

Friends Welcome Two “New” Friends

Friends to be led by new staff position



Heidi Frei and Bill Northcott join The Nature Conservancy's Shiawassee River Project located in the Owosso office. Heidi will serve as the staff director of the Friends of the Shiawassee River.

The Friends of the Shiawassee River welcome new staff members Heidi Frei and Bill Northcott to The Nature Conservancy's Shiawassee River Project. Heidi and Bill join Craig Burns, Field Representative, to lead conservation activities and partnerships throughout the watershed.

Heidi Frei

Heidi will work closely with the Friends of the Shiawassee River (FOSR) on conservation projects that will improve water quality and habitat in the Shiawassee River. In collaboration with the FOSR and communities in the watershed, Heidi will coordinate volunteer opportunities including river cleanups, invasive species workdays, aquatic sampling, riparian plantings, and newsletter updates.

Heidi has a B.S. in Forest Conservation and M.S. in Forestry with an emphasis on Latin American and Caribbean Studies from MSU. Before joining TNC, Heidi worked with non-profit Global ReLeaf of Michigan, coordinating conservation and volunteer activities within the Saginaw Bay watershed and

several communities. She has studied and worked in various regions of Brazil.

As a native of Oscoda and self-professed AuSable River rat, Heidi has always enjoyed natural resources and respected the ecosystem processes that govern them. She enjoys running, biking, hiking, camping, traveling, and outdoor activities. She also loves the beach and spending time with family, her boyfriend, and two “kids”- dog Sadie and cat Dave.

Bill Northcott

Bill is project manager for the Shiawassee River Program, also based in the Owosso office. Bill served as the state Director of Sustainable Agriculture. Prior to the Conservancy, Bill was a faculty member in the Biosystems and Agricultural Engineering Department at MSU. He still holds a visiting faculty appointment there and teaches courses in hydrology and water quality.

Bill is from east central Illinois where he has a 500 acre corn and soybean operation. His education includes a B.S. and Ph.D. in Agricultural Engineering and an M.S. in Crop Sciences from the University of Illinois.

Bill enjoys outdoor activities including hiking, camping, fishing and kayaking with his wife Carrie and son Ethan. Around the house he stays busy doing landscaping and gardening.

Bill and Heidi look forward to working with the Shiawassee community and appreciate your input. Please feel free to contact Heidi at 989-723-9062 or hfrei@tnc.org with any comments or suggestions.

The River View Friends Publication Gets a New Look!

Recognize the River View newsletter? First published in the Spring of 1996, we are now working with our partners at The Nature Conservancy to publish an updated version of our seasonal publication of the Friends of the Shiawassee River. For those of you new to the Friends of the Shiawassee River, this nonprofit, all volunteer organization was created in 1995 to renew the river-focused efforts started originally by James Miner back in the 1960-70s. The Friends have focused on river clean-up, education about river stewardship and enjoyment of the river. See the Friends organizational goals on page three. You'll now receive Spring, Summer, and Fall editions of this refreshed newsletter and you're invited to participate! Send your ideas, suggestions, comments, or photos of the Shiawassee River to Heidi Frei, Project Coordinator for The Nature Conservancy and Friends of the Shiawassee River, 1900 S. Morrice Rd., Owosso, 48867 or hfrei@tnc.org.

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Dates with Friends Workshops & Events

April 12

Peter Sinclair of The Climate Project will present a special program on Global Warming at the Michigan Wildlife Conservancy's (MWC) Bengel Wildlife Center in Bath on Thursday, April 12 at 7:00 p.m. Seating is limited. Advance reservations are required and can be made by calling Beth Elliott at the MWC office—(517) 641-7677 or by emailing wildlife@miwildlife.org.

April 14

Help Remove Garlic Mustard along the Shiawassee River! Join the Friends at DeVries Nature Conservancy on Saturday, April 14th from 9 am to 12 pm to remove exotic garlic mustard, which will improve conditions for native species. See story page 3.

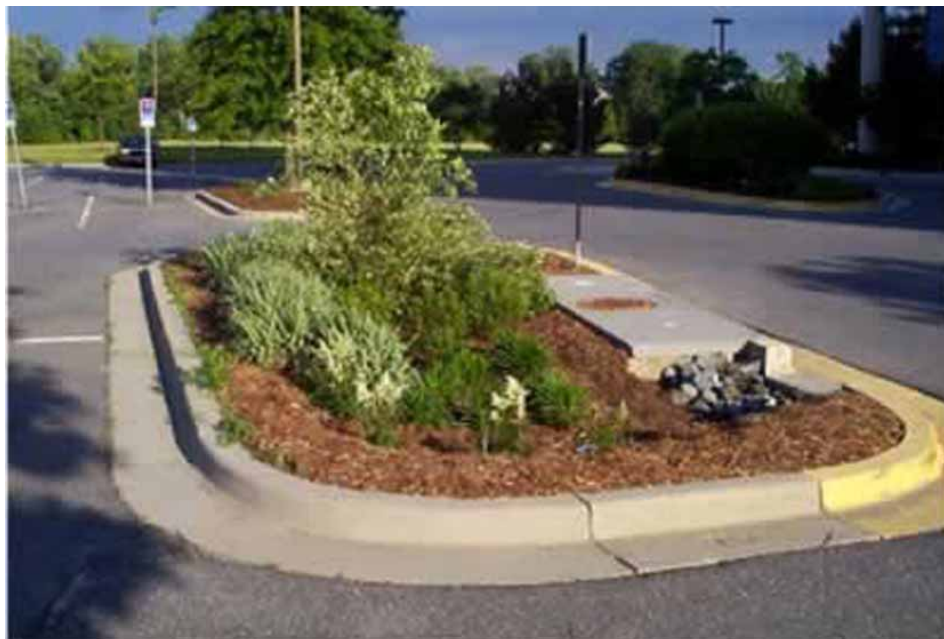
April 21

Spring Riverbank Cleanup and Tree Planting on Saturday, April 21, Comstock Center at 10am. Groups will be assigned to riverside areas within the city limits. If enough volunteers come, other county and city parks will be included.

May 15

Pond Workshop by Parker Ostrander, Michigan Groundwater Stewardship, will be presenting a Pond Workshop in Laingsburg with Dr. Don Garling, MSU Dept. of Fisheries and Wildlife. Though the workshop will be presented on a pond, the information is applicable to any waterfront property owner. Parker will also demonstrate his Lake-A-Syst program, which is available to any interested homeowners. The fee for the program will be approximately \$10. Contact Parker Ostrander at 989-723-8263 ext 3 or ostranderp2@michigan.gov. See story page 3.

Call to Friends, River Enthusiasts & Master Gardeners



Rain Gardens will be planted in Comstock Center along the riverbank in Owosso to act as a planted filtration system for parking lot run off. Volunteers are needed for the weekend of May 11-12.

The Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed project is searching for volunteers to help with the landscaping of two bio-retention rain garden projects, the first of their kind in Shiawassee County, at the Comstock Center in Owosso.

A bio-retention rain garden acts like a planted filtration system that is able to handle large amounts of runoff and pollutants from an urban parking lot. Bio-retention utilizes soils and plants to remove pollutants from storm water runoff, lets sediment settle out of the water and allows it to infiltrate naturally into the ground. This type of system is an example of low impact development, which involves innovative construction and design that minimizes negative impacts of urbanization on the environment.

Downtown Demonstration Site

The Comstock Center bio-retention rain garden project, funded by the Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Clean Michigan Initiative Project and the City of Owosso will serve as a demonstration of highly effective storm water management in an urban environment.

Spring 2007 Start up

Installation and landscaping will be accomplished through a collaborative effort of community members from Shiawassee County and hired professionals. Master Gardeners are highly encouraged to participate and earn hours for volunteer commitment, but all are invited to help and become a part of Owosso history. The garden planting is planned for May 11-12, 2007. For more information on volunteering with the project, please contact Andrea Berry at the Shiawassee Conservation District at (989) 723-8263 ext3 or andrea.berry@mi.nacdnet.net. Mid-Shiawassee River Watershed Restoration Project, Shiawassee Conservation District





Garlic Mustard takes over native Michigan wildflowers by choking out light, moisture, and nutrients.

Shiawassee County's Least Wanted

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Garlic mustard, native to Europe, was introduced to North America in the 1860's for food and medicinal purposes. Though intentions were good, garlic mustard has taken over and altered the ecology of many eastern forests, including those in Shiawassee County. Many native wildflowers that complete their life cycles in the springtime (e.g., spring beauty, wild ginger, bloodroot, and trilliums) occur in the same habitat as garlic mustard. Once introduced to an area, garlic mustard outcompetes native plants by aggressively monopolizing light, moisture, nutrients, soil and space. Wildlife species that depend on these early plants are deprived of essential food sources when garlic mustard replaces them while humans are deprived of the vibrant display of beautiful spring wildflowers.

See the Workshops and Events column on page two to learn how you can help remove Garlic Mustard from areas along the Shiawassee River in April.

Get the Latest on Friends

Sign up to be included in Heidi's Friends of the Shiawassee River email list. She puts together all kinds of river-related electronic information including seminars, workshops, Board of Directors meeting summaries and other great river stuff! Just send her an email and ask her to add your address to her group email at hfrei@tnc.org or call her at 989-723-9062.

Buffers, Plants, & Plots

Watershed farmers contribute to Shiawassee River conservation

The Nature Conservancy has been working closely with area farmers to adopt conservation practices since 2004. In 2006, farmers enrolled about 353 acres in the "Risk Protection Program" whereby producers try no-till farming techniques next to their typical tillage. No-till farming reduces the number of times a tractor pulls equipment through the field. This minimizes soil disturbance and erosion thereby improving water quality.

Though harvests are comparable under no-till and conventional systems, The Nature Conservancy assumes the risk of any decreased income. In 2005 and 2006, no-till soy bean fields were found to be at least as profitable, and many times more profitable, as conventional tillage. Results were mixed for corn crops due to variation in yield, though many times no-till yields were comparable to conventional methods. Eight producers also took advantage of \$22,000 from the "No-till Equipment Purchase Program" to buy first-time no-till equipment. Meanwhile, two producers utilized the "Filter Strip/Riparian Buffer Program" and received additional payments on about 25 acres of CREP riparian buffers.

The Nature Conservancy will continue to work with agricultural producers in 2007 in the Shiawassee River Watershed. For more information, contact Craig Burns, Field Representative for The Nature Conservancy, at 723-9062.

Waterfront Property (Pond) Workshop

Parker Ostrander, an AmeriCorps member serving in the Michigan Groundwater Stewardship Program at the Shiawassee Conservation District, is partnering with MSU Extension to hold a workshop on "Weed Management Strategies in Lakes and Ponds & Nutrient Management for all Surface Waters" scheduled for May 15. The workshop is intended for residents who live on lakes, rivers, ponds, and streams and will focus on practices that affect water quality and impact fish and wildlife populations. Dr. Don Garling, professor and pond management specialist from Michigan State University Dept of Fisheries and Wildlife, will be the guest speaker. Participants will also be led through a waterfront property evaluation called Lake*A*Syst to determine potential threats to groundwater quality. Residents interested in learning how their actions may affect water quality are encouraged to attend. A small fee will be charged. For more information, contact Parker Ostrander at 989-723-8263 ext 3 or ostranderp2@michigan.gov.

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 fishers, canoers, 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.

Join Friends as a member on page 4. For more information about the Friends of the Shiawassee River, contact Heidi Frei at 989-723-9062 or hfrei@tnc.org.

notes from Heidi

membership

Thanks are in order to all those who have donated their time and enthusiasm towards “reinvigorating” the Friends of the Shiawassee River”.

energized Board

To date, our board has convened twice since I started and has generated a host of excellent ideas. The board has been busy organizing details, such as our “new” newsletter, organizing our database and membership list, reviewing our bylaws, and planning other upcoming events, such as the Annual River Cleanup to be held in August. We’ll also hold our annual meeting in August to officially elect board members.

Fun Events Planned

We’re getting things started this spring with some fun, family-friendly events, including an Invasive Species Workday on April 14th at DeVries Nature Conservancy, a Riverbank and Trail

Cleanup and an Arbor Day Tree Planting, both on April 21st on Miner’s Trail (please see “Events” on page 2).

Join us!

We welcome all those who are interested in sharing their ideas, learning more about our organization, or becoming more active in our board to join us at our monthly meetings. Our next board meeting will be held at 7:00 pm. on Tuesday, March 27 at DeVries Nature Conservancy on N. M-52. If you can’t attend any of the spring events, find out how you can participate and work towards improving the health and habitat of our Shiawassee River! We also encourage you to join Friends as a member by using the application form to the right. Membership proceeds are used in the numerous clean-up, enhancement and educational efforts of Friends. Come and join us!

Name _____

Address _____

City/ST/Zip _____

Phone _____

email _____

Membership Options

<input type="checkbox"/> \$15	Friend
<input type="checkbox"/> \$30	Supporter
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	Benefactor
<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	Blue Heron

River Interests (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/> Canoeing
<input type="checkbox"/> Biking
<input type="checkbox"/> Park User
<input type="checkbox"/> Riverbank resident
<input type="checkbox"/> Fishing
<input type="checkbox"/> 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
c/o The Nature Conservancy
Shiawassee River Project
1900 S. Morrice Rd.
Owosso, MI 48867

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