



Honors and Awards

2017

Chicago Wilderness

Friends of the Chicago River was honored to receive a 2017 Chicago Wilderness Force of Nature Award for our turtle restoration project. Over the past three years Friends has cleared 78 acres along the river system so turtles could find new places to nest. Some of these sites had documented nesting the following year. The speed of the turtles' response is highly unusual in wildlife restoration work. The award recognizes those who "extend above and beyond the ordinary and are inspirational examples for others."

Rudy Bruner Foundation

Friends of the Chicago River joined the City of Chicago and Ross Barney Architects as a recipient of a silver medal for Urban Excellence in Design for the Chicago Riverwalk for the 2017 Rudy Bruner Awards which recognize transformative places that contribute to the economic, environmental, and social vitality of American cities.

Friends of Downtown

Friends of the Chicago River, the City of Chicago, and Metropolitan Planning Council received the "Best Plan" Award for "Our Great Rivers" as part of Friends of Downtown's annual awards for those who advance the quality of life for downtown residents, workers, and visitors.

2016

Lake County Stormwater Management Commission

In the Lake County Stormwater Management Commission (LCSMC) presented Friends of the Chicago River with its 2016 Education, Outreach, and Media Award, honoring public outreach activities in the Chicago River watershed. This award recognizes an individual, publication, website, or group for addressing topics related to stormwater and floodplain management. Significantly, it highlights the ways Friends' and LCSMC's missions intersect to improve water quality, reduce flood damages, and restore and enhance the river system.

2013

Chicago Wilderness

Chicago Wilderness recognized Friends for our ongoing restoration efforts at Edgebrook Woods with the Conservation and Landscaping Award at our demonstration site there. The work has been completed by Friends' staff, volunteers, interns and corporate partners, transforming the site.

ALSA, Illinois Chapter— Merit Award for Communications for Waterline

In partnership with SOM, Friends of the Chicago River won an American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award for Communications for Waterline from the Illinois Chapter. Waterline is a multimedia effort that showcased the work of 12 Harvard University graduate students and their exploration of issues and opportunities that impact the Chicago River.

ALSA, Illinois Chapter— Merit Award for Environmental Stewardship for the Fish Hotel

In partnership with WRD Environmental, Friends of the Chicago River won an American Society of Landscape Architects Merit Award for Environmental Stewardship for Friends' Chicago River Fish

Hotel, an in stream habitat project that demonstrated how constructed habitat can work in intensely developed urban areas.

Chicago Audubon Society— Protector of the Environment Award

The Chicago Audubon Society presented Friends with their 2013 Protector of the Environment Award.

2011

Friends of the Chicago River was awarded with THE COOLEST THING from Friends of Downtown for providing canoe tours on the Chicago River downtown.

Friends secured the Most Endangered River Award from American Rivers in partnership with Natural Resources Defense Council and Environmental Law & Policy Center which played a key role in building public support for new water quality standards for the Chicago River

2009

American Planning Association, Illinois Chapter—Sustainability

In partnership with Lake County Stormwater Management Commission, Friends received an award for the North Branch-Chicago River Open Space Plan in the Sustainability category.

2007

Chicago Wilderness and US EPA—Conservation and Native Landscaping

Friends' Michigan Avenue Fish Hotel received a Conservation and Native Landscaping Certificate from Chicago Wilderness and US EPA.

City of Chicago—GreenWorks Award

Friends' Michigan Avenue Fish Hotel was awarded a GreenWorks award from the City of Chicago, in partnership with WRD Environmental.

Friends of Downtown—Welcome to Downtown

Friends' McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum received the Welcome to Downtown award recognizing outstanding achievements that promote downtown and help make it the well-designed, vibrant, economic heart of the city.

Commission on Chicago Landmarks—Preservation Excellence

Friends' McCormick Bridgehouse & Chicago River Museum received a 2007 Chicago Landmark Award for Preservation Excellence in the Interpretation/Education category, presented by the Commission on Chicago Landmarks

2005

State of Illinois—Governor's Hometown Award

Friends of the Chicago River received first place from the Governor's Hometown Award from Rod Blagojevich, Governor, State of Illinois, for the Riverbank Neighbors restoration project

Keep Chicago Beautiful—Award for Beautification and Community Improvement

Friends received the National Award for Beautification and Community Improvement for Chicago River Day from Keep Chicago Beautiful.

2001

Brookings Institution—High Performing Nonprofit

Friends was recognized in a nationwide study as one of 80 high-performing non-profits and one of 25 selected for in-depth interviews by the Brookings Institution

Local Economic and Employment Development (LEED) Council—Community Leadership Award
Friends was awarded the Community Leadership Award for outstanding leadership in promoting the Greencorps community job training and placement program and river restoration and landscaping projects

Unisys—Online Science Education

Friends received the Unisys Prize for Online Science Education for the Chicago Academy of Sciences web site program “El Agua Trabaja: How Water Benefits Quality of Life in Little Village” which Friends was a partner in along with the Josefa Ortiz de Dominguez Elementary School.

Metropolitan Planning Council—Daniel H. Burnham Award

Friends received the Daniel H. Burnham Award for North Branch Watershed Plan – Lake County developed by Friends and Lake County Stormwater Management Commission.

2000

Chicago Audubon Society—Protector of the Environment

Friends’ former executive director, Laurene von Klan, received the Protector of the Environment award for achievements and advocacy as Friends’ executive director.

IT Resource Center—Technology Leadership

Friends received the 2000 Technology Leadership Award from the ITRC, now Lumity.

North River Commission—Special Recognition

Friends received a Special Recognition Award for outstanding service to the North River community.

1999

American Planning Association, Illinois Chapter—Chapter Award

Friends received the 1999 Chapter Award for work with stakeholders during the North Branch Watershed Planning Phase.

Points of Light Foundation—Daily Point of Light

Friends received the Daily Point of Light for Chicago River Rescue Day 1998.

1998

State of Illinois—Governor’s Home Town Award

Jim Edgar, Governor, State of Illinois, awarded Friends the Governor’s Home Town Award (First Place) for Chicago River Rescue Day 1997.

Office of President Bill Clinton—Lake County Youth Conservation Corps

Friends received the President’s Award for engaging youth in community conservation service from President Bill Clinton.

1997

Keep Chicago Beautiful—Lester Nonprofit Award

Friends received the “Lester” Non-Profit Award for Chicago River Rescue Day.

State of Illinois—Governor’s Home Town Award

Jim Edgar, Governor, State of Illinois, awarded Friends the Governor’s Home Town Award (Second Place) for the Prairie Wolf Slough Wetlands Demonstration Project.

1996

Office of President Bill Clinton—Lake County Youth Conservation Corps

Friends received the President's Award in recognition of engaging youth in community conservation service.

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1995

American Rivers— Urban Rivers Restoration Award

American Rivers awarded Friends the Urban Rivers Restoration Award for efforts on behalf of urban river restoration across America.

Environmental Law Institute & U.S. EPA—National Wetlands Award

Friends was given the National Wetlands Award to Friends' David B. Ramsay for Gompers Park and Prairie Wolf Slough restorations (educational components).

1992

American Planning Association, Illinois Chapter—Planning Award

Friends was awarded the 1992 Planning Award for the Chicago River Urban Design Guidelines: Downtown Corridor.

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