

A Seasonal Publication of The Friends of the Shiawassee River • Founded 1995 • Summer 2007 • Vol. 11, Issue 2

## ‘Friends’ Program Grows with Addition of Summer Intern

The Friends of the Shiawassee River and The Nature Conservancy welcome Meghan Shea-Keenan to our conservation staff! Meghan is a recent graduate from Michigan State University’s Biosystems Engineering program. As part of her curriculum, she has experience planning community projects and designing bio-retention gardens on MSU campus. She will spend the summer working for The Nature Conservancy and Friends of the Shiawassee River building upon outreach efforts and aiding in technical projects. In the fall, she will begin graduate school at Virginia Tech to pursue a Master’s Degree in Urban Planning. Meghan loves to enjoy nature by hiking, biking, kayaking, and camping. Please join us in welcoming Meghan as a part of our staff!

## Be a Part of the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual River Cleanup on August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007!

by Heidi Frei, FOSR & The Nature Conservancy in Michigan

Join the Friends of the Shiawassee River at the 10<sup>th</sup> annual River Cleanup on Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. until noon! Participants are also invited to join us for a free lunch and celebration at the Amphitheater in Owosso following the Cleanup. The celebration will include music, educational opportunities, prizes, and a showcase of oddities found in the River.

Groups will meet at 9:00 a.m. at various locations along the River. Those wishing to ‘reserve’ a their favorite stretch of the river are asked to register in advance. Trash bags and 5-gallon buckets will be provided but additional donations are welcome. Volunteers should dress in old clothes and shoes (flip-flops not recommended), wear sunscreen and bug repellent, and bring gloves if desired.

### Register early to work on your favorite stretch

Service clubs, scout troops, employee associations, church groups and school organizations are welcome as well as family volunteers. Students can also earn volunteer hours for their participation but must bring a parent or guardian to sign a participation waiver unless completed in advance. Groups and individuals will be assigned tasks suited to their interests and ability and on-shore tasks can be assigned to those not wishing to get wet.

Register early to work on your favorite stretch of the River! Crews will be as-

signed to stretches from Walnut Hills to Harmon Partridge Park.

### River is a resource for all

The Shiawassee River is one of the best recreational assets and a centerpiece of our community. Many people hike, bike, paddle, and fish on or along the river and it’s our responsibility to keep the river healthy so that future generations may also enjoy the river. A free t-shirt will be provided to all participants.

### Canoes and boats needed

Boats and sturdy canoes that can transport debris are still needed and those able to donate their use for the morning should contact Heidi Frei, Program Coordinator for Friends of the Shiawassee River & The Nature Conservancy. Please also call in advance to register a large group, reserve a stretch of the river, or to sponsor a portion of the event at 989.723.9062 or shiawassee\_mi@tnc.org.



Volunteers turned river stewards from OHS Environmental Club at the 2002 River Cleanup. © Tom Cook, FOSR.

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## Dates with Friends

### Upcoming Events

#### July 17

FOSR Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m., DeVries Nature Conservancy. All are welcome to attend.

#### August 17

FOSR Board Meeting, 7:00 p.m., DeVries Nature Conservancy. All are welcome to attend.

#### August 25

Volunteer to help clean the Shiawassee River! Crews will work on stretches from Walnut Hills Campground to Patridge Park. To volunteer or to donate the use of your canoe or boat, contact Heidi Frei at 723.9062.

#### September 14

Friends of the Shiawassee River Wine Tasting fundraiser. Sample some of Michigan's best wines and help support the activities of the Friends!

## Heritage Water Trails Add History and Education to Canoe Experience

by Sue Julian & Heidi Frei

An effort is currently underway by Headwaters Trails, a group dedicated to the development of a trail network and accompanying recreational activities in the northwest headwaters region of Oakland County, to designate the segment of the Shiawassee River from Holly to Fenton as one of Michigan's first Heritage Water Trails.

The proposed trail will be seven river miles long and include signage that highlights cultural and historical markers such as the Water Works in Holly. The Friends of the Shiawassee River hope to expand this effort north to Corunna and Owosso to

showcase our beautiful stretch of the River and to promote our local heritage. The goal is to eventually extend the heritage trail route to Saginaw Bay.

Heritage water trails are routes on navigable waterways such as rivers, lakes, and canals designed and implemented to foster an interactive historical education experience. Historical markers posted on bridge crossing highlight historic events or themes related to the waterway. A companion guide provides a more detailed presentation of the historic material in addition to acting as a more conventional water trail guide with maps, put-in points, take-out points, rest stop locations, paddling conditions, etc. An interpretive program and exhibit at a local museum on or nearby the water trail may also be part of the experience.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the Heritage Water Trail in Owosso/Corunna, send an email to Shiawassee\_mi@tnc.org.

For more information on Heritage Water Trails, please visit Dr. Dave Lemberg's website (portions of this article taken from): [www.wmich.edu/glcms/watertrails/](http://www.wmich.edu/glcms/watertrails/)

To learn more about Headwaters Trails: <http://www.headwaterstrailsinc.org/>

### Sign for the Friends of the Shiawassee River email list.

Stay informed on river-related information including seminars, workshops, Board of Directors meeting summaries and other great river stuff! Send an email request to Heidi Frei at [hfrei@tnc.org](mailto:hfrei@tnc.org) or call the Shiawassee River Project office at 989.723.9062.

## DeVries Nature Conservancy Provides Education and Recreation along Shiawassee River

by Ken Algozin

Shiawassee County and the Owosso-Corunna community are the beneficiaries of a wonderful gift – 136 acres of farmland, forest and floodplain along the Shiawassee River that encompass the DeVries Nature Conservancy.

The DeVries Nature Conservancy is a nonprofit organization, created through a generous bequest of property and funding from Frances and Dr. Joseph (Jack) DeVries of Owosso. The Conservancy is endowed by a monetary gift from the DeVries and includes their home and several outbuildings which housed his show horses and a collection of restored sleighs, carriages, buggies, surreys and cutters. True to their interest in horse-powered agriculture and their love of nature, it was the DeVries' intent that the Conservancy would "protect and use the land, consistent with appropriate charitable and educational purposes, as a relatively natu-

ral habitat of fish, wildlife, plants or similar ecosystem...of flora and fauna of local historical interest and significance." The farm will be utilized as an historical or demonstration farm, preserving farm life and methods in use throughout Michigan's 150+ years of statehood.

### Open for Public Use

As we work behind the scenes to define our vision for the future, the DeVries Nature Conservancy will continue to offer educational programs and recreational opportunities for the public. The Conservancy is open daily to the public, from dawn to dusk. The hiking trails offer a variety of landscapes to explore, including riverfront, floodplain, upland forest, and open countryside. If you like to get dirty, join other volunteers in protecting the property's natural heritage by removing invasive plants, or consider adopting a small garden on the grounds. Other volunteer opportunities are

available; applications can be picked up at the main office, or sent by email. For information, please call Ken Algozin at 989-723-3365, or

by email at [info@devriesnc.org](mailto:info@devriesnc.org). The DeVries Nature Conservancy is located at 2635 N. M-52 in Owosso, just ¼-mile north of the Northside Animal Hospital and across from Redeemer Lutheran Church.

### Join us Even-numbered Wednesday mornings, 6:45 a.m.

Both experienced and novice bird watchers are invited to gather to catch a glimpse of the wide variety of birds that are found on the grounds. Binoculars and field guides are available for use, and coffee is provided at the end of the hike.



# Corunna High School Students Improve Water Quality

by Andrea Berry, Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project Shiawassee Conservation District

The Agri-science students at Corunna High School participated in a hands-on project to help stabilize soil eroding at the high school. Agricultural science teacher, Mark Forbush, teamed up with Andrea Berry of the Shiawassee Conservation District's Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project to control an erosive problem along the banks of the newly established detention stormwater pond. FFA students and Agri-science students implemented a Critical Area Planting to level, seed, and lay straw on the bare ground around one side of the pond.

The plan includes a single side planting of deep-rooted grasses, including red-top, ryegrass and two types of fescue will serve to illustrate how to implement and properly maintain vegetation to control erosion on a steep pond bank. The opposite bank was not eroding because it was initially established with topsoil and seed, and left to grow without being disturbed. The result of this planting is lower levels of sediment running into the stormwater detention pond allowing it to serve its purpose of slowly filtering and recharging groundwater, while creating wildlife habitat and improving water quality of the Shiawassee River floodplain. Future studies on this project will include comparing the different vegetative management styles on the pond banks.

This project is a demonstration of a

Best Management Practice used to improve water quality and habitat within a watershed. This Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project is funded under a Clean Michigan Initiative grant and is administered by the Shiawassee Conservation District. For more information on the Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project, please contact Andrea Berry at the Shiawassee Conservation District at (989) 723-8263 ext. 3.



Thank you to Cheff's Canoe Rental for their support of this year's River Cleanup!

Cheff's also provides 2 & 4 hour trips on the Shiawassee by appointment. Canoes & kayaks available.

Call Mike Cheff @  
989.288.7067 or  
989.494.9955

## Benefits of a Two-Stage Drainage Ditch

by Andrea Berry, Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project Manager

Adequate field drainage is important to anyone working on an agricultural field. Typical drainage ditches are trapezoidal in shape and designed to contain flows of 5 to 50 year storm events without overflowing banks. Classified as unstable streams, these trapezoidal ditches are oversized for low flow events and provide limited capacity for larger events. These traditional ditches require intensive routine maintenance and improvements to stabilize banks with vegetation and sustain drainage functionality.

A two-stage ditch functions as a natural stream with a deep central channel bordered on either side by shallower floodplains to dissipate energy of water during high flow

events. This floodplain minimizes soil erosion on bank sides caused by flashy storm events of high flowing water by concentrating water in a fast-flowing central channel. Water overflowing from the central channel in the floodplains has the benefit of allowing sediments to settle on these flat banks on either side of the central channel. The result is a reduction of sediment carried in the central channel to an emptying waterway, and an overall improvement in surface water quality.

### Best Management Practices

The Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed transects Shiawassee County and covers three unique sub-watersheds representing agricultural, ag-urban and urban land uses. The primary goal of this watershed restoration project is to move toward the restoration of waterway fisheries, and indigenous aquatic life and wildlife. This is being achieved through the implementation of Best Management Practices throughout the project area. As a part of the Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project, the first two-stage ditch in Shiawassee County and one of the first in Michigan will be installed to improve drainage potential and quality of delivered water to the Shiawassee River. This project is funded under a Clean Michigan Initiative watershed improvement grant and is administered by the Shiawassee Conservation District. For more information on two-stage ditches or the Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project, please contact Andrea Berry at the Shiawassee Conservation District at (989) 723-8263 ext. 3.

## Goals of the Friends of the Shiawassee River

### Care for the River

Maintain and improve the River's water quality, habitats, and natural banks.

### Enjoy the River

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

Become a 'Friend' fo the River 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.

# River Ramblings

# membership

Many thanks to those of you who volunteered to help clean the Shiawassee River and area parks and also to those who helped remove invasive species! Volunteers removed debris from the banks of the Shiawassee River in Owosso and in five city parks at the Riverbank Cleanup and Arbor Day Tree Planting on April 21<sup>st</sup>. The event was a huge success and fun for all involved. Parks included Harmon Patridge Park where volunteers also planted 100 native seedlings to protect against erosion. Following the cleanup, volunteers participated in a ceremonial planting of two native trees to celebrate Arbor Day, declared by Mayoral proclamation.

### Support from the Community

It was great to see a turnout of over 100 volunteers from the community and groups from around the county involved in stewardship of our River. Many of these volunteers also worked at DeVries Nature Conservancy removing garlic mustard, an invasive woodland species from Europe, during two stewardship days in May. Forty volun-

## River Clean Up on August 25. Get your service group involved today!

teers braved the cool weather on April 14<sup>th</sup> to remove garlic mustard. Another enthusiastic crew of students and volunteers removed over 26 large lawn bags full of the invasive weed on May 5<sup>th</sup>.

Special thanks are in order to Roma's Backdoor Restaurant for providing volunteers with lunch and to Tim Horton's for getting the morning started with doughnuts. Gilbert's True Value Hardware also generously donated painting supplies to cover vandalism on the bridges along Miner's Trail.

### Get involved!

With momentum from these successful events, the Friends are looking forward to our Annual River Clean-up on Saturday, August 25<sup>th</sup> and look for more support and involvement from the community.

**Check out the Friends online!  
visit [www.shiawasseeiver.org](http://www.shiawasseeiver.org)**

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

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.*



## Friends of the Shiawassee River

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

Friends of the Shiawassee River  
c/o The Nature Conservancy in Michigan  
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