Friends’ mission is to improve and protect the Chicago River system for people, plants, and animals. In a highly urbanized region like Chicagoland, where the human element is dominant, we must work with people and communities through environmental education and stewardship to accomplish our mission. As a society, we must oversee and care for the river. We need to work together, getting our hands dirty, so to speak, to improve the river and its environs. In order to accomplish this, all of us, especially youth, need to appreciate the river as a natural resource and have a sense of how everyday actions can affect the river.

Since 1995, Friends has been taking students on trips to the Chicago River. The goal of introducing these kids to the wonders of the river is relatively simple; the process, complex. Consider the number of students (over 20,000 in the past 10 years alone) the variety of educational goals and lesson plans imposed by schools; and the pre-existing issues that all kids bring along on field trips. Given all this, it is an impressive accomplishment that many students come away from the field trip experience with an altered view of the river.

The question then becomes: how does the field trip experience change students, and how can we measure it? Every year, Friends surveys approximately five hundred students from Friends’ Adopt a River Schools program (AARS), a service-learning initiative in which students use chemical and biological river data that they collect to drive an environmental restoration project. These surveys aim to measure changes in knowledge of the river, appreciation, and interest in the river, and a willingness to take action on its river. Each of these areas is integral to Friends’ mission. Students take the survey before and after their field trip experience. The questions on the two tests are the same so that change can be measured. In the following summary, change from pre to post was measured using the appropriate statistical test. If a change is described as “significant,” it passed at the 95% level, meaning we can say with a 95% degree of certainty that the result is true and not due to random chance.

**THE CHICAGO RIVER IS GETTING BETTER**

Many students come on a field trip for the first time with preconceived notions of what the river is like. The river has a sketchy past. We don’t deny it or sugar coat this fact with kids. We attempt to show them the river as a changing, evolving, living thing. It is, in a way, a mirror that we hold to ourselves and it will reflect how we treat it. We share with students stories of a mighty river that helped build a great city that was as abused as it was used.

Students were asked to give us the first word that came to their minds when they thought of the Chicago River. Student responses were classified as being negative, neutral, or positive. Over 50% of all responses, both pre and post, consisted of negative words like “dirty,” “polluted,” “smelly,” “green,” or “toxic.” A portion of the responses were neutral words, like “water” or “river.”

“Even on a rainy, cold spring day, my 8th graders had a truly valuable nature-education experience at the Chicago River. I never heard a single complaint, and the students could not stop talking about their positive experiences once we got back into class the next day.”

- Jen Stubbs
  Life Science Teacher
  Young Women’s Leadership Charter School, Chicago

A student from Drummond Elementary School holds a crayfish. The experience was free; the smile… priceless.
WADING IN
Making it Great

One of the most wonderful aspects of the Chicago River is its amazing array of aspects. Downtown it sparkles like a jewel marvelously juxtaposed against stately buildings and bridges. In locations north and south, it meanders through forest preserves where foxes and coyotes stalk the riverbanks and birdsong fills the air. In other places the Chicago River becomes a quaint and quintessential watercourse with parks and pretty homes. In still others, it is a conduit for commerce linking Chicago and the region to rest of the world.

That the Chicago River can be so many things at once is the glory of its metropolitan countenance. With 156 miles of stream, we have room for boats, bridges, barges, birds, beavers, muskrats, turtles and tall buildings and we can love them all.

Our recently completed strategic plan celebrates this urban elasticity and our new vision calls for making the Chicago River one of the world’s greatest metropolitan waterways. That does not preclude the need for wildlife protection. It only makes it stronger and more exciting.

To qualify as a great metropolitan river, like a world class city, a river must possess certain characteristics. For a city they are economic, cultural, infrastructural, and political. For a river it is much the same.

A great metropolitan river must have clean water. It must be accessible and connected. It must have healthy wildlife populations and quality habitat to support them. There must be places where people can go to enjoy nature. A great metropolitan river requires great public spaces where there are things to do, places to eat, and pageantry to enjoy. A great metropolitan river is integrated into our everyday lives—much like the Great Lakes for which we feel such ownership and pride.

Of course, we believe that the Chicago River, with Friends at its side, has already achieved pretty good standing. Our water quality is improved and improving. The river’s economic value continues to grow with an influx of river-edge developments, rising river-edge property values, and an upswing in river-based and riverfront commerce. Culturally, the river is becoming more connected. Public access and recreational opportunities grow annually. The Chicago Riverwalk is attracting attention and enthusiasm. There is a visible shift in numbers of people using the river for entertainment, education, exercise and tourism.

Yet where we are is not good enough. Infrastructurally, we need to invest millions to prevent pollution in the form of combined sewer overflows, wastewater treatment plant discharges, and stormwater runoff. Politically, we need leaders who are willing to challenge the river’s pollution-tainted history and rise up to embrace its bright future. Environmentally, there is much more to do.

The time has come to treat the Chicago River as a precious treasure; wild, wonderful and unexpected; and to manage and restore it through outstanding, visionary, and sustainable practices. Becoming one of the world’s greatest metropolitan rivers is a task for the undertaking and we are ready for it. How about you?

Margaret Frisbie
Executive Director
It Isn’t Going to Go

Recent news stories that the Chicago River can simply reverse into Lake Michigan due to low lake levels have been debunked by the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) and accusations of the river being an open sewer directly challenged.

While the water quality of the river is still compromised, the river is a recreational, natural, and economic treasure alive with people and wildlife. The flow of the river is a microcosm in the much larger story of why the lakes have receded, and another call to action for water conservation and continued water quality improvement for all our rivers, lakes, and streams.

AWARD WELL DESERVED

Janet Pellegrini, an environmental scientist in the Water Division at USEPA Region 5, recently received a USEPA award for her “outstanding contributions and leadership in improving the recreational and aquatic life use designations and water quality standards for the Chicago Area Waterways.”

Pellegrini won the award because she was instrumental in getting a contractor hired to evaluate the cost of sewage effluent disinfection for three Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) treatment plants that discharge into the Chicago River. According to USEPA, the contractor’s findings were vastly lower than those initially put forth by the MWRD. That new information contributed significantly to the 2011 approval of improved recreational use standards which now require disinfection at the two of the three treatment plants in question.

In addition, Pellegrini led a multi-agency effort to collect valuable fish count and species data for the Little Calumet River. The results of this study, which surprised many because of the GREAT variety and number of fish found, was used by the US Fish & Wildlife Service to request an upgrade to the Aquatic Use designation of the Little Calumet. This study also supports the pending system-wide Aquatic Use upgrade for the portion of the Chicago River system under review at present.

...AND ANOTHER

Waterline, a multimedia effort by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM), will receive a 2013 Merit Award from the Illinois Chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects. The award recognizes the work of SOM’s City Design Practice and its partners – Friends of the Chicago River and Spirit of Space, a creative agency – in producing Waterline.

Waterline examines the South Branch of the Chicago River between Wolf Point and the Near South Side of the Chicago. This corridor of approximately one mile touches Chicago’s central city, transit hubs, office core, industrial corridors, and emerging residential and arts neighborhoods. Winding through these diverse land uses, the river presents complex design challenges.

Waterline communicated the immense potential for a rebirth of the Chicago River through a two-month public exhibition at Friends’ McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum that featured the work of 12 students from the Harvard Graduate School of Design. A series of three documentary videos by Spirit of Space further communicated the transformative thinking of the student designers, garnering over 30,000 views online in addition to the 5,000 museum visitors. Friends’ executive director, Margaret Frisbie, was directly involved in the project, and spent hours sharing the history, ecology and cultural relevance of the Chicago River with the students in Boston and providing on-the-ground experiences in Chicago, including canoeing on the South Branch.

READY FOR RIVERWALK, PHASE II

The City of Chicago is moving forward with plans to complete the Chicago Riverwalk. Construction for Phase II, State to LaSalle, may start as early as this summer. The project, which will establish a public greenway all along the south side of the Main Stem downtown, with under-bridge connections that allow visitors to walk right along the water’s edge, will give people a wonderful opportunity to get close to and use the Chicago River in even more and wonderful ways.

According to proposed plans, the next phase will include three distinct sections, connected by a river-edge promenade, including:

• The Marina from State to Dearborn, which will feature restaurants and public seating areas,
• The Cove from Dearborn to Clark, which will include kayak rentals and space for nonmotorized watercraft to dock, and the
• The River Theater, from Clark to LaSalle, which will be heavily landscaped with trees to provide shade and have a dramatic staircase connecting Upper Wacker Drive and the riverwalk below.

When complete, the riverwalk project will include a host of amenities for people and wildlife ranging from critical fish habitat and native gardens to fountains, restaurants, and play areas, as well as bike rentals and Friends’ McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum. The museum is a cultural anchor for the whole project and allows visitors to celebrate Chicago’s river and world-famous movable bridges, providing a one-of-a-kind opportunity to explore a historic landmark bridgehouse.
Friends of the Chicago River recognizes the generous contributions and support of members, donors, and program participants and partners at $250 and above between July 1, 2012 and December 15, 2012.

**INDIVIDUALS**

$1,000 and above
- The Crown Family
- Fred and Cinda Axley
- Kenneth M. Arenberg and Susanne Swisher
- Kent and Jane Jacobsen-Brown
- Henry T. Chandler
- Sally Fletcher
- Dennis Howarter
- Lawrence and Denise Kaplan
- James and Mary Kay Mark
- Marjorie Miller-Brownstein
- Jeremiah Reeves
- David Reinsch and Julie Kiefer
- David and Stacy French Reynolds
- Jacob Ringer
- Sandra Ryan
- Robert and Eileen Stein

$500 – $999
- Lee and Lori Alber
- George and Ellen Benson
- Alex Brown
- Wendy Cartland
- Robert and Jean Carton
- Irina Dashhevsk
- Robert and Quinn Delaney
- Jessica Goehler
- Janice Goldblatt
- Stewart Hudnut
- Doug McLemore
- Mary Ellen Mitchanis
- Melanie Napoleon
- Timothy and Sandra Ryan
- Ron and Dee Tevonian
- Reven Uhlein-Fellars
- Gintaras A. Vaisnys

$250 - $499
- Associated Colleges of Illinois
- Continental Paper Grading
- DMK Restaurants Fish Bar
- Hotel 71
- Lindblom Math & Science Academy
- McMaster Painting & Decorating
- Sheridan Park Consulting
- The Boston Consulting Group, Inc.
- Thomas Ward Agency, Inc.

**FOUNDATIONS, CORPORATIONS, GOVERNMENT, AND OTHER**

$1,000 – $3,499
- Dixon Enterprise
- Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
- GMR Marketing
- Grand Victoria Foundation
- Harold M. & Adeline S. Morrison Family Foundation
- MillerCoors
- Ozinga Ready Mix Concrete, Inc.
- Prince Charitable Trusts

$3,500 – $9,999
- Associated Colleges of Illinois
- Continental Paper Grading
- Dixon Enterprise
- GMR Marketing
- Grand Victoria Foundation
- Harold M. & Adeline S. Morrison Family Foundation
- MillerCoors
- Ozinga Ready Mix Concrete, Inc.
- Prince Charitable Trusts

**RECREATIONAL</em>** Equipment, Inc.
- STS Foundation
- The Richard H. Driehaus Foundation
- WRD Environmental

$3,500 – $9,999
- Allied Metal Company
- Burke, Warren, Mackay & Serritella, PC
- Chicago Botanic Garden
- Chicago Park District
- CPS, Office of Social Sciences & Service-Learning
- Earth Share of Illinois
- Fletcher Jones Automotive Enterprises
- Forest Preserve District of Cook County
- Midwest Generation EME, LLC
- Patagonia, Inc.
- PricewaterhouseCoopers, LLP

$1,000 – $3,499
- Dixon Enterprise
- Gaylord and Dorothy Donnelley Foundation
- GMR Marketing
- Grand Victoria Foundation
- Harold M. & Adeline S. Morrison Family Foundation
- MillerCoors
- Ozinga Ready Mix Concrete, Inc.
- Prince Charitable Trusts

**Friends Wish List**

Please contact us at (312) 939-0490 if you have one or more of these items to donate. Thank you in advance.

- Flat screen monitor for Bridgehouse Museum displays
- Conference table and chairs
- Printing new materials
- Flip cameras
- Laptop for Bridgehouse Museum
- iPad for Bridgehouse Museum

Friends of the Chicago River is a proud member of

**Friends of the Chicago River**

**Chicago Wilderness**

**EarthShare Illinois**

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**Chicago Wilderness**

**EarthShare Illinois**
MillerCoors Celebrates “Great Water Month”

Every year, MillerCoors dedicates the month of September to volunteerism in their local communities. Officially dubbed “Great Water Month,” thousands of employees across the country volunteer with local organizations on watershed enhancement and protection projects. Here in Chicago, MillerCoors asked its employees to roll up their sleeves and help Friends to beautify the river by removing harmful, invasive plants and trash from the Chicago River’s banks.

This was by far one of Friends’ biggest workdays of the year. For those of you who know beer, you know that it is mostly water (90%, to be exact). Consequently, clean water and water conservation are priorities for the MillerCoors company. This year MillerCoors partnered solely with Friends of the Chicago River. This was a fantastic opportunity for Friends because MillerCoors provided over 275 employee volunteers all on one day, allowing us to plan for restoration and improvements at seven sites along the river. From picking up litter to removing buckthorn, these volunteers could not help but get a little dirty. They also performed water quality testing, mulched trees, and explored the Skokie Lagoons by canoe. At the end of the day, MillerCoors employees had many great things to say about their workday with Friends.

“The knowledge of the staff was impressive. The group was most appreciative of learning about the river’s ecosystem by working with Friends of the Chicago River. It did not feel like just a ‘clean up’ because we actually learned why we do the things we do.” Would they recommend it to other companies – absolutely!

Table 1: First word that comes to mind when I think of the Chicago River - Percentage of positive responses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
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Table 2: Percentage of students expressing interest in science and nature.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Interest in Science</th>
<th>Interest in Nature</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test</td>
<td>Post-test</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Percentage of students responding to Images E, F, or G.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pre-test</th>
<th>Post-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Many issues face the Chicago River: disinfection, soil erosion, combined sewer overflows, and invasive species, just to name a few. But that’s nothing compared to the task of figuring out what’s going on in your average high school student’s brain. We see the influence the river has on students on every trip. Exploring nature, walking in a river, and hunting bugs with a net rarely fails to put a smile on a student’s face, even the most reluctant. We continually evaluate our AARS program to ensure that it is having a positive impact on both student learning and appreciation for the Chicago River and the larger environment. With the right tools, students are more likely to be able to make informed decisions and take appropriate action as adults.
Membership Has New Perks at the Bridgehouse Museum

Friends of the Chicago River members have one more reason to look forward to spring this year. Starting in May, members will receive free general admission and other benefits at Friends’ one-of-a-kind McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum. Located inside a five-story bridge tower at Michigan Avenue, the Bridgehouse Museum celebrates Chicago’s river and world-famous movable bridges. It also encourages visitors to discover the river’s wonders and participate in its renaissance, helping build a community of people who care about and for our river.

The Bridgehouse Museum is seasonal, open spring through fall. It has emerged as the cultural anchor of Chicago’s Riverwalk, and also serves as the Riverwalk Information Center, helping visitors discover all that this new and expanding linear park on the south bank of the river’s Main Stem has to offer. Since opening in 2006, more than 55,000 visitors have discovered the river’s story at the museum. They learn how people like them are helping transform this once-neglected waterway into one of the best metropolitan rivers in the world.

Beginning this spring, Friends invites museum visitors to add their Chicago River stories, memories and hopes to the museum’s narrative. “We are constantly inspired by the river stories we hear as part of our work at the Bridgehouse Museum – from childhood memories to fresh first impressions,” says Ozana Balan King, the museum’s director. “Our visitors remind us every day about the many things our river represents: thriving wilderness in the city, a lifeblood of commerce and recreation, a refuge, a gathering place, and so much more. Our goal is to create opportunities for their voices – which collectively give the river a voice – to be heard, and to inspire thousands more to take part in our river’s continued improvement.” Visitors will be able to contribute at the museum and online.

To support the museum’s programs – which also include permanent and temporary exhibits, bridge lift viewings, walking tours, lectures and special events – Friends has just launched the first ever Bridgehouse Museum Committee. This visionary group of civic-minded individuals volunteers to promote the museum and help raise funds, making a significant impact on the museum’s ability to engage growing audiences.

The museum’s 2013 season kicks off on Chicago River Day, May 11, but you won’t have to wait that long to take a peek. The museum will host a free season preview on Earth Day, Monday, April 22. After May 11, the museum is open five days a week, Thursday through Monday, until October 31. The museum also offers all-inclusive special event rentals such as dinners and cocktail parties throughout the season, and bridge lift breakfasts in the fall.

To become a member of Friends or to renew your membership, please visit www.chicagoriver.org. For more information about our museum and the Bridgehouse Museum Committee, visit www.bridgehousemuseum.org.
Fish Hotel Inspires Riverwalk Habitat

When Friends set forth to prove that the Main Stem of the Chicago River could support aquatic life through constructed habitat, we never imagined how much fun it would be. In addition to showcasing a new idea in habitat creation, over the years our 10’ x 40’ floating Fish Hotel won three design awards, delighted passersby, and provided refuge for countless fish, birds, butterflies, and the occasional muskrat, not to mention the many creative media references since the hotel debuted in 2005.

The hotel was necessary because while there are plenty of fish in the Main Stem, the habitat there is limited. Throughout their lifecycle, fish seek out shallow, rocky areas for spawning, mating and maturing. Yet the changes that Chicagoans made to the river since the 1800s to facilitate shipping removed many of the best hang out spots for fish. Recognizing that the Main Stem will never return to its natural state, Friends offered an alternate vision for fish habitat and recovery through the Fish Hotel, which provided an oasis for wildlife in the midst of a busy city and valuable habitat in an otherwise limited reach of the river.

After eight years the Fish Hotel has closed its doors for good, but the impact it made is vast, proving that constructed habitat has value and contributing to the argument for better Aquatic Life standards. Supporting this concept and recognizing its real value, the City of Chicago has committed to design fish hotel-like habitat into its plans for the Chicago Riverwalk. This new and permanent addition to the downtown riverscape means that fish and other aquatic creatures will thrive while people enjoy the river and continue to enjoy the river renaissance as an asset to Chicago and the people who call it home.

Dams Are Coming Down

In November, Illinois Governor Pat Quinn announced the “Illinois Dam Removal Initiative” which includes plans to remove four dams on the North Branch of the Chicago River. Friends has been a partner in the process since its inception, and has worked with the state, Forest Preserve District of Cook County, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District and Niles Park District on the project. Dams can be dangerous for paddlers, and prevent fish and other aquatic life from reaching, thus limiting, their full breeding and habitat range.

“Free-flowing rivers benefit all of Illinois,” Governor Quinn said. “Removing these dams will improve waterways across our state, making them safer for kayakers and paddlers who use them for exercise and recreation, and for anglers who enjoy fishing in these rivers. This dam removal initiative will improve conservation, water quality and outdoor recreation in Illinois.”

Friends began work on the dam removal initiative over a decade ago, seeking to build support for this critical new connectivity when we completed a feasibility study for removal or modification of the North Branch Dam. That study, which was supported by then Lt. Governor Quinn and the Grand Victoria Foundation, laid the groundwork for dam removal on the Chicago River system.

On the north branch of the Chicago River, the work to remove or modify four low head dams and free up an additional 55 miles of waterway from downtown Chicago north will cost an estimated $3.5 million. The project is part of Governor Quinn’s $31 billion Illinois Jobs Now! capital construction program.

State officials promise that work on three of the four dams will be complete this year.
A Riverbank Report

Since early settlement, riverfront development has been the base of a strong economy for Chicago. Through the industrial boom, transportation and other river-based activities kept properties along the river valuable. Water pollution in the 20th century took its toll; but today, while the river's industrial uses continue to prosper, the appeal of the vastly improved Chicago River is attracting more residential and commercial development every year.

As more people recognize the Chicago River system for the natural, recreational, and economic treasure it is, it is critical to think intentionally about how we develop and redevelop its banks.

Launched in 2010, Friends’ Chicago River Blue program does just that, by providing guidance on how properties can be developed in river-sensitive ways that take people, water, and wildlife into account. Using progressive approaches to public access, stormwater management, habitat protection and creation, Chicago River Blue details ways developers can embrace the river and water into all types of property development.

One of the fundamental ways of addressing our water and wildlife goals is good stormwater management and with climate models suggesting that the Chicago region will experience warmer weather with fewer yet more intense rain events, it becomes even more important to integrate green infrastructure and design techniques into riverfront development now.

Stronger storms will bring more rain to the region, inundating our wastewater treatment plants. These rains can cause can flash flooding on streets and in basements, exacerbate erosion, and wash pollutants into the river. Bioswales, rain gardens, permeable pavers, and restored wetlands and river banks all provide some protection from the impact of flooding.

In fact, by slowing down the movement of rain running off of a property, allowing for percolation into the ground where it falls, and incorporating trees and other bank stabilizing elements, we can buy time for treatment plants to catch up with increased loads on the system, naturally filter contaminants before they run into the river, reduce erosion and provide habitat and an improved aesthetic into property designs.

Fortunately, what is good for the river is also good for climate change, and it can be wonderfully attractive. Projects that incorporate these methods and more are eligible for Friends’ annual Blue Ribbon Awards, which celebrate excellence in river-sensitive design.

Friends is now accepting applications for the 2013 Blue Ribbon Awards and you can call Kim Rice at (312) 939-0490, ext. 15, to find out more. The deadline for submissions is April 19, 2013.

In addition, Friends also recognizes the many companies that already embrace the values of Chicago River Blue in their work. These Watershed Action Allies receive recognition on our website, at the Chicago River Summit, and with a certificate that can be proudly displayed in their office. Check Friends’ website for this year’s Ally report and be sure you do blue.

NEW RECREATIONAL CRITERIA READY TO BE REVIEWED

USEPA recently recommended new recreational water quality criteria for states that will help protect peoples’ health during visits to beaches and other recreational waters year-round. The science-based criteria provide information to help states improve public health protection by providing similarly protective recommendations for both marine and fresh waters, encouraging early alerts to beachgoers and promoting rapid water testing.

The new criteria do not impose any new requirements; instead, they are a tool that states can choose to use in setting their own standards.

Fishing on the Chicago River.
Volunteer Diversity: The Secret to Program Success

For all of our 33 years, Friends has relied on our volunteers to improve and protect the Chicago River, and to use it for recreation. We see volunteers as critical partners in furthering our mission and improving the health of the river for the benefit of people, plants and wildlife. As people’s interest and volunteer hours increased, we launched the Chicago River Eco-Warrior (CREW) program to recognize our volunteers and the hours they have dedicated on behalf of the river.

As we enter into 2013, we hope all our volunteers will renew their commitment to the Chicago River and get recognized as Eco-Warriors. There are many ways to serve as an Eco-Warrior, including:

- Help as a site captain for Chicago River Day
- Work at registration for the Chicago River Student Congress
- Be a super villain at the Chicago River Student Congress
- Sign up to be a canoe guide, go to our web page, get involved to learn more
- Plant a rain garden
- Write a blog about the Chicago River and Friends
- Refer a friend to volunteer with us
- Sign up for gully walker training and identify gullies along the riverside
- Host a local fundraiser and raise awareness for the river
- Participate on a Friends’ committee

Every month, there is something to do. The best way to stay in the know is to sign up for Friends’ social media and e-communications. You can get our e-news, our Twitter or Facebook updates, depending on your preference.

Many volunteers have been with us for years. They have seen the impact of our collective work. For 20 years, we have been organizing Chicago River Day in May. Chicago River Day has turned into a regional event with over 4,000 volunteers and over 70 sites. We rely on site captains to make sure the event goes smoothly. One such captain is Ms. Henrietta Saunders in Glenview. She not only serves as a volunteer captain for Friends, but she serves as the chair for the volunteer Natural Resource Commission in Glenview. She has observed Chicago River Day’s growth over the years and explained that the event is special because it gathers so many people of different ages and backgrounds.

By offering Chicago River Day every year, more and more people learn the importance of caring for the river. “The annual clean up is the anchor for a lot of other activities we do at the river,” Saunders remarked when reflecting on the impact of River Day on the village of Glenview. “Through exposure to the river,” she noted, “the community of Glenview is more willing to invest in environmental projects and has matched federal funding with local funding to restore our meandering river.” Now residents can enjoy a resurgence of birds in the area and a beautiful place to watch them. Volunteers are the key to catalyzing this kind of community engagement that makes a real difference in the long haul for environmental sustainability. We hope you will join this diverse, committed group of folks and volunteer with us this year.
Have you heard a yowling noise in some of the more remote forest preserves of the Chicago River system? It could be a bobcat! Long absent from the Chicago region, this shy, elusive cat may be moving back into the area.

The bobcat is best distinguished from a domestic housecat by three features. The bobcat’s most recognizable attribute is its short, “bobbed,” tail that is about six inches long, tipped with black on the upper surface. The bobcat also has short, black tufts of fur on the tips of its ears and a ruff of long fur along the cheekbones that hangs down to give the impression of a wide face. The rest of the bobcat’s coat ranges in color from gray to brown to red, with dark streaks and spots on the body and bars on the forelimbs and tail. The chin, lips, belly, inner legs and tail underside are white. Female bobcats are typically smaller than males, but both are about twice the size of a housecat.

The bobcat remains solitary except for breeding, actively defending territories that range from one to 120 square miles in size depending on prey availability. In Illinois, the typical range for males is about eight square miles, and three square miles for females. Active at dawn and dusk, they mate in winter and early spring, resulting in a litter of two to four kittens born late spring. By fall or the next spring, the kittens are fully independent.

The bobcat has the greatest range of any native North American cats, ranging from Southern Canada to Northern Mexico and across most of the continental United States. Bobcats prefer to live in woodland habitats, but will happily live in deserts, swamps, or mountains.

Across Illinois and the Chicago River system, the bobcat was plentiful at the time European settlers moved into the area. The bobcat was often observed hunting rabbits, squirrels, birds, rodents, insects, and deer.

As settlers began converting natural habitat into expanses of highly-modified cropland, the bobcat population dropped across Illinois. Extensive hunting also contributed to their decline. Soon, the bobcat became restricted to habitats in the southern third of the state, as well as some populations in the far northwest of Illinois. Bobcats remained in southern Cook County until the 1850s, and were seen, if rarely, in the Calumet region through the 1870s. In 1977, the bobcat was placed on Illinois’s first state threatened list, and subsequently protected from hunting and trapping.

With a closed hunting season and ecological restoration efforts that restored degraded habitat, Illinois bobcat numbers began to rise. In 1999, bobcats were delisted from the Illinois threatened species list. Today, the estimated population in the state is more than 2,250 individuals, although this is still restricted mainly to the southern parts of the state. However, there have been confirmed sightings of a bobcat in Waterfall Glen Forest Preserve, which surrounds Argonne National Laboratory along the Sanitary and Ship Canal and Des Plaines River. Additionally, people have reported numerous unconfirmed bobcat sightings in forested areas near the Palos area. As we work to increase habitat quality in protected areas, we may start to see more resident bobcats.

What does this mean for us? Can we expect to see bobcats everywhere in the Chicago region in the coming days? It’s doubtful, as the bobcat still depends on large areas of wild habitat and good prey availability, neither of which is present in the more developed areas of Northeast Illinois. And while bobcats may be aggressive towards other bobcats, they are shy and retiring around humans. In any case, be sure to keep your eyes and ears open around the forests and neighborhoods of southern Cook County. You may catch a rare glimpse of a species that was once plentiful throughout the region.
CALUMET ECO-WARRIOR WORKSHOP

Wednesday, February 13, 2013
6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Workshop for all individuals interested in revitalizing the waterways and watershed of the Calumet region. This event will be held at the Sand Ridge Nature Center, 15890 Paxton Ave. South Holland, IL 60473. Contact Curtis Witek at cwitek@chicagoriver.org for registration information.

FRIENDS’ ANNUAL MEETING AND AWARDS

Wednesday, April 17, 2013
6 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

Please join us to celebrate our accomplishments, recognize our volunteers, learn more about the river, and most importantly have fun with board, staff, and our incredible volunteers. Contact us for details. Location TBD.

CHICAGO RIVER DAY

Saturday, May 11, 2013
9 a.m. to 12 noon

We cordially invite you to join Friends and over 4,000 volunteers for the 21st Chicago River Day. Volunteers will gather for a day of hands-on environmental work along the Chicago River. They work side-by-side to collect garbage and sort for recycling, remove invasive vegetation, spruce up river-edge trails, plant native seedlings, and much more.

Friends and over 4,000 volunteers. Contact us for details.

I’m pleased to make a membership contribution to Friends of the Chicago River in the amount of:

☐ $5,000  Gray Wolf  ☐ $100  Blanding’s Turtle / Business
☐ $2,500  Bobcat  ☐ $75  Tiger Salamander / Family
☐ $1,000  Wild Mink  ☐ $35  Chorus Frog / Individual
☐ $500  Great Horned Owl  ☐ $30  White-fringed Orchid / School / Club
☐ $250  Yellow-headed Blackbird  ☐ $15  Purple Coneflower / Teacher / Volunteer
☐ $156  Black-crowned Night Heron  ☐ $10  Prairie Dropseed / Student
☐ Other  $______________________

Name ____________________________________________

Company (if applicable) ____________________________________________

Address ____________________________________________

City, State, Zip ____________________________________________

Daytime 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 _____________________________ 3-4 digit security code ________________________

Cardholder’s name and billing address (if different than above) _____________________________

☐ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities.
   The best way to reach me is by ☐ Email  ☐ Daytime phone  ☐ Old-fashioned mail

☐ 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/.

For all contributions over $35, Friends of the Chicago River members receive:
* A subscription to Friends’ River Reporter newsletter, filled with important information on issues that effect the Chicago River plus a calendar of river-related events;
* Volunteer bulletins and other opportunities for hands-on involvement;
* Invitations to special events like Chicago River Day and the Big Fish Ball;
* Discounts on Friends’ canoe trips;
* 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 and more. 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.

8TH ANNUAL BIG FISH BALL

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

Join us at Friends’ celebration of the Chicago River in front of Merchandise Mart on Riverside Drive. Highlights include sumptuous and surprising outdoor dining along the river, live river animals, river-centric entertainment and a fireworks boat ride. Honorary Co-Chairs include Governor Pat Quinn, former Mayor Richard M. Daley and Maestro Riccardo Muti of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

This year’s Corporate Chair is Mark Falanga, President of Merchandise Mart Properties, Inc. and the Gala Chair is Barbara Morse-Quinn. Contact Mary Beth Sova to reserve your tickets or a table now at (312) 939-0490, ext. 19, or msova@chicagoriver.org.

The best way to reach me is by Email  Daytime phone  Old-fashioned mail
Get Out and Gully Walk!

Last fall, Friends launched the Gully Walker program to locate gullies along the Chicago River. They are indicators of excess runoff and stormwater that are damaging the river ecosystem. With your help, we can find and assess gullies along the riverbanks. The data you collect will help determine future restoration projects and help in our efforts to preserve and improve the Chicago River. Once you are trained, your stroll in the woods turns you and your friends into active citizen scientists.

Training dates (please RSVP*):
• February 9, 2013, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Edgebrook Woods
• March 9, 2013, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Edgebrook Woods

For more information about the Gully Walker program check out our website under “Get Involved,” or *contact Betsy Hands at (312) 939-0490, ext. 12, or bhands@chicagoriver.org.