Hold the Salt

When the snow starts falling on Chicago, the salt trucks start spreading. Like clockwork, municipalities throughout the Chicago River watershed deploy fleets of plows and salt trucks to combat dangerous road conditions. Road salt is a cost-effective deicer that functions by lowering the freezing point of ice and snow. The resulting slush makes for safer roads, but it carries an environmental cost.

The use of road salt has risen steadily since the expansion of the American highway system in the 1950s. During the winter of 2013-14—a winter during which Chicago received 67 inches of snow—the Chicago Department of Streets and Sanitation poured 370,000 tons of salt onto our city streets. Much of this salt then washed away into the Chicago River system as the snow melted, dissolving and accumulating in the river.

This chloride accumulation harms riverbank habitat and creates a toxic environment for fish and other wildlife dependent on the river. A study from the National Institutes of Health showed that chloride has negative effects on a wide-range of freshwater fish and often inhibits spawning. Chloride also impacts the survival rates of mussels, frogs, plants and other a host of other organisms.

Because of the seriousness of this environmental threat, Friends and our partner environmental groups advocated for a new chloride standard for the Chicago River system as part of the new Aquatic Life Standards, which were approved by the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) in August (see “The Big Show is Over” on Page 5). At 1500 milligrams per liter (mg/l) during the winter months, and 500 mg/l during the summer, these standards promote a healthier environment that does not interfere with the life cycles of aquatic wildlife. After 2018, the standards transition to 500 mg/l all year round.

Story continued on page 5...
WADING IN

Big Plans for the New Year

Chicago is here because the river is here, and yet the relationship between the river and the city that grew up along its banks has often been fraught. As early as 1816 the soldiers at Fort Dearborn were digging through the sandbar at what is now Michigan and Wacker to create a channel to the lake. In the 1850s we raised the city and drained the sewers to the river. In 1900 we opened the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to reverse the river, sending our sewage and industrial waste “downstream.” We dredged it, channelized it, and filled in its creeks and branches. More modern concerns like runoff pollution, urban flooding, and climate change exacerbate the lot.

Fortunately over the years Friends, with partners and government agencies, have improved the river and 2015 was a banner year. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District opened the Thornton Composite Reservoir and installed disinfection technologies at the Calumet and O’Brien treatment plants which will have an enormous impact on water quality. The Chicago Riverwalk opened to rave reviews. Friends educated over 10,000 students; restored hundreds of acres of river-edge land; and created habitat for breeding bats, catfish, osprey, and turtles; and won the day when the Illinois Pollution Control Board finalized new water quality standards that protect people and fish—a process that took more than a decade to complete.

Friends has many big plans for 2016. More osprey nests, gullies fixed, and acres restored are on the docket. We will engage more corporations in River Action Days, volunteers in Chicago River Day, and students in river education. Our bridgehouse museum will attract visitors, we will begin our next fish habitat project, and we will continue to dream.

At a minimum, the Chicago River system must meet the vision set down by the Clean Water Act which means the river has to be clean enough for people to swim and for fish to reproduce. There are many pieces to the puzzle to make that happen, most important of which is reducing the pollution we add to the river system whether it is sewage, toxic stormwater runoff, contaminants from household cleaners, or fertilizers from our gardens.

This spring Friends will launch a new campaign to educate our members and friends about how they are connected to the river and what they can do to help. The Overflow Action Days campaign will be a call to action and help us all understand how we can reduce stormwater pollution including toxins and litter, flooding, and combined sewer overflows. Watch out for more information about this ambitious outreach initiative—and call us if you want to help.

Margaret Frisbie
Executive Director
Be Rewarded for Your Good Work: Applications Due

Each year Friends of the Chicago River presents a suite of awards to celebrate developers, planners, architects and anyone else who employs river-friendly practices in their designs and developments across the Chicago River watershed through our Chicago River Blue Ribbon Awards. Intended to promote sustainable practices that advance our vision of a river with clean water, healthy habitat, and great public access, Blue Ribbon Awards have been awarded to a wide variety of winners including the Center on Halsted which won a Chicago River Blue award for its suite of river-friendly design features which included reusing greywater and installing a green roof in their North Side redevelopment.

“The Center on Halsted’s dedication to advancing the community includes creating a healthier, greener environment for all,” said Modesto ‘Tico’ Valle, the Center’s chief executive officer, “With this in mind, our building was designed not only to be functional and aesthetically pleasing, but also environmentally conscientious.”

For more information on the 2016 application please contact Anthony Cefali at (312)939-0490, ext. 15. Applications are due by April 8, 2016.

RIFFLES & CURRENTS

GREAT RIVERS CHICAGO

In December the information gathering portion of the Great Rivers Chicago project wrapped up with over 8,800 people weighing with their vision and dreams for Chicago’s rivers through online surveys, focus groups, public meetings, and excursions to river. The project, developed as a partnership between Friends, the Metropolitan Planning Council, and the City of Chicago, will result in a vision for Chicago’s rivers and action plan to support it to be led by the city and partners like Friends. Friends will be able to use the information captured by the Great Rivers process as a tool to move forward with our broader river goals for the full 156 miles. A draft of the Great Rivers Chicago vision will be ready for public review in the spring of 2016.

CHICAGO RIVER BRIDGES WINS FERGUSON PRIZE

Friends’ long–time Bridgehouse volunteer and friend, Patrick McBriarty, received the 2015 Ferguson Award for his book Chicago River Bridges for its “outstanding contribution to the history of technology that will provide the basis for future scholarship” from the Society for the History of Technology (SHOT). The biennial award was presented at SHOT’s 2015 Annual Meeting in Albuquerque. This is the third and most prestigious award for Chicago River Bridges. Chicago River Bridges also won the 2014 Barkhausen Award for “original research on Great Lakes Maritime history” and received an Honorable Mention in the traditional non-fiction category of the Chicago Writer’s Association Annual Book Awards.

AND THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN

More than a decade after Friends embarked on an ambitious dam removal program for the Chicago River system, the first dam was demolished on the East Fork of the North Branch just below the Skokie Lagoons in November. Known as Winnetka Road, the dam was removed by the Forest Preserves of Cook County as part of the state wide effort to reconnect our waterways and make them safer for paddlers and healthier for wildlife. The project is a collaboration between the Friends, the Chicago Park District, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD), Illinois Department of Natural Resources (IDNR), the Niles Park District, and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The removal of this dam, in place since 1918, is an important milestone for the Chicago River.
On Friday, November 20, 2015, Chicago experienced the largest November snowfall on record—just over 11 inches. By Thanksgiving, a steady stream of rain and warm temperatures had melted all of the snow. Often, this volume of water might have overwhelmed the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago’s (MWRD) wastewater treatment facilities and triggered a combined sewer overflow, dumping millions of gallons of untreated sewage into the Chicago River—but not this time. The 400 million gallons of untreated sewage and stormwater instead made its way into the MWRD’s recently completed Thornton Composite Reservoir, where it remained until it could be treated at the nearby Calumet Wastewater Reclamation Plant (WRP). Completed in early September as part the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan (TARP), Thornton can hold 7.9 billion gallons of wastewater before sending it 5.5 miles to the Calumet WRP. On Thanksgiving, the reservoir filled 17 feet over several hours, eliminating any chance for sewer overflows and flooding in the Calumet region.

With the completion of Thornton, TARP can now hold over 10.5 billion gallons of wastewater across 109 miles of tunnels and two reservoirs, with more capacity on the way. Started in 1975, TARP has reduced the number of sewer overflows in the Chicago River by half, and prevented millions of dollars in flood damages. The Thornton Composite Reservoir protects over 550,000 people in 14 communities throughout the south side of Chicago and south suburbs from flooding and keeps untreated sewage out of the river.

However, it is expected that because of further regional development and impacts from climate change, TARP will need to be augmented by green infrastructure which should be employed more widely now to reduce combined sewer overflows and other stormwater related pollution.

This summer Friends celebrated a number of milestones with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), environmental groups, and local lawmakers that included new disinfection technology at the Calumet and O’Brien Wastewater Treatment plants as well as the opening of Thornton Reservoir—adding 7.9 billion gallons of stormwater retention to the Tunnel and Reservoir Plan. These infrastructure improvements are having an impact on the health of the Chicago River as well as those who depend on it.
The Big Show is Over, New Standards Protect Fish

Thirteen years after the water quality review process began, this summer the Illinois Pollution Control Board (IPCB) approved new water quality standards for the Chicago River system that will promote a healthy waterway for people, plants, and wildlife. In addition to disinfection requirements at the Calumet and O’Brien wastewater treatment facilities, which were put into motion in 2011, the IPCB set stricter standards for chlorides, dissolved oxygen, and temperature throughout the river system.

- All standards were effective starting July 1, 2015. The chloride standard will increase in 2018.
- Chlorides can interfere with spawning and are lethal to fish at high levels. From July of 2015 until July of 2018, chloride concentrations in the Chicago River system cannot exceed 500 milligrams per liter (mg/l) from May through November, and 1500 mg/l from December through April. In 2018, the standards become stricter: 500 mg/l throughout the year.
- IPCB set dissolved oxygen standards that protect aquatic life throughout the Chicago River: 5.0 mg/l from March through July, to promote spawning, and 4.0 mg/l for the rest of the year. Dissolved oxygen concentrations may not drop below 3.5 mg/l at any time.
- Water temperature may not exceed 60° F on any single day from December through March, and cannot exceed 90° F on any single day from April through October. The last standards enforced a nearly year-round maximum temperature of 90° F, negatively affecting aquatic wildlife.

Meeting the new standard will require coordination between a number of municipalities, public works departments, and water experts, which is why the IPCB requested that the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) lead the charge. Responsible for the health of Chicago’s water resources, MWRD treats over a billion gallons of water a day across three wastewater treatment plants within the Chicago River watershed alone. “The chlorides initiative is about environmental stewardship,” said Tony Quintanilla, the MWRD’s assistant director of management and operations and coordinator of the Chlorides Task Force.

“Municipalities can make significant positive impacts on local waterways by implementing best management practices for winter deicing in a cost-effective manner and by engaging with their local watershed planning groups.”

Similar chloride reduction initiatives have made positive environmental impacts throughout the Midwest, notably in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Since 2010, the Twin Cities Metropolitan Area, consisting of seven municipalities around Minneapolis and St. Paul, has engaged in a chlorides initiative that relies on public participation and education as well as community and municipality partnerships to achieve chloride reduction goals. The city of Madison, Wisc., has also experimented with a plan to reduce road salt with more efficient salt spreading techniques like wetting the salt before application.

Last year, the City of Chicago spent $30 million on road salt—no small sum. Municipalities stand to save money and protect the water environment by adopting the best road salt management practices of other Midwestern cities and coordinating snow removal efforts throughout the watershed. Homeowners and renters play an important role, too.

Next snowfall, be cognizant of how much salt you use on your driveway and sidewalks. It all ends up in the river when the snow melts.
Volunteers and Dedicated River Advocates Are Core to Achieving Our Goals

We are ever grateful for all the people who care for and are invested in our long-term vision for a greener, healthier river. We have three categories of awards to highlight the diversity of efforts involved in making the Chicago River one of the world’s greatest metropolitan rivers. Volunteer of the Year is awarded for extraordinary volunteer efforts on behalf of the individual to improve and protect the Chicago River system. Spirit of the River is awarded for someone whose work, both personal and professional, most embodies the spirit of the river. River Champion is awarded for extraordinary efforts and leadership by an individual working on behalf of an organization. Congratulations to all the Awardees!

Adam Flickinger
2014 Volunteer of the Year
Adam has been an integral member of Friend’s Planning Committee for over four years, volunteering his skills, expertise and artistic talents to improve and protect the Chicago River system.

Henrietta Saunders
2014 Spirit of the River
Henrietta works on committees and groups to support environmental efforts on innumerable projects that improve and protect the Chicago River system.

Mike Tuttle
2015 Volunteer of the Year
Mike has volunteered throughout the Chicago River system. He is a trained river steward, and has taken on more responsibility at Friends by helping to lead River Action Days.

Jim Doyiakos
2015 Spirit of the River
Jim is an environmental science teacher at Amundsen High School and has been involved with Friends of the Chicago River’s education program and Student Congress for 19 years.

Steve Pescitelli and Bob Rung
2014 River Champions
Steve and Bob were chosen for their extraordinary partnership with Friends of the Chicago River in inventing, designing, and implementing our channel catfish nesting cavity project.

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Steve Pescitelli and Bob Rung
2014 River Champions
Steve and Bob were chosen for their extraordinary partnership with Friends of the Chicago River in inventing, designing, and implementing our channel catfish nesting cavity project.

Michelle Woods and Ozwaldo Chaves
2015 River Champions
Michelle and Oswaldo, who for many years were a team together at CDOT, have worked tirelessly for more than a decade to bring the Chicago Riverwalk into existence.

Centennial Volunteers Expands Restoration Efforts to Create Additional Healthier River Corridors

Friends’ Centennial Volunteers initiative received another two-year grant from Chi-Cal Rivers Fund to support a pioneering partnership that fosters and grows leadership for sites along the Chicago and Calumet rivers in the Forest Preserves of Cook County.

In addition to the original five sites Kickapoo Woods, Whistler Woods, LaBagh Woods, Somme Woods East, and Blue Star Memorial Woods, four sites will expand our reach to Forest Glen Woods, Clayton Smith Woods, Beaubien Woods, and River Oaks Woods.

We have also grown the partnership to include The Field Museum and Chicago Ornithological Society. We have had over 20,000 volunteer hours dedicated to planning, caring, and learning about these very special sites this last year and a half. These efforts are destined to blossom into a restoration revolution along the Chicago River system, improving water quality and habitat for wildlife using the corridor and for people seeking solace in nature amidst our busy urban environment.
Utilizing the skills and enthusiasm of our Centennial Volunteers, this winter Friends plans to really dive into our gully fixing projects to reduce erosion of forest preserve land, improve habitat, and help aquatic life. The projects are the next step in our gully program which started two years ago when 100 trained volunteers combed river-edge forest preserve sites and located 139 gullies that are negatively impacting the Chicago River system in Cook County. Our conservation programs specialist, Sean Moloney, will be leading gully fixing volunteer days at both Kickapoo Woods and Blue Star Memorial Woods to address smaller gullies and erosion. There will be volunteer days almost every weekend working with Centennial Volunteers. Check for all nine locations, dates, and times at this webpage: www.fpdcc.org/CV. If you want to learn more about gully fixing, we are having a workday on February 7 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Blue Star Memorial. Please contact Sean Moloney at smoloney@chicagoriver.org for details.
As you’ve probably heard by now, Friends of the Chicago River’s McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum had a remarkable season raising awareness of the Chicago River and Friends’ mission. We hit a record 28,000+ visitors with continued growth in revenue and donations and over 120,000 total guests since we opened. This winter we are forging ahead planning for the museum’s 10th anniversary celebration starting in May 2016 and invite you to be a part of the planning process to help continue our success.

“This is an outstanding facility – has become one of my favorite locations which I will visit each trip back to Chicago.”

Cem Basman, Bloomington, IN

Here are a few dates to remember for the 2016 season:

**Museum’s Opening Day** (May 14) – We open our doors to the public with free admission.

**Annual Museum Fundraiser** (late June) – Enjoy a festive evening celebrating the museum. This on-the-water affair is the largest fundraising event in support of our mission.

**Lunchtime Speaker Series** (July through August) – Presented weekly on the museum’s plaza, this free series provides unique programming on the Chicago River that covers river landscapes, fish habitat, bridges, and more.

**Asian Carp Cookout with Dirk from Dirk’s Fish** (August) – This was a big hit last season, so we’re bringing it back for a tasting and lively discussion of this notorious invasive species.

**Bridgehouse Rentals** – Located on the Chicago Riverwalk, the Bridgehouse Museum is available for parties of all kinds, weddings, dinners for eight, cocktails for 80 and so much more.

Contact Joanne So Young Dill at (312) 939-0940, ext. 23 for more information.
One of the most astounding sights on a walk along the Chicago River is the flash of feathers—that through-the-trees glimpse of a Cooper’s hawk, one of Chicago’s resident birds-of-prey. But don’t look for them out in the open or soaring high above on the wind. This year-long resident is usually to be found perched on a branch or flying amongst the trees along the river in our forest preserves.

The Cooper’s hawk is one of three North American species in the genus *Accipiter*, the “true hawks,” along with the smaller sharp-shinned hawk and the larger northern goshawk. The Cooper’s hawk is our medium-sized accipiter.

Unlike the bigger birds-of-prey like eagles or osprey, accipiters aren’t built for soaring high in the sky. Accipiters are built for stealth and hunting in the dense forest. Even amongst the accipiters there is specialization. The smaller sharp-shinned hawk preys exclusively on small birds, while the larger northern goshawk can eat mammals as large as rabbits and woodchucks. The medium-sized Cooper’s Hawk will eat most any bird, but will also catch mammals, including chipmunks and squirrels, and even the occasional lizard or amphibian.

Cooper’s hawks prefer to lay in wait, perched on a branch, looking for movement with their blood-red eyes, and then swooping in to catch their food with quickness and exceptional maneuverability. They have long, rudder-like tails which allows them to follow the twisting and turning escape flight of smaller birds and other animals they pursue. Rounded wings enable the hawk to generate a quick burst of speed, while short wing length allows it to slip through dense woodlands without crashing into branches, although this does happen.

As with most birds-of-prey, females are nearly a third larger than males. This allows a nesting pair to have a greater range of prey choices—smaller male hawks are better able to catch small prey, while the larger females can catch larger animals.

The Cooper’s hawk nests in a wide variety of woodlands, and are becoming more common in suburban areas. If you see a smaller hawk (with no obvious red tail) perched near you birdfeeder, it’s probably a Cooper’s hawk.

In general, Cooper’s hawks are very shy. They are rarely seen, and except for migration season, stick mostly to the dense forested areas. During migration season, hawks from Canada “replace” those that have flown south for the winter, enabling you to observe them year-round. If you’re lucky enough to see one flying among the branches, or lurking near your birdfeeder, savor the moment.

The Cooper’s hawk serves a very important role in the Chicago’s forest ecosystem. By doing their hunting up close and personal, they keep all the little woodland creatures on their toes. In so doing, they help ensure a healthy population of diverse songbirds and small mammals for the future—and that leads to a healthier river ecosystem.
In-Kind Services Needed at the Bridgehouse

Do you have fabulous connections to in-kind services? We always appreciate a good public relations, graphic design, printer, or media lead. We can also use a few “office” items that will make the museum cozier for our staff who work in a most unusual setting – microwave, refrigerator, and easels. Our merchandise display needs a makeover. If you’ve got an idea or product for display, please share or donate. Your donations are tax deductible.
Spring/Summer Calendar of Events

Chicago River Blue Award
Application Deadline
Friday, April 8
Contact Anthony Cefali at (312) 939-0490, ext. 15

Chicago River Student Congress
Saturday, February 20
8:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Students attending 7th to 12th grade are welcome to attend this student-led conference all about the Chicago River. RSVP required to mhauser@chicagoriver.org

Bridgehouse Museum Opening
Saturday, May 14
10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
www.bridgehousemuseum.org

Your gift today makes you a member of Friends of the Chicago River.

☐ $__________ Yes! I want to join The Otter Society with my gift of $1,500 or more.
Contact me with details regarding gift recognition and special member opportunities.

☐ $1,000 Wild Mink
☐ $500 Great Horned Owl
☐ $250 Yellow-headed Blackbird
☐ $156 Black-crowned Night Heron
☐ $100 Blanding’s Turtle / Business
☐ Other $________________________

Name _______________________________________________________________________________
Company (if applicable) ___________________________________________________________________
For recognition purposes, list my name or company as ________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________
Address _______________________________________________________________________________
City, State, Zip _________________________________________________________________________
Preferred phone _____________________________  Email _____________________________________
☐ My check made payable to Friends of the Chicago River is enclosed.
☐ Charge my credit card (circle one) American Express  Discover  MasterCard  Visa
Card # _______________________________________________________________________________
Exp. Date _____________________________ Security code _______________________
Cardholder’s name and billing address (if different than above) _________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________________

☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities via ☐ Preferred phone ☐ Email
☐ Please do NOT add me to your email communications list.

Your contribution is tax deductible as allowed by law. Please send it to Friends of the Chicago River at 411 South Wells Street, Suite 800, Chicago, IL 60607 or make your gift online at www.chicagoriver.org/get-involved/membership.

For all contributions over $35, Friends of the Chicago River members receive:
* Free general admission, discounts on bridge lift and tour tickets, and merchandise discounts at our McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum;
* Discounts on our canoe trips;
* A subscription to The River Reporter newsletter, filled with important information on issues that effect the Chicago River plus a calendar of river-related events;
* Volunteer bulletins, email actions alerts, and other opportunities for hands-on involvement;
* Invitations to special events like Chicago River Day and the Big Fish Ball;
* Listing in our Annual Report;

And perhaps most significantly,
* The reward of knowing that your membership contribution has a direct impact on improving the Chicago River’s health and vitality.

Business members also receive a certificate showing your customers and employees that you care about the environment and the Chicago River.

Donors of $250 and above are eligible for additional recognition opportunities. Those with support of $1,000 and above for the year are also included on an annual plaque at our McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum. Naming opportunities at the Bridgehouse Museum are available as well.

Friends of the Chicago River is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization.

Chicago River Day
Saturday, May 14
9 a.m. to 12 noon
www.chicagoriver.org/get-involved/volunteer/chicago-river-day

Big Fish Ball
Wednesday, June 8
5:30 to 10 p.m.

Chicago River Blue Award
Winners Announced
Wednesday, June 8

Rivers Curriculum
Teacher Workshop
June 27-30, for 6th to 12th grade teachers
www.chicagoriver.org/education/workshops-curricula
Make a Resolution You’ll Want to Keep

In 2016, we’re launching an Overflow Action Days initiative. Join us and pledge to reduce water use before, during and after a rain event to help reduce pollution in the Chicago River system.

In the coming months, we will share simple every day actions that can help you reduce your water usage. Please share your top conservation practices with us via Facebook or Twitter.

#overflowaction

Sign Up for a River Action Day

These days, more and more companies are looking for ways to give back to the local community - and Friends of the Chicago River is the perfect place to do that. Friends can provide a river-edge team building experience for your employees as they improve the health of the river at a customized River Action Day. Contact Sean Moloney at smoloney@chicagoriver.org or (312) 939-0490, ext. 18, for more information.