service, Conservation District and The
Nature Conservancy. Appreciation is also
given to Tim Horton's for donating
donuts; Roma's Backdoor for providing
pizza, and Jons-R-U's for donating a
portable toilet for volunteers to use. If
you have any questions on bio-retention
rain gardens or the Mid-Shiawassee River
Watershed Restoration Project, please
contact Andrea Berry at the Shiawassee
Conservation District 989-723-8263 ext.
3. Sincere thanks to everyone for support-
ing the Shiawassee Conservation District
and our Community to help make this
project a huge success!

Duck Feeding Harmful to Health of the River & Species

FOSR Archives

We all look for enjoyable experiences with the Shiawassee River, especially when we see flora and fauna up-close. One of the most common and longest-standing natural experiences on the Shiawassee is duck feeding, but wildlife experts suggest that this may not be good for ducks or the River.

While an occasional handful of bread crumbs thrown to ducks on the River will unlikely be harmful, concentrated onshore feeding of ducks creates dependency among wild waterfowl, supports the spread of disease, and can lead to environmental degradation of the shoreline.



Canadian and barnyard geese (in the Shiawassee River along Jerome St.) are invasive species brought by feeding and can outcompete the smaller, native mallard. © Tom Cook.

Additionally, many foods that we consume, such as cereals and snacks, are highly processed and contain ingredients and additives that may be harmful for wildlife.

The riverbank which runs adjacent to Jerome Street has long been a popular feeding spot for ducks, and the congregation of waterfowl has stripped the shoreline of vegetation and has generated trash and other debris in and along the River. We are fortunate to have a great community resource, the River and the bankside vegetation that keeps pollutants out of the waterway, and it is important to reduce environmentally damaging activities, such as duck-feeding, in the area to protect it. This will enable the natural riverbank vegetation, including those planted by the Shiawassee County Conservation District, to fully establish itself, reduce pollution, and help the ducks become true wild creatures.

Please don't feed the ducks in any location along the River. The entire community and future generations will thank you for your help in keeping the water clean, the shoreline growing, and the ducks healthy.

CREP Environmental and Financial Benefits Continue to Increase

by Donna Flagg, CREP Technician, Shiawassee Conservation District

Do you know of any cropland along the River that could be planted with trees or grasses to improve water quality? Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is open for enrollment as anticipation of the environmental and financial benefits continue.

CREP was created to address the environmental issues of soil erosion, water quality, and wildlife habitat by installing conservation practices such as grass plantings, filter strips, field windbreaks, wetland restorations and riparian forest buffers. To be eligible the land must be located in the Saginaw Bay, River Raisin, Western Lake Erie, or Lake Macatawa Watersheds, and must have a cropping history (4 out of 6 years from 1996 -

2001). In addition to preserving vulnerable land, landowners will receive financial incentives.

CREP participants will receive an annual soil rental rate payment, annual maintenance payment, 140% reimbursement of installation costs and a one time signing incentive payment. Payment amounts are based on assigned soil rental rates (SRR). The Michigan State Farm Service Agency has just announced that SRR have increased as much as \$17 an acre!

For more information contact Donna Flagg, CREP Technician at 989-723-8263 x3.



Thank you to our Blue Heron donors!

Charles and Bonnie Agerstrand
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Caroline & Ed Pritchett
Lyman Woodard
Bill Yocum
Clark & Joane Shanahan

Join the Blue Herons!

It's not too late to show your support for the Friends of the Shiawassee River! (pg.4)

Watershed Language Decoded

WATERSHED: A watershed is the geographic area of land that drains to a particular lake or pond or a particular river or stream. Watersheds, also called drainage basins or catchments, are defined by the natural topography of the landscape.

HEADWATERS: Headwaters is where a creek or river starts. A headwaters can be a spring, a lake or a wetland.

RIPARIAN: the interface between land and a flowing surface water body, or the land located on the banks of a river.

river ramblings

membership

The Friends of the Shiawassee have had another great year, thanks to a number of volunteers from the community, our partnership with The Nature Conservancy, local government, the Shiawassee Conservation District and DeVries Nature Conservancy.

Friends welcome Denny McGrath

Get a recap on the last year's activities at the Annual Meeting, Thursday, November 7, 2007, 6:30 - 8:30 p.m., at the Baker College Welcome Center. Guest speaker, Denny McGrath, Director of Strategic Initiatives for The Nature Conservancy in Michigan, will discuss The Conservancy's goals for the Shiawassee River Watershed and how to preserve agricultural land and benefit the environment.

He only recently joined the Michigan Chapter, but has been working for The Conservancy since 1983 when he took an internship with the Indiana Chapter. Denny has a B.S. in Forestry and Natural Resources from Purdue University and a

Annual Meeting on November 7. Reserve your seat today!

M.A. and M.S. from Indiana University in Public and Environmental Affairs and Geology.

Board members and officers will also be elected and dinner will be served. The cost is \$10 per person. To reserve seating, contact Heidi Frei at 989-723-9062 or shiawassee_mi@tnc.org.

Riverside Tree Planting

Help the Friends of the Shiawassee and the City of Owosso restore vegetation along the riverbank! Volunteers are needed to plant trees along the new trail extension near the #1225. A planting of 180 trees is tentatively scheduled for 11/10/07, which will require 40-50 volunteers. Volunteers will be trained on how to properly plant trees and care for them post-planting. Show your support for the River and sign you and your family or colleagues up to make a difference!

Name _____

Address _____

City/ST/Zip _____

Phone _____

email _____

Membership Options

- \$15 Friend
- \$30 Supporter
- \$50 Benefactor
- \$100 Blue Heron

River Interests (check all that apply)

- Canoeing
- Biking
- Park User
- Riverbank resident
- Fishing
- Other _____

Please make check payable & mail to: Friends of the Shiawassee • PO Box 402 • Owosso, MI 48867

Friends of the Shiawassee River

The Friends is a nonprofit volunteer organization in Shiawassee County, MI.

The **mission** of The Nature Conservancy is **to preserve** the plants, animals and natural communities that represent **the diversity of life on Earth** by protecting the lands and waters they need to survive.

The Conservancy and its 1 million members worldwide have protected more than 117 million acres on Earth. The Nature Conservancy embraces a **non-confrontational, market-based** approach for accomplishing its **science-driven** mission.

For more information, visit <http://nature.org/michigan>.

This publication produced by Friends of the Shiawassee River volunteers.



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c/o The Nature Conservancy in Michigan
Shiawassee River Program Office
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