



CONTACT: Lauri Elbing, Executive Director
Friends of the Shiawassee River
lkelbing@ShiawasseeRiver.org
(989) 723-9062 | office mobile

News Release

Friends' Awarded Important Grant to Coordinate Regional Coalition and Develop 120 Mile Water Trail

Water Trail designation would improve public access and promote outdoor recreational experiences on Shiawassee River from Holly to Chesaning.

July 6, 2016, SHIAWASSEE RIVER, MI - The Friends of the Shiawassee River is happy to announce that it was just awarded an important grant by the Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network (WIN) to further the work of the so many river advocates as we pursue national water trail designation. The \$21,400 grant will support coordination of a regional coalition's work with trail development experts from the National Park Service. Work has already begun to conduct an inventory of public access sites and amenities along the 120 mile stretch of river. This information will be used to create a water trail management plan and identify funding to implement this project. The WIN grant also supports development of a public website to promote paddle experiences and the communities and businesses along the Shiawassee River from Holly to Chesaning.

"We are excited to support this project that will really serve as a new template in engaging our urban areas in the broader work of conservation and the enhancement of regional quality of life," said **Michael Kelly, Great Lakes Director of The Conservation Fund**. The Conservation Fund administers the Saginaw Bay WIN project. "By providing this grant, we hope to build new partnerships between a variety of community organizations, while at the same time connecting people to nature through paddling experiences along this 120 mile stretch of the Shiawassee River," added Kelly.

"The Shiawassee River has been supported through past grants from Saginaw Bay WIN for signage in Holly, Linden and Fenton, six river launches (including the latest in Byron), the Chesaning Dam removal and restoration, and the dam removal in Corunna, among many others" said **Lauri Elbing, Executive Director for the Friends of the Shiawassee River**. "We couldn't be more thrilled by the support our Coalition has received from Saginaw Bay WIN as will begin working on this pivotal project to link, enhance and promote one of our region's greatest asset and economic engine — the Shiawassee River."

"We want to attract new people to our communities and new dollars to our local economies from the river's headwaters in Holly all the way up to the Shiawassee River National Wildlife Refuge in Saginaw Township, said **Jeff Deason, President of the Shiawassee Regional Chamber of Commerce**. "The river is one of our region's greatest assets, and our goal is to both improve access to the river, and to package and promote outdoor experiences such as kayaking, canoeing, fishing, hiking, and bird watching."

Much work has already been accomplished from Holly to Byron, which resulted in the Shiawassee River landing at #7 on the Michigan Department of Natural Resources' poll: [Top 11 Places to Paddle in Michigan](#). The Coalition will work to extend those improvements in recreational access, signage, mapping, programming and public information into the communities of Byron, Durand, Vernon, Corunna, Owosso, Oakley, St. Charles and Chesaning.

"I applaud the work that has already been done to develop the Shiawassee River Water Trail and am looking forward to working with the City of Linden, Friends of the Shiawassee River, Headwaters Trails, Keepers of the Shiawassee, and other partners to extend the efforts downstream to the Shiawassee

Care. Share. Enjoy.

National Wildlife Refuge,” said **Barbara Nelson-Jameson, Michigan Program Coordinator of the Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program with the National Park Service.**

“Water trails are routes that connect access sites along river, lake and coastal shorelines and each trail is as unique as the landscape it moves through and the experiences provides along the way.”

The City of Linden, Friends of the Shiawassee River, Headwaters Trails, Keepers of the Shiawassee, Village and Township of Chesaning, Village of Holly, City of Fenton, and Fenton Township came together last fall to successfully applied for technical assistance from the National Park Service to secure National Water Trail designation for the Shiawassee River.

“We can’t thank Saginaw Bay WIN enough for awarding a grant to our project. This is pivotal and the process will engage numerous community stakeholders, non-profit organizations, local governments, the business community, and residents - both young and old alike, who all care about a healthy and safe, accessible place, while creating a wonderful shared place along the Shiawassee River,” said **David Lossing, Mayor of the City of Linden.** “We look forward to working with Barbara Nelson-Jameson over the next year to move this project forward.”

Earlier this spring, a diverse group of community leaders representing business, government and non-profits from the region came together as the Shiawassee River Water Trail Coalition (Coalition) in an effort that will culminate in the Shiawassee River designated as a National Water Trail. The Coalition is currently comprised of the Friends of the Shiawassee River, Headwaters Trails, Keepers of the Shiawassee, Michigan State University Extension Services, Shiawassee County Conservation District, Shiawassee Regional Chamber of Commerce, and local government leaders from Linden, Fenton, Holly, Owosso, Corunna, Byron, Argentine, Chesaning and St. Charles.

“The Shiawassee River has been such an asset to the Village and Township of Chesaning,” said **Cathy Gross, Chesaning Township Treasurer.** “I grew up just down the road from Showboat Park and spent most of my childhood down there. It is a serene and peaceful setting along the river bend.” “We are thrilled to be a part of the Shiawassee River Water Trail Coalition,” she continued, “and are grateful to have an organization like Saginaw Bay WIN that continues to invest in our community and our region to make this an even better place to live, work and play.”

To learn more about the Shiawassee River Water Trail Coalition, planning efforts and to get involved, please go to ShiawasseeWaterTrail.org

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*The [Friends of the Shiawassee River](#), a 501(c)3 nonprofit established on July 30, 1996, adopted a mission to **Care, Share, and Enjoy** the river. We **Care** by maintaining and improving the health of the river; **Share**, by enhancing the community's appreciation and knowledge of the river; and **Enjoy**, by increasing recreational access and responsible use of the river.*

The [Saginaw Bay Watershed Initiative Network \(WIN\)](#) is a collaborative, community driven quality of life initiative created by a variety of environmental, business and community interests in 1996. WIN was formed to create a more sustainable future for all who live, work and play within the Saginaw Bay watershed. One of the ways in which WIN accomplishes this objective is by providing financial support to projects that link the economic, environmental and social needs of the region. Key WIN funding partners include: Bay Area Community Foundation, Consumers Energy Foundation, Harry A. and Margaret D. Towsley Foundation, Midland Area Community Foundation, Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation, Saginaw Community Foundation, The Dow Chemical Company Foundation, The Herbert H. and Grace A. Dow Foundation, S.C. Johnson Fund, the Cook Family Foundation, the C.S. Mott Foundation and the Saginaw Bay Foundation. More information on WIN is available at www.saginawbaywin.org or by calling (989) 892-9171.

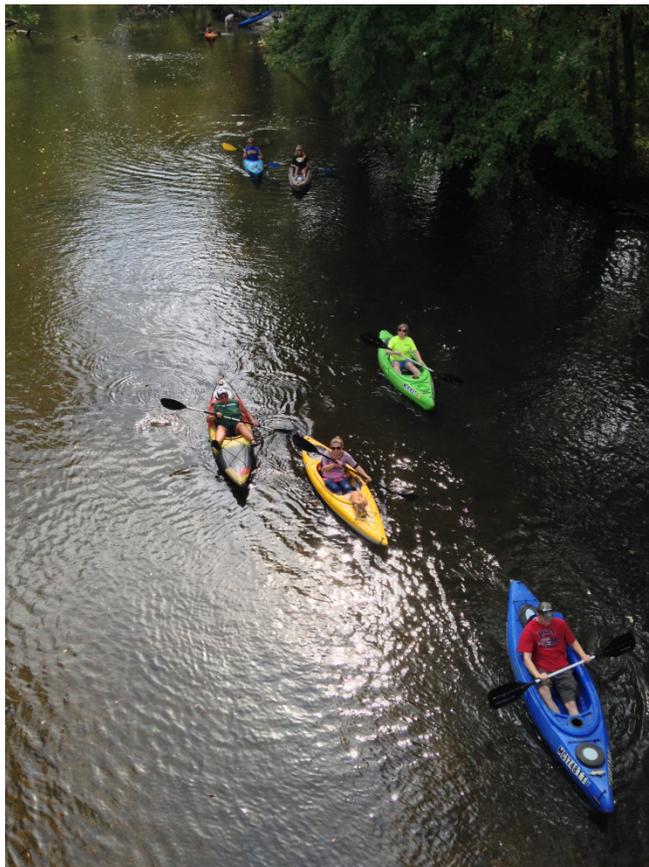
The [National Park Service Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance program](#) has been helping water trail partners throughout the country for almost 20 years to create and improve

access to waterways, promote education and stewardship, and provide people information to safely plan their water trail experience. The National Park Service also administers the [National Water Trail Program](#) to establish a national system of exemplary water trails; be a catalyst for protecting and restoring the health of local waterways; and build a community that mentors and promotes the development of water trails and shares best management practices.

In order to achieve National Water Trail Designation, the water trail must meet four requirements:

1. The trail and access points must be open to public use and made according to the best management practices.
2. The trail must comply with applicable land use plans and environmental laws.
3. The trail must be open for public use for at least 10 years after the designation.
4. The trail designation must be supported by landowners, public or private, where access points exist.

As a National Water Trail Designation, the river will receive national promotion and visibility, use of the National Water Trails logo, being part of a national network and more opportunities to obtain technical assistance and funding to implementation of trail projects



- Byron Launch Ribbon Cutting and Paddle: September 26, 2015, photo credit Lauri Elbing/Friends of the Shiawassee River
- National Park Service Technical Assistance Grant Awarded. Linden Mayor David Lossing talks with Barbara Nelson-Jameson from the National Park Service about new public access sites and signage for paddlers in Linden, Fenton, Byron, and Argentine. October 21, 2015 photo credit Lauri Elbing, Friends of the Shiawassee River
- Shiawassee River, July 31, 2015 photo credit Jared Gill