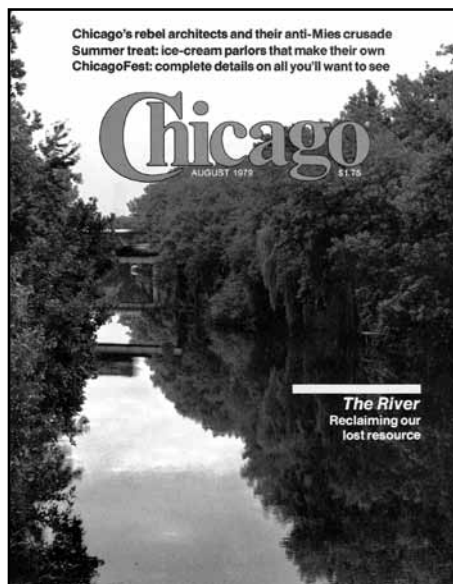


the river REPORTER

For 40 Years, Bringing the Chicago River to Life



The Chicago River is teeming with life in, on, and along the water and Friends of the Chicago River is proud to have been at the forefront of this renaissance. Our founders could see past the sewage and see past the fences and imagine a river alive with fish, beavers, birds and turtles and people embracing it as a community treasure and resource.



The August 1979 issue of *Chicago* magazine was the spark that started Friends as an organization.

It all got started in 1979 when freelance journalist and urban planner Robert Cassidy penned "Our Friendless River" for *Chicago* magazine after paddling the river from Winnetka to the Chicago locks with conservation and paddling legend Ralph Frese. Cassidy detailed the degraded state of the waterway: smelly, clogged with debris, poisoned by industry, stormwater runoff and more than 100 releases of combined sewage a year.

But he also extolled its value. "The Chicago River is the city's most neglected resource," wrote Cassidy. "It is overshadowed by Lake Michigan, disdained by environmentalists and outdoorsmen alike, neglected, fouled, and abused by industry and by all the rest of us. Nonetheless, it is the second greatest gift that nature has bestowed on this city."

Cassidy offered up a roadmap for rescuing this orphan, including the creation of a designated interest group of "Friends." "If the river is truly to be the city's second greatest natural resource, someone has to market the idea to the public," he wrote. "Not just to the



Robert Cassidy revisits the river he wrote about 40 years ago.

wealthy, but also the folks in the blue-collar neighborhoods who stand to benefit the most."

Cassidy's story was published in August of 1979. Within days, he was getting phone calls from folks such as Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD) Commissioner Joanne Alter and Openlands director Judith Stockdale. First a small group met at a coffee shop in Albany Park. Weeks later they held an informal gathering at the IBM Building at Wabash and the river which drew about 130 people. "I asked, 'Do we have something here? Do we want to pursue this?'" recalled Cassidy. "And they said, 'Yeah, that's what we're here for.'"

Story continued on page 5...

WADING IN

40 Years, and No Longer Friendless

This year Friends of the Chicago River is celebrating our 40th anniversary and to be quite honest we have plenty to celebrate. Since Robert Cassidy wrote “Our Friendless River” in 1979 (see the cover story) a huge amount of progress has been made.

In the 1970s audiences laughed out loud when Chicago Mayor Richard J. Daley proposed that businessmen would be fishing in the Main Stem at lunch, yet today it’s quite common and the river is home to over 70 species of fish, up from seven a few decades ago. Not only do fish fill the water but fleets of tour boats and water taxis compete with kayaks and pleasure cruisers.

Natural areas are being restored and are alive with all kinds of wildlife ranging from beavers and muskrats to turtles, herons, and mink from Lake County southwest all the way to Palos and on Chicago’s southeast side. Dam removal has become a priority and new water quality standards are being implemented to protect recreators and wildlife. Ambient water quality has dramatically improved. All this was almost unimaginable four decades ago.

Friends is excited and proud of our prominent role in bringing the river to life and transforming it into a community treasure, but we didn’t do it alone and the change didn’t come easy. It took imagination, ingenuity, perseverance, dedication

and the help of lots of people starting with our founders and continuing through to today with members, partners, and volunteers who provide financial support and write letters, carry canoes, restore riverbanks, serve on boards and committees, pick up garbage—and in some cases—all of the above.

Our combined effort has made an extraordinary difference and while we know we still have tough water quality, access, climate and habitat problems to solve we also know that people from across the watershed and in corridors of power are ready for the river to be clean, healthy, and safe for recreation—a truth made clear to me again recently via a post by one of Friends’ many Facebook followers who wrote:

“Yesterday there was a gang of kids loitering on the river bank, tossing bricks and being kids, oh well,” he wrote. “A moment later the doorbell rang. It was one of the loitering kids asking if we had some garbage bags. They were going to clean up the bank.”

Those kids and their trash bags are emblematic of how far the river has come and how willing people are to help improve and protect it, and proves the fact that our river isn’t friendless anymore.

Margaret Frisbie
Executive Director



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Our mission is to improve and protect the Chicago River system for people, plants, and animals.

Our vision is to make the Chicago River one of the world’s greatest metropolitan rivers.

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New Boat Helps Connect With River's Magic

Friends of the Chicago River Executive Director Margaret Frisbie christened the *Odyssey Chicago River* vessel on October 16, with company officials praising the environmental organization for its decades of advocacy and stewardship of the waterway.

Dan Russell, regional vice president of Entertainment Cruises, said Frisbie represented how Friends has “led the way of the transformation of the river,” a success “that we on the river appreciate and benefit from.” With a crack of a champagne bottle, Frisbie christened the new glass-enclosed boat, the second for Entertainment Cruises in Chicago.

“The *Odyssey Chicago River* is a beautiful symbol of how far we have come since Friends was founded almost 40 years ago and a wonderful example of what is possible if everyone is willing to work hard and dream big,” Frisbie told the gathered crowd.



Margaret Frisbie christens the *Odyssey Chicago River*.

“Friends is proud of the success we have had in transforming the river from a polluted back alleyway into a natural, recreational and economic asset. Our success can be measured in miles of trail, species of fish, towering riverfront skyscrapers, and the fact that this year I jumped into the Chicago River with elected officials from every level of government to demonstrate our commitment to swimming,” she said.

Frisbie said the *Odyssey Chicago River* fits into “one of the fundamental goals” of the Friends organization: to bring people closer to the water so they can appreciate it, support it, and protect it.

“The river belongs to us all. Being out on the water is a magical way to connect with it and learn about its health,” she said.

Friends’ Executive Director Margaret Frisbie with executives of Entertainment Cruises.



Friends Joins Attorney General Suit Against Trump Hotel

Friends of the Chicago River was permitted to join as an intervenor in a lawsuit filed by the Illinois Attorney General’s office against Trump International Hotel & Tower Chicago for violating environmental laws and jeopardizing fish and aquatic life in the Chicago River.

That action came after Friends, Sierra Club Illinois, and the University of Chicago’s Abrams Environmental Law Clinic accused management of Trump Tower, which uses 19.7 million

gallons of Chicago River water a day for cooling, of ignoring federal and state laws and regulations that require buildings to minimize damage to fish and other aquatic life from water.

“Friends of the Chicago River is eager to join forces with the Attorney General to assure the law is enforced and the river is protected,” said Friends Executive Director Margaret Frisbie.

Record-Breaking Year for the Bridgehouse Museum

The McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum, owned and operated by Friends of the Chicago River, enjoyed an extraordinarily successful season in 2018.

In June, the museum, located in the southwest bridgehouse of the DuSable (Michigan Avenue) Bridge over the Chicago River, welcomed its 200,000th guest since opening in 2006. The museum shattered its previous annual attendance record by nearly 20 percent, recording over 45,000 visitors.

In a fun and interesting way, the museum exposes more people to the Chicago River system's ecological and historical importance and fosters protection and support for the waterway. Museum Director Josh Coles and his seasonal staff expect to welcome its 250,000th visitor early next season.



The museum was the subject of a Page One story in the *Chicago Tribune*, with transportation writer

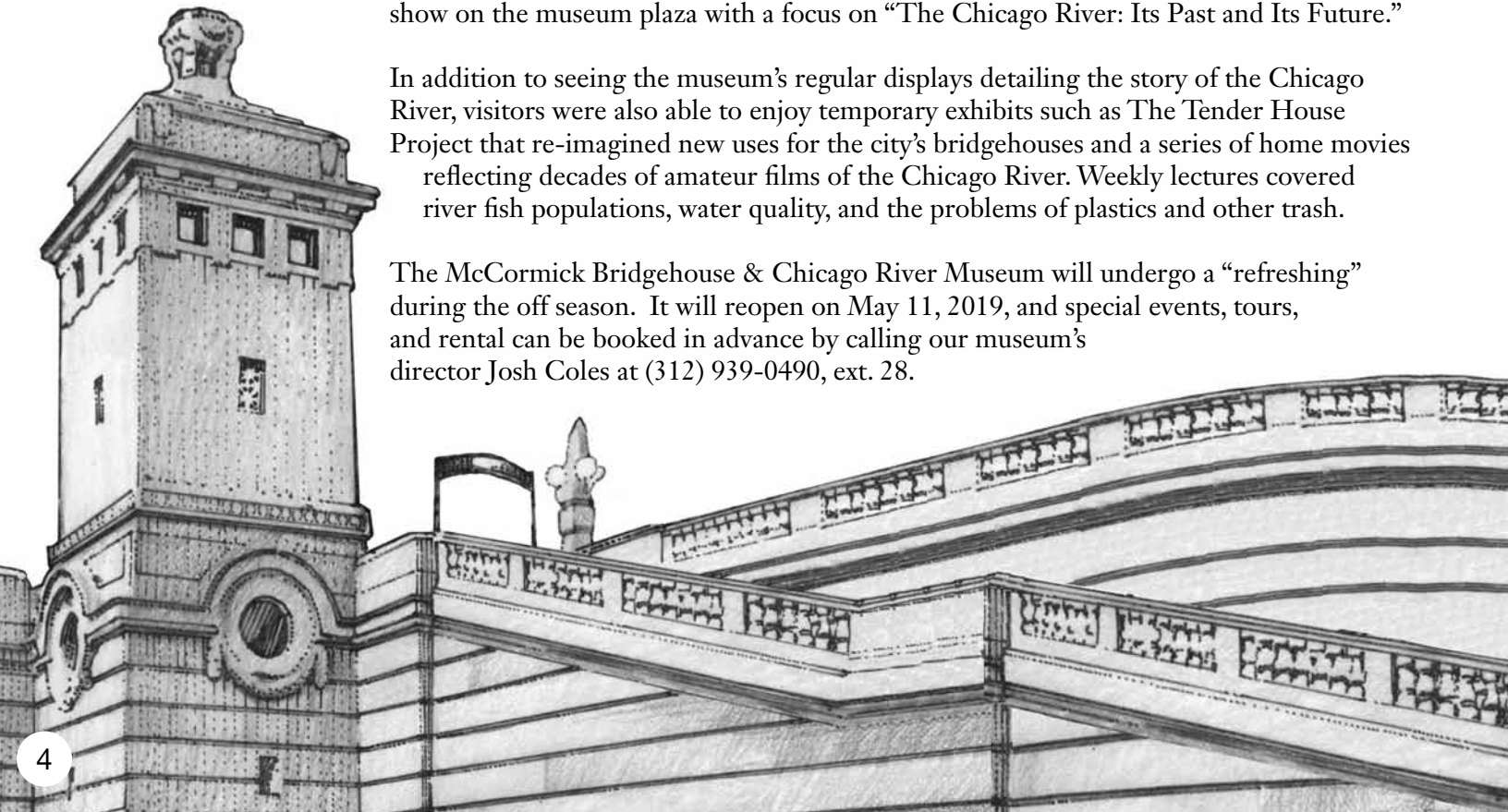
Friends' Bridgehouse Museum saw more visitors this past year than ever before and reached the 200,000 milestone as well. Come visit us on the Riverwalk.



Mary Wisniewski likening the gear room where patrons can watch the mechanics of the bridge operate to “being inside a giant’s pocket watch.” *Chicago Sun-Times* columnist Neil Steinberg raved that he learned “far more than I have spending hours in larger museums.” CBS2 dropped by to film the gear room and WBBM Newsradio recorded its weekly “At Issue” show on the museum plaza with a focus on “The Chicago River: Its Past and Its Future.”

In addition to seeing the museum’s regular displays detailing the story of the Chicago River, visitors were also able to enjoy temporary exhibits such as The Tender House Project that re-imagined new uses for the city’s bridgehouses and a series of home movies reflecting decades of amateur films of the Chicago River. Weekly lectures covered river fish populations, water quality, and the problems of plastics and other trash.

The McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum will undergo a “refreshing” during the off season. It will reopen on May 11, 2019, and special events, tours, and rental can be booked in advance by calling our museum’s director Josh Coles at (312) 939-0490, ext. 28.



Story continued from page 1...

Within a year, the newly founded group held its first conference with Mayor Jane Byrne as the keynote speaker. “Byrne told us ‘I like what you’re doing. Keep going,’” said Cassidy. “The Byrne thing opened the door to the city planning department for us.”

From the beginning, Friends of the Chicago River, which was first organized as a volunteer project within Openlands, began piling up successes. Byrne’s promise of cooperation resulted in the establishment of the first Chicago River protection ordinance requiring developers to negotiate with the city and groups such as ours on issues including public amenities and access to the waterway. Just two years after the publication of Cassidy’s piece, the organization’s effort encouraged Byrne to propose even more city oversight, including mandating that developers pass muster with the Chicago Plan Commission.



The 1980s would see Friends become the premier voice of protection for the full 156-mile Chicago River system. Victories included passage of the Riverfront Protection Ordinance. Our successful fight against a heliport at Wolf Point with Openlands, securing federal funding to clean up the North Branch, becoming an independent 501(c)3, and hiring our first executive director, Beth White, reflected our growing influence. We had some fun as well—developing public programs that would educate

and engage the public through rowing races, walking tours, and “guerilla” canoeing long before there were any public boat docks.



Three months into 1990 Friends helped Mayor Richard M. Daley unveil a best practices document we co-authored for river-edge development, Chicago River Urban Design Guidelines: Downtown Section. The first of what would become Chicago River Day, a now-annual litter removal and land restoration event that draws thousands of volunteers to more than 70 locations across the region, was in 1992. Our Chicago River Schools Network was formed and now reaches 17,000 students a year using the waterway to teach about history, water quality and wildlife. We also completed river projects in suburban North Chicago, Lake Forest, and Glenview.

The 1990s were capped by the city’s release of the Chicago River Corridor Development Plan which outlined specific recommendations for public and private land use to enhance the river’s natural areas—an evolution of the first River Protection Ordinance, co-authored with Jane Byrne and passed by the City Council back in 1983.

Into the 21st century Friends has continued to advance our cause. We fought for dam removal and more public access. With our allies at the Environmental Law & Policy Center, Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense

Council, and Openlands we put a spotlight on water quality protections that provide for safe recreation and our burgeoning wildlife population, and that more accurately reflect the river’s blossoming health and future. We would win on all counts.

For the fish, we built a hotel. For turtles, we cleared nesting land. For bats and ospreys, we installed places to call home. And for the people, we opened a museum that teaches about the Chicago River system’s past, present and future and how we can make it even better.



Today, because of our efforts, everybody wants to be a friend of the river—to live by it; to play in, on, and around it; to show it off to the world. But this river still needs protecting and we must still work together to guarantee access, foster environmentally sound development, and, sometimes, as with our legal action against the Chicago Trump International Hotel & Tower, keep it from being abused.

As a writer for over 50 years, Cassidy figures he has probably penned somewhere between three and four million words: “You write stuff and you go on to the next thing,” he says. His article “Our Friendless River” was something different: “Nothing I’ve ever written has had this kind of impact,” he said. He laid the foundation and we ran with it. Friends has been bringing the river to life for 40 years.

Hotspotting Effort Tracks Down Litter

Despite legal requirements to protect the river from “floatables,” the Clean Water Act descriptor for garbage, litter and debris still finds its way into the Chicago River system and it doesn’t just magically float away.

Litter has a terrible impact on the environment. It harms wildlife, mucks up riverbanks, and generally makes our world look like a mess. Some of our local trash flows downstream to become someone else’s problem but lots of it stays right here and collects on the banks and in the stream in areas Friends refers to as hotspots.

In 2016, Friends began a systemic approach to removing litter through the Litter Free North Shore Channel program, focusing on the eight-mile canal where we’ve been working to remove litter with local partners in a project funded by the Mars Wrigley Foundation. This fall we expanded our footprint downstream and added hotspotting to collect data about the movement and type of litter that pollutes river. Such litter mapping will help Friends combat garbage and debris in strategic ways and allow Friends to understand more about its sources and locations, and advocate for and implement best-practice litter prevention projects with government partners and community groups using Friends’ Litter Free Toolkit.

“Our early assessments tell us that hotspots are strikingly consistent,” said Joanne So Young Dill, Friends’ director of strategic initiatives, after weeks on the water. “We found pools of garbage in the same spots even after rainstorms swept away the last pile or when debris boats picked it up. Analysis of what’s collecting finds it is mainly wrappers, plastic bags, disposable packaging, and bottles.” More than 22 million plastic water bottles are thrown away annually in the United States. Almost half of the litter in the U.S. is food packaging, says EcoWatch.

Hotspots often occur where people are—near parks and public areas. North Shore Channel hotspots were commonly found where overgrown trees reach into the waterway and trap trash in low-hanging branches. North Branch hotspots were located in construction zones and under bridges. Natural eddies collect trash based on flow.

Friends advocates for local government to step up litter collection as required by the Clean Water Act and we are also looking for community partners to combat trash. Our toolkit guides people who want to organize clean-up events in their communities.

The toolkit covers everything from how to attract volunteers to disposing of trash to developing press materials. The kit can be found at <http://bit.ly/LoseTheLitterToolkit>.

Contact Dill at jdill@chicagoriver.org for more information.



Hotspotters commonly found litter repeatedly trapped by river eddies and caught up in low-hanging tree branches.



Come Down for Bottoms Up

Please join Friends’ Tributary Committee for Bottoms Up, an evening of networking and fun for emerging leaders on Thursday, February 28, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

The fundraiser for Friends is being held at Rock Bottom, 1 W. Grand Ave., Chicago. The evening includes a raffle and prize wheel. Tickets are \$40 at the door or \$35 at <http://bit.ly/bottomsupfeb28>. The event is sponsored by Meeting Tomorrow.



Friends’ Tributary Committee.



Friends at 40: Forty Highlights

All this year Friends of the Chicago River will share success stories and river information as a central feature in *The River Reporter*. There will be four pages in each issue from 2019 to inform, amuse and perplex you. We hope you look forward to the spring/summer and fall issues of our newsletter. But now, in this issue, please enjoy this list of *Forty Highlights from Friends First 40 Years*.

1979

1. Robert Cassidy publishes "Our Friendless River," which is the cover story of the August issue of *Chicago* magazine. So many people respond that in October 1979, with the help of Openlands, Cassidy schedules a public meeting and 130 people attend. Friends of the Chicago River is born.



2. The Joyce Foundation provides the first large donation to Friends which enables the fledgling organization to begin seriously organizing and advocating for the river's protection, leading to 40 years of progress towards a healthy and accessible Chicago River system.



1980

3. Friends hosts the first Chicago River Weekend which includes the Revitalizing Chicago's River conference. Chicago Mayor Jane

M. Byrne participates and calls for a "bold new plan" for the river and instructs the Chicago Department of Planning and Development to work with Friends.



1981

4. The *Chicago Tribune* runs a pair of front page stories regarding the newfound interest in the Chicago River which gives Friends' founder and first chair, Robert Cassidy, prominence and introduces the new organization and its mission to a broad audience. The story notes that there is a change in attitude about the river and that people are starting to view it as an underdeveloped recreational resource rather than a polluted nuisance.

1982

5. Friends hosts the second annual river design conference and identifies the need for river-edge tourist locations and infrastructure that would make the river accessible for recreation. These plans lay the foundation for a now universally desired continuous Chicago River Trail, the Chicago Riverwalk, and the first public canoe launches at River Park and Clark Park.

1983

6. Organizing to protect the river for public access and open space, with the help of Illinois Attorney General Ty Fahner, Friends and Openlands successfully prevent a heliport from being built at Wolf Point. This effort establishes Friends as the voice of the Chicago River system and sets a precedent for public involvement in river-edge development.



7. The first legislation designed to guide development along the river system is created by Friends and the Chicago Department of Planning and Development and approved by the Chicago City Council. The new "Waterways Ordinance" stipulates 19 guidelines for progress including that access to water is a necessary component of new riverfront plans.

1984

8. Friends is among the recipients of \$150,000 in federal funds to clean up the North Branch on the Chicago's near north side. Over 20,000 yards of debris are removed, enough to bury a football field under 11 feet of trash.



1985

9. Friends and the Chicago River Aquatic Center launch the Iron Ores Marathon, a 15-mile rowing race that starts in Evanston and ends at the Columbus Bridge downtown. Will Hart, 40, of Atlanta wins the event in 1:56:50. The goal is to get people out on the water and demonstrate the value of the river as a natural, recreational, and community asset.

1988

10. Formerly housed as a project of Openlands and volunteer driven since 1979, Friends of the Chicago River incorporates as a stand alone 501(c)3 organization and hires Beth White, an urban planner and expert in public-private partnerships, as its first executive director.

1990

11. Capitalizing on the previous river protection ordinances, the City of Chicago hosts a press conference to unveil the new Chicago River Urban Design Guidelines with Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley and Friends' executive director Beth White. David Mosena, then commissioner of the Department of Planning and Development, says "Friends of the Chicago River was invaluable in their ability to pull together varying interests and concerns... to achieve consensus on the Guidelines."

1992

12. Expanding on the success of Friends' first volunteer river clean up in 1985, Friends of the Chicago River launches the first Chicago River Rescue Day with 25 people volunteering at Linne Woods. Volunteers pull shopping carts, picnic tables, mattresses, and bags of garbage from the river and its banks.



1993

13. Actions improving the Chicago River draw the attention of the U.S. Congress resulting in the formation of the "Chicago Rivers Demonstration Project." Friends, the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, National Park Service, Urban Resources Partnership, USDA Forest Service, and U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service work together to develop model methodologies to engage the public and improve the river's health.

1994

14. Determined to open the river up for recreation, Friends publishes the Unofficial Paddling Guide to the Chicago River and starts to take people canoeing so that they can see the river's magic and the help it needs. This leads to the creation of Friends' formal Paddling Program in 1995 which enables tens of thousands of people to get out on the water and directly impacts improved water quality rules 16 years later.



1996

15. Friends establishes the Chicago River Schools Network to provide K-12 teachers within the Chicago River watershed the tools they need to use the Chicago River system as a context for teaching about science and the environment. This offers

their students the opportunity to explore the natural world that can be found in even the most urban settings. Since its inception, the CRSN has reached 400,000 students.



16. Illinois EPA funds the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission and Friends to develop a watershed plan for the 94-square mile North Branch subwatershed from Waukegan down to Morton Grove where the stormwater and sewage systems are separate. Known as the North Branch Watershed Project, the partnership promotes and supports on the ground stormwater projects that improve water quality, increase habitat, and educate the public leveraging millions of dollars in government funding.

17. Friends, Lake County Forest Preserves, Lake County Stormwater Management Commission, National Park Service and others begin the transformation of a 42-acre farm field into a wetland adjacent to the Middle Fork in Highland Park. Known as Prairie Wolf Slough, the project provides quality wildlife habitat, creates new trails, and demonstrates how thoughtful land use can improve water quality in the river system.



1998

18. Friends starts work with Lake Forest Openlands and the U.S. Forest Service to restore 2,000 feet of riverbank along the Middle Fork

flowing through Melody Farms in Lake Forest which improves water quality and creates habitat. Friends also partners with Gillette Co. and the City of North Chicago to create a stormwater detention basin to improve water quality in the headwaters of the Skokie River and reduce flooding downstream.

1999

19. Friends and the Lathrop Homes Local Advisory Council inaugurate the Jimmy Thomas Nature Trail along the North Branch in Chicago. Improvements include a 600-foot nature trail, observation platform, canoe dock, and 16 beds of native plants. The project, which sets a natural area vision for future redevelopment, provides for wildlife and improves quality of life for the community.



2000

20. The Civic Federation, Friends, and Openlands release their seminal study *"Waterways for Our Future."* Findings include that the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago is the only major sewage agency in the country whose permits do not require the removal of harmful bacteria and pathogens from their discharge to the river system. The report triggers a five-year analysis by the Illinois EPA of how the waterway is, and could be, used and leads to the approval of new recreation standards which require disinfection.



2000

21. Friends launches the Chicago River Flatwater Classic & Friendly Float, the first large-scale canoe and kayak race on the Chicago River. Running seven and a half miles from Clark Park to Ping Tom, the Flatwater attracts thousands of paddlers over its 10-year run and contributes to the successful approval of better water quality standards designed to protect recreators in, on, and along the water.

22. Friends and the Horner Park Advisory Council begin planning how to restore the banks of the Chicago River at Horner Park, laying the foundation for a half-mile riverbank restoration completed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Chicago Park District in 2018. The \$5.6 million project includes the removal of invasive plant species, regrading the shoreline to create a natural slope, and planting 128 native trees, 282 shrubs, and hundreds of flowers and forbs.



2002

23. Working with the Illinois Department of Natural Resources, Friends identifies four dams along the North Branch that need to be removed to improve and connect aquatic habitat and increase paddler safety. Joining forces with then-Lt. Governor Pat Quinn who launches the Illinois Dam Removal Initiative in 2012, Friends begins advocating for dam removal and building a coalition of support. The Winnetka Road dam comes down in 2015.

2003

24. Friends and Governor Pat Quinn host the inaugural Chicago River Summit to drive policy changes that improve the river system. At the

Summit, Quinn announces a goal for the river to be fishable and swimmable by 2020. Future topics explore swimming, supporting urban wildlife, sewage pollution, and best practices for litter removal instream.

2005

25. Friends' Michigan Avenue Fish Hotel opens to great acclaim on the Main Stem of the Chicago River. Designed to demonstrate that it is feasible to construct places where fish can find food and shelter in an urban environment, the hotel garners international attention, wins many awards, and leads to the creation of The Jetty between Wells and Franklin on the Chicago Riverwalk downtown.



2006

26. With a goal of engaging broad new audiences in the protection and improvement of the Chicago River system, Friends' opens the McCormick Bridgehouse Museum & Chicago River. Located in the landmarked southwest tower of the DuSable Bridge at Michigan Avenue and Wacker Drive, the museum tells the story of the river's transformation from a wild prairie stream to a sewage and ship canal to the living waterway it is today.



2008

27. Friends' launches the Chicago River Blue program to encourage and reward sustainable riverfront and watershed-wide development that protect people, water, and wildlife including bestowing the Blue Ribbon Awards. The first Blue Ribbon Award is given to Chicago Mayor Richard M. Daley for his commitment to river improvement and partnership with Friends.

2011

28. Friends, Environmental Law & Policy Center, Natural Resources Defense Council and Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club win Most Endangered River from American Rivers which brings national attention to water quality issues. U.S. Senator Dick Durbin and U.S. Congressman Mike Quigley join forces with the coalition to ensure better recreational water quality standards are approved.



29. After a decade of effort, Friends and its partners secure improved recreational water quality standards for the Chicago River system downstream of the North Branch Dam including protection for swimming and disinfection. The new standards are approved by the Illinois Pollution Control Board and USEPA and require sewage effluent discharged the river to be disinfected which improves ambient water quality dramatically.



2013

30. Friends and Openlands release "*Our Liquid Asset: The Economic Benefits of a Clean Chicago River*," an economic analysis which finds that for every \$1 spent on clean water infrastructure and public open space there is a \$1.70 return on investment from individual income, taxes, corporate revenue, and jobs.

31. Friends of the Chicago River, Friends of the Forest Preserves, and the Forest Preserves of Cook County launch Centennial Volunteers to build a community of stewards to restore and protect river-edge forest preserves. Since then, over 51,000 hours have been dedicated by volunteers to improve the health of 385 acres at nine forest preserves.



2014

32. Friends secures \$175,000 to fund The Jetty habitat installation on the Chicago Riverwalk to improve habitat in the Main Stem of the Chicago River. Capitalizing on Friends' design for the Fish Hotel, The Jetty includes floating wetlands, limnetic curtains, and fish lunkers that provide substrate for aquatic plants and insects which provide food sources for fish.

2015

33. Friends and the Illinois Department of Natural Resources complete the pioneering installation of 400 channel catfish nesting cavities in the North Shore Channel, North Branch, and the Little Calumet River to improve reproductive success. The project is the first restoration project at this scale in the river system and includes the release of 277,000 channel catfish to jumpstart reproductive success.



34. Friends and the Environmental Law & Policy Center, Openlands Natural Resources Defense Council, and Illinois Chapter of the Sierra Club secure improved aquatic life water quality standards for the reaches of the Chicago River system downstream of the North Branch Dam governing dissolved oxygen, chlorides, and metals and other pollutants by Illinois Pollution Control Board and USEPA.

2016

35. In order to address the continued problem of sewage and stormwater pollution in the river system, Friends launches Overflow Action Days. The program educates the public about how and when they should reduce their inputs to the river and builds awareness of the policy changes that need to occur to reduce and, ultimately, eliminate pollution.

36. Complementing Friends' advocacy efforts to reduce the flow of garbage to the river, Friends launches the Litter Free North Shore Channel program and engages partners to help remove trash along the eight-mile canal. Participants include the City of Evanston, Evanston Ecology Center, and Shedd Aquarium. In 2019, Friends expands the project's scope south to Chicago Avenue in Chicago, and changes the name to Litter Free Chicago River.



37. Scientists from the Forest Preserves of Cook County deem Friends' turtle nesting habitat restoration project an immediate success when turtles at Chipilly Woods, one of five project sites, use a Friends' cleared location in the first year it was restored. To date, over 100 acres have been cleared and 54 additional acres are in the works.



2017

38. The Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, Friends, Environmental Law & Policy Center,

Gulf Restoration Network, Natural Resources Defense Council, Prairie Rivers Network, and Sierra Club approve a settlement agreement to reduce phosphorus inputs to the Chicago River system. Phosphorus fuels excessive algae and plant growth using up critical dissolved oxygen that aquatic organisms including fish need to live.

39. Josina Morita, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District Commissioner, and Friends host the inaugural Big Jump to demonstrate the health and future for swimming in the Chicago River. First-year jumpers from all levels of government include U.S. Congresswoman Jan Schakowsky, U.S. Congressman Mike Quigley, Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle and Friends' executive director Margaret Frisbie.



2018

40. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Metropolitan Water Reclamation District, and the Chicago Park District remove the North Branch Dam 16 years after Friends and Illinois Department of Natural Resources initially called for its removal. The project includes tearing down the dam, five acres of instream habitat restoration, and 14 acres of riverbank restoration.

Turtle Nesting Habitat to be Expanded by 51 Acres

Turtle nesting habitat restoration work at Chipilly Woods is scheduled to begin this winter, expanding Friends' reproduction-focused restoration efforts to date by 51 acres. Chipilly, located along the Middle Fork in Northbrook, is part of the Forest Preserves of Cook County. The proposed area will be cleared of invasive plant species by 2020.

Chipilly Woods, like many other sites, is thick with invasive trees and shrubs, primarily buckthorn. Brush and trees will be hand cut using chainsaws and brushcutters and treated with an appropriate herbicide. This work, overseen by Friends, will improve turtle nesting habitat within Chipilly by allowing more sunlight to reach the ground. Painted turtles, snapping turtles, and spiny softshell turtles, among others, nest much more successfully in drier open areas with extensive sunlight and minimal vegetation. More nesting habitat will result in a greater survival rate for young turtles.

The 51 acres restored at Chipilly will connect to a previously restored 12-acre turtle habitat area.

Friends Honored for Work on Our Great Rivers

Friends of the Chicago River was part of a team recognized with an Implementation Award from the American Planning Association's Illinois Chapter for work on the Our Great Rivers project. Our Great Rivers sets a variety of goals for the City of Chicago's vision of the reaches of the rivers that flows through it, many of which reflect Friends' mission and vision.

Accepting the award in September 2018 were, (pictured below from left to right) Todd Wyatt from the Chicago Department of Planning, Chloe Curin-Sands of the Metropolitan Planning Council, Eileen Figel of the Forest Preserves of Cook County, and John Quail, director of watershed planning for Friends.



Chicago Fishes Event—a Reel Success

Despite occasional rain, some cloudy skies, and cool temperatures, the 2nd annual Chicago Fishes event attracted hundreds of people to the Chicago Riverwalk on October 19, 2018.



Fishing is a great way to get closer to the river. A young woman is proud of her catch.

With free poles, free bait, and free lessons, the event attracted kids and adults, first-timers and veteran anglers, tourists and locals. Sponsors included Friends, the Chicago Park District, the Environmental Law & Policy Center, the Illinois Environmental Council, the Metropolitan Planning Council, and Shedd Aquarium.

Demonstrating that the river is a wonderful natural and recreational resource, some 160 individual fish were caught over two hours—more than twice 2017's total. The most common catches included bluegill (*Lepomis macrochirus*) and green sunfish (*Lepomis cyanellus*). Participants used a range of bait, including bratwurst, pizza, French fries, maggots, and worms. Over 70 species of fish can be found the Chicago River including some surprises such as spotted gar and the American eel. In the 1970s, there were fewer than 10 species to be found.

Fishing poles purchased for the event will be donated to support youth fishing programs in Chicago. Poles from the 2017 event helped over 1,500 kids experience fishing in Chicago through various Chicago Park District programs.

Explorer Cousteau Teams With Friends, Students for World Water Monitoring Day

Philippe Cousteau Jr.—explorer, environmental advocate, and the grandson of Jacques Cousteau—teamed with Friends of the Chicago River in September to help over 300 Chicago River Schools Network (CRSN) students learn more about water quality, using the waterway as a test site.

The event at Clark Park, a partnership between Friends and Cousteau's non-profit educational organization EarthEcho International, was part of World Water Monitoring Day. Friends' CRSN reaches 17,000 students and teachers annually exposing young people to science, nature, and the Chicago River system and fostering stewardship for the waterway.

Cousteau told the students from Lane Tech, Chicago City Day School, and Northeastern Illinois University to “demand that the water we drink, which is a fundamental right we all have, is healthy and nourishing. Demand a cleaner, healthier world.”

Margaret Frisbie, executive director of Friends of the Chicago River, noted that “students are such an important part of the environmental movement” and that the CRSN, boosted by partnerships with groups such as EarthEcho, are “helping build the next generation of Chicago River stewards.”



Phillippe Cousteau Jr. talks water quality as two students examine river organisms with microscopes.

Cousteau, Friends' staff, including CRSN manager Mark Hauser, and volunteers from Xylem Watermark worked alongside local educators and their students on water testing projects at the park.

“When I see the optimism and passion young people have for the environment, it gives me hope,” said Cousteau, a TV host and producer as well as author, speaker, and entrepreneur.

river LIFE

You'll probably hear them before you see them. They can be quite loud, but they have to be as they communicate with the rest of their flock going 45 mph several thousand feet above the ground. Sandhill cranes are very large, migratory birds that commonly travel the Mississippi/Great Lakes flyway in flocks numbering in the hundreds. They are an important part of the Chicago regional ecosystem and, happily, one that we have been seeing (and hearing) more frequently.

Sandhill cranes are magnificent birds that can live to be 20 years old. Adults are large, weighing about 10 pounds. That's heavy for a bird, but flying is absolutely no problem. They have an 80-inch wingspan and are very skilled at soaring. Wings extended, they can ride thermal winds for hours, requiring only an occasional flapping of their wings to stay aloft. In flight, their long legs trail out behind them and their long neck is kept straight.

Outgoing, smart, and social, sandhill cranes are marked by red foreheads, white cheeks, and long, dark, pointed bills which are good for catching fish, insects, small reptiles and amphibians. The rest of their body is covered in grayish feathers. Young cranes have reddish-brown appearance, which changes as they mature.

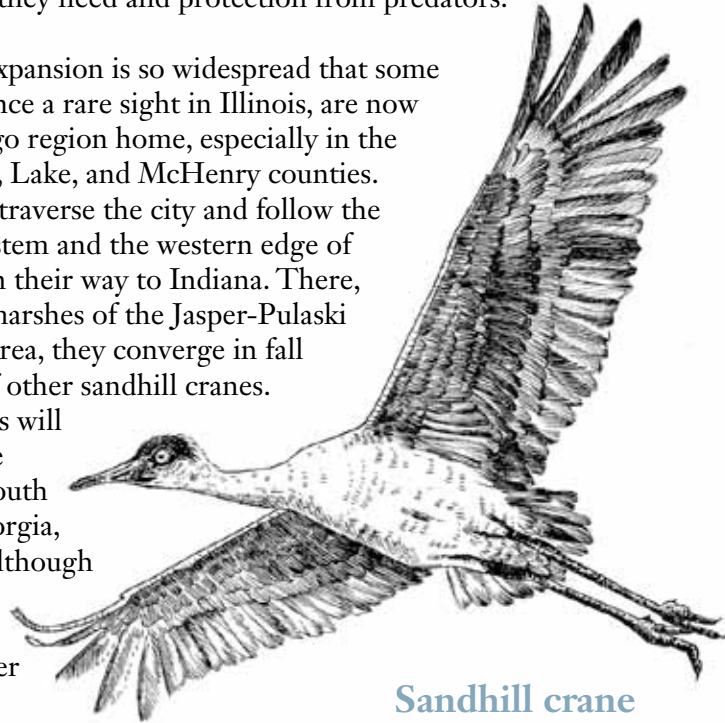
Once nearly vanished from the Midwest, sandhill crane populations have bounced back. In the 1930s, only two dozen breeding pairs lived in Wisconsin. Today, their population in the upper Midwest is now nearly 100,000.

The most important factor in the sandhill cranes' recovery has been the conservation and restoration of wetlands, marshes and prairies, the cranes' preferred habitat for nesting and breeding. There they can find the food they need and protection from predators.

The population expansion is so widespread that some sandhill cranes, once a rare sight in Illinois, are now calling the Chicago region home, especially in the wetlands of Cook, Lake, and McHenry counties. Migrating cranes traverse the city and follow the Chicago River system and the western edge of Lake Michigan on their way to Indiana. There, in the expansive marshes of the Jasper-Pulaski Fish & Wildlife Area, they converge in fall with thousands of other sandhill cranes.

Most of the cranes will go on to make the three-day flight south to Tennessee, Georgia, or even Florida, although some will remain locally to spend the winter at Jasper-Pulaski.

A good place for crane watching locally this February is the Cook Country Forest Preserves in Palos and your own backyard.



Sandhill crane

Antigone canadensis

Illustration by Jen Pagnini
www.mooloco.com

RIFFLES & CURRENTS

MONARCH PLATE DECALS OKAYED

More than 2,000 Sierra Club, Illinois Environmental Council, and Natural Resources Defense Council supporters partnered to apply for a new specialty monarch Illinois license plate decal, raising over \$20,000 for roadside habitat and ensuring the decal will be commissioned.

Since 1997, the Midwest has seen an 88 percent decline in the monarch population and a 64 percent decrease

in available milkweed, which serves as egg-laying habitat and a food source for caterpillars.

Decal ordering information can be found at <https://ilenviro.org/monarch/>.

HURRAY FOR HORNER PARK IMPROVEMENTS

Friends joined neighbors and government officials in September to mark the opening of a restored riverfront at Horner Park.

The \$5.6 million project involved removing invasive plant species and replacing them with 128 native trees and 282 shrubs to combat erosion. Two acres of riverbank were added through a lease with the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District as well as a new canoe and kayak landing.

The ceremony included Friends, in recognition of our role in initiating the project in 2000 and advocacy that kept it alive; the Chicago Park District; the U.S. Corps of Army Engineers; Ald. Deb Mell (33rd); and the Horner Park Advisory Council.

HIGH Water Marks

Friends of the Chicago River gratefully acknowledges all the ways members, donors, and partners helped us achieve our mission to improve and protect the Chicago River system for people, plants and animals from August 14, 2018, through December 13, 2018.

THE OTTER SOCIETY

The Otter Society is Friends' giving society and recognizes individuals, businesses, and foundations that contribute \$1,500 annually to the General Operating Fund or the Voice for the River Endowment Fund. Chicago River Legacy members, who are thoughtfully providing for Friends in their estate plans, are also recognized as Otter Society members.

Anonymous
Kenneth Arenberg and
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Jane Jacobsen-Brown
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Eugene and Sasha Jarvis
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SPACECO, Inc.
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GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Friends of the Forest Preserves/
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IN-KIND

Arcadis U.S., Inc.
Marjorie Brownstein
Calumet Fisheries
Corner Bakery Cafe
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Metropolitan Brewing
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Friends of the Chicago River
is a proud member of



Friends of Friends: Volunteers Welcome

Friends of the Chicago River volunteers are important contributors to accomplishing our mission to improve and protect the Chicago River system for people, plants, and animals.

Volunteers such as Barbara and Tom Honn, who have been involved with Friends for 20 years and were named Volunteers of the Year for 2018. And there's Chris Parson, a longtime volunteer with Friends' canoe program who in December was recognized by the state's Serve Illinois Commission as volunteer of the week. Friends has many ways people can volunteer with the organization:

Chicago River Eco-Warriors (CREW): Members of CREW can volunteer at our annual Chicago River Day cleanup event, help out at various land restorations along the Chicago River system, and work at the

Bridgehouse Museum or on other Friends' initiatives. Please visit www.chicagoriver.org/get-involved/ for more information.

Wildlife Monitors: To support our wildlife projects involving bats, osprey and turtles and evaluate their success, Friends has established a volunteer monitoring program for our habitat initiatives. Visit <http://bit.ly/wildlifemonitors>.

Tributary Committee: An organization for emerging leaders concerned with protecting the environment, the Tributary Committee is involved in fundraising (see page six). Drop an email to tributary@chicagoriver.org.

Chicago River Day: Our annual cleanup event needs volunteers and site captains. Contact Friends' Volunteer and Events Associate Annette Anderson at aanderson@chicagoriver.org.



.....YES! I want to support the Chicago River's recovery and renaissance!

By becoming a member, you are making a strong statement that you want a healthier river for people, plants, and animals. Gift memberships are also available.

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,500+ | The Otter Society | <input type="checkbox"/> \$100 | Blanding's Turtle / Business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$1,000 | Wild Mink | <input type="checkbox"/> \$75 | Tiger Salamander / Family |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$500 | Great Horned Owl | <input type="checkbox"/> \$35 | Chorus Frog / Individual |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$250 | Yellow-headed Blackbird | <input type="checkbox"/> \$10 | Prairie Dropseed / Volunteer, |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$156 | Black-crowned Night Heron | | Teacher, or Student |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$156 | Tributary Member (Emerging Leaders) | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> \$ _____ I/we wish to only make a donation at this time. | | | |

Contact your employer's Human Resources department today to find out if they have a matching gift program.

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- ☐ Charge my credit card (circle one) American Express Discover MasterCard Visa
- ☐ Yes, please charge the 3% credit card transaction fee to my card so that 100% of my membership/donation goes to Friends.

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- ☐ I/we wish to be anonymous. Please do not list my/our name.
- ☐ I am curious about: ☐ volunteering ☐ sponsorship ☐ planned giving
- ☐ Please DO NOT add me to your email communications list.

Your generous support directly impacts Friends' efforts to improve the Chicago River's health and vitality in three important ways: education and outreach; on-the-ground programs; and public policy and planning.

Members receive:

- Free general admission plus discounts on bridge lift, tour tickets, and merchandise at our McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum,
- Discounts on our canoe trips,
- A subscription to *The River Reporter* newsletter,
- Volunteer bulletins, email alerts, and other opportunities for hands-on involvement, plus
- Invitations to special events such as Chicago River Day, Big Fish Ball, and Summer Cruise, and
- Listing in Friends' Annual Report.

Business members of \$100 and above, as well as individual/household members of \$250 and above, receive additional benefits.

Otter Society members represent Friends' most important philanthropic partnership. In appreciation of their generous support, they enjoy unique benefits at three levels of giving. To learn more about how you can participate as an individual, household, or business, please contact kolsenclark@chicagoriver.org or call (312) 939-0490, ext. 19.

Interested in joining our monthly giving club? Support Friends year-round through automatic monthly contributions as small as \$10 per month. Contact membership at friends@chicagoriver.org or call (312) 939-0490, ext. 10.

Friends of the Chicago River is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization. Please send this form and payment to: Friends of the Chicago River at 411 South Wells Street, Suite 800, Chicago, IL 60607, or join online at www.chicagoriver.org/get-involved/membership.

Friends of the Chicago River

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BRINGING THE RIVER TO LIFE



Chicago River Summit—March 14

The value of blue/green corridors and how to create them is the focus of our annual Chicago River Summit scheduled for Thursday, March 14, 2019, from 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. The summit, first held in 2004, typically attracts over 100 professionals working in design, construction, engineering, architecture, landscape architecture, conservation and ecology as well as elected officials and other interested parties. Reserve your spot for this unique event at <http://bit.ly/ChicagoRiverSummit2019>

Listen Up: River Focus of Podcast

Friends' Executive Director Margaret Frisbie was recently a guest on Planet Forward, a podcast produced through George Washington University's School of Media and Public Affairs, talking about the past, present and future of the waterway with reporter Colin Boyle. "People desire the river. They want to have access to it. You can kayak on it. You can go fishing. You can have dinner or a drink. That's an economic advantage. That's a quality of life issue," she said. The future, she says, is swimming in it. "The law is on our side. And we're not going to stop pushing for it until we're all splashing around." The complete podcast can be heard at <http://bit.ly/riverpodcast>



The River Reporter is printed on recycled paper.

Visit our website, www.chicagoriver.org, for more information on getting involved.

Membership opportunities on page fifteen.