

Winter 2017

Newsletter



Dear Wayne,

Welcome to Genesee RiverWatch's 2017 Winter newsletter. The year 2016 was busy for staff and volunteers at Genesee RiverWatch as we strive to achieve our vision of a healthy and sustainable Genesee River ecosystem that is an environmental, recreational and economic asset for all generations. We are grateful for all of our supporters.

Here are some highlights of last year's accomplishments and what is happening in 2017:

3rd Annual Genesee River Basin Summit:



In May, 2016, we convened our [3rd Annual Genesee River Basin Summit](#) where a variety of stakeholders discussed Streambank Erosion, Soil Loss & Sediment throughout the Genesee River Basin. Many tributaries and the main stem of the Genesee River suffer from severe streambank erosion which significantly contributes to excess sediment and nutrients in the river. Based on presentations from experts and subsequent discussions, the Summit participants agreed upon the following project goals:

1. Conduct an analysis of the extent and severity of streambank erosion in the entire Genesee River Basin.
2. Based on this analysis, develop a Basin-wide program to stabilize the highest priority streambanks, including project costs and timing; and
3. Evaluate the efficacy of such a program, considering the impact on water quality improvement, habitat, increased boating/fishing access, arable soil loss, land protection, improved Port of Rochester harbor reliability, and private and public dredging costs.

Efforts have been made and are on-going by Genesee RiverWatch and its partners to seek funding to support these projects goals.

Streambank Stabilization:



A streambank study in the Town of Caneadea was completed in 2016 with support from a \$15,000 Healing Our Waters (HOW) Coalition grant awarded in 2015. That study identified a need to stabilize 900 feet of streambank north of Belfast - work that will be completed in 2017 with the support of a \$146,982 grant from the Great Lakes Commission.

Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Program



Genesee RiverWatch launched a Citizen Water Quality Monitoring program in 2016. Our goal with this effort is to establish simple water quality test methods that average citizens can use to measure phosphorus and sediment concentrations in the Genesee River and its tributaries. In cooperation with SUNY Alfred and the Oatka Creek Watershed Committee, a citizen water quality monitoring protocol was developed and tested. The Norcross Foundation donated \$2,000 to purchase three sets of equipment.

There are several benefits associated with this program. Collecting and publishing more data throughout the watershed will provide the general public with a better picture of the overall quality of the water in the Genesee River. Data that is collected routinely will increase our ability to spot trends. Data collected at a multitude of sites throughout the watershed could identify areas where previously unknown problems exist. Citizens directly involved with sampling and data collection will become more engaged in the efforts to improve the river.

Braddock Bay Phosphorus Load Assessment:



The US Army Corp of Engineers is currently working on a major habitat restoration of Braddock Bay expected to be completed in 2017. One of the issues raised in the evaluation of restoration options was how on-going release of phosphorus into the Bay from the five sub-watersheds that drain into it would affect the water quality in the Bay once the restoration work is complete.

The Monroe County Water Quality Committee requested help from Genesee RiverWatch to determine the sources of phosphorus in the Bay. Using a computer model and stream sampling, Genesee RiverWatch estimated the relative contribution of a variety of sources that discharge phosphorus into the five sub-watersheds that drain into Braddock Bay. The Salmon Creek and Brockport-Otis Creek HUC12 watershed accounted for most of the phosphorus flowing into the Bay. Streambank erosion, septic system failures, hay/pasture management, and farm animal management were identified as the major contributors to those loads.

The final report can be viewed [here](#).

Partnership with St. John Fisher College:

Our Board President, Mike Haugh worked with a group of students at St. John Fisher College to develop and publish a film about the Genesee River Basin and the issues facing its restoration. The film, "Genesee RiverWatch Informational Video" can be viewed [here](#).

In Celebration and Recognition: First Annual Genesee River Bash!



Since its founding in 1974, Genesee RiverWatch's parent organization, the Center for Environmental Initiatives has held a fall celebration and fundraiser titled the "Community Salute to the Environment". With the success of the Genesee RiverWatch program, we decided that 2016 was the year to update the content and name of this annual event. Accordingly, on October 6th, we launched our

First Annual Genesee River Bash, held on the River at the Port of Rochester Terminal building on October 6th, and featuring river-related exhibitors as well as a band and buffet dinner.

The **2016 Elizabeth Thorndike Environmental Leadership Awards** were presented during the event to three individuals and organizations whose work on the river was especially noteworthy:

Seneca Park Zoo Society - One Cubic Foot Project



In August 2015, the Seneca Park Zoo Society arranged for environmentalist and photographer David Liittswager and a team from the Smithsonian Institution to study the biodiversity in the Genesee River using his "One Cubic Foot" technique. One Cubic Foot had a major impact on public awareness of the Genesee; encouraging people to explore, experience and celebrate the River, and contributing to a recent renaissance of interest in the River.



Oatka Creek Watershed Committee Inc. - Watershed Education, Protection and Restoration

OCWC is a volunteer watershed group that promotes, protects, and improves the natural resources and assets of the Oatka Creek watershed, a major tributary of the Genesee River. Since 2002, the organization has conducted: watershed education outreach activities; water quality and biological monitoring; storm drain marking; improvement in riparian vegetative buffer areas adjacent to the streams in the watershed; and public education on invasive species

and their control.



Dueppengiesser Dairy Co. - Water Quality Protection and Farming Education

The Dueppengiesser Dairy Co. of Perry, NY, a family run farm milking 1,000 cows, working 2,000 acres of corn and employing 20 full-time workers, has worked with USDA, NYS, and Wyoming Co. to implement multiple conservation measures to reduce soil erosion and pesticide use and improve water quality in the Genesee River Basin. These

include vegetated treatment areas, grass waterways, cover cropping, pest management, residue management, installation of drainage tile, diversion ditches and drop inlets, nutrient management, sand/solid manure separation, use of a dragline manure system and two silage leachate collection systems.

Learn more about the work of these deserving [award recipients](#) on our web site.

New Board Members:

Genesee RiverWatch welcomes two new Board Members in 2017:

Michael Boller PhD.

Dr. Boller is an Associate Professor of Biology and the founding director of the Sustainability Program at St. John Fisher College. As an educator, he works with biology majors in the fields

of ecology, aquatic science, and plant biology, and with students from across the campus on environmental science and sustainability. Through committee work and community-based service learning, he works to bring the College's and student's assets to community partnerships with local organizations, including schools, parks, and nonprofit organizations. As a researcher, he studies the ecology of aquatic organisms, focusing much of his work on the biomechanics of Riverweeds and working with student researchers in a number of ecological areas. His work has been presented at meetings and published in peer-reviewed journals of international scope. As Sustainability Program Director, he develops and guides the interdisciplinary program, represents the College at local, regional, and national organizations, and works with the College administration to improve the College's educational and operational outcomes.

Elaine Enfonde

Elaine Enfonde is a senior environmental scientist at the law firm Nixon Peabody, LLP. She has extensive knowledge in a broad range of environmental regulations and policies. She works with clients to develop environmental compliance plans and strategies and provides technical knowledge for due diligence transactions, site investigations and remediation, enforcement actions and environmental permits.

Looking ahead:

We are excited about 2017! With the continued help of our supporters, volunteers and partners, we will:

- Convene the 4th Annual Genesee River Basin Summit on June 15th, 2017. This year's Summit topic is River Access and Recreational Opportunities. Stay tuned for more details.
- Launch our first Genesee River Basin Report Card.
- Further develop our Genesee RiverWatch Citizen Water Quality Monitoring Program building on volunteer efforts and support from donor organizations.
- Continue to seek funding for and execute projects to reduce sediment and excess nutrients in the waters of the Genesee River Basin.
- Collaborate with partners along the length of the River and its tributaries to restore water quality, improve access, increase use and encourage economic development.
- Present an even bigger and more exciting Second Annual Genesee River Bash, scheduled for October 7, 2017. Be sure to add this event to your calendar!

Want to know more? Visit our website and be sure to watch our film: ["Restoring Our River - Work Worth Doing!"](#). This 12 minute film tells the story of the Genesee River - its history, significance to our region and how we can - as its caretakers - restore the water quality of the river.

Want to Volunteer? Check out our [Volunteer opportunities!](#)

Sincerely,

Mike Haugh, Board President *George Thomas, Executive Director*



Support Us!

Our work is just getting
started and we need your
help!

*Our Mission: To champion solutions that improve
the water quality of the Genesee and initiatives that
connect people to the River.*

See what's happening on our social sites



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