

VOL. 7 ISSUE 1 • MAY 2026

THE MINNESETAH CURRENT

Friends of the Outlet Newsletter Featuring the Keuka Outlet Trail



Spring on the Outlet Trail

So that day finally arrives. It's 60 degrees after a long, cold winter. Suddenly you're hit with that feeling of, "I gotta get outside!" You throw on your sneakers, hop on out to stroll the Outlet Trail, smile on your face, phone camera in hand.

The next day you wake up to a frost, and by afternoon find yourself gazing out your window to the sight of light, fluffy snowflakes falling over a dimly colored landscape. Such is the rhythm of nature. A steady progression is composed of constant ebbs and flows. And so it goes. We want to savor it all with you. Enjoy the greening of spring with us, friends. -JW 🐸



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A message from our President

BY KEITH PRATHER

Where does the time go? Six years ago I began my journey on the Friends of the Outlet Board, four serving as president, and it seems in the flap of a Kingfisher's wings, it is gone.

We've accomplished much over this span of time. Two mill sites (Schutts and Fox) were cleared, cleaned and marked with signage by our incredible maintenance crew. Hopeton Campground was completed and opened. There is a trail that connects to the main trail from the campground. If you have never been there, you should pay it a visit or even consider a night of tent camping there. A group of us put together an audio tour that can be enjoyed as you walk the entire length of the trail or take it in a couple of sections at a time. The Cascade Falls area was finally cleared of all buildings, grass was planted, a gazebo installed and now, we pay tribute to the area with our Celebrate Cascade event (Mill to Mill 5 and 10K runs available as well), which is in its 5th year!

The maintenance crew continues to do all of the little things; trash removal, clearing fallen trees off the trail, mowing and a plethora of other duties that make the Outlet Trail one of the best trails in the area. Finally, it is my hope that in the coming years the Seneca Mill Falls project comes to fruition. It will be stunning, making the area around the falls safe and visually magnificent.

Friends of the Outlet is an amazing group of people supported by board members, maintenance crew, volunteers and members. Without this group of dedicated people, the Outlet Trail would not exist. No governmental body supports the trail. It is done by WE the People. I am proud to be part of this group. I'm leaving the board, but I will never leave the trail. I look forward to another summer, jogging, biking, walking and bird watching on the trail, and of course taking part in Celebrate Cascade. I hope if you love the Outlet Trail like I do you will consider joining the board, becoming a member or volunteering. See you on the trail. 🦎

-Keith Prather



Mission

The Friends of the Outlet, Inc. is a non-profit organization working with the community to preserve, protect and develop our properties along Keuka Outlet Creek to provide an area for natural, physical, outdoor and historic-oriented recreation and education, while serving as responsible stewards for the natural resources of our organization.



FRIENDS OF THE OUTLET



New Wetlands Solve Problem Along the Outlet

BY KEITH PRATHER

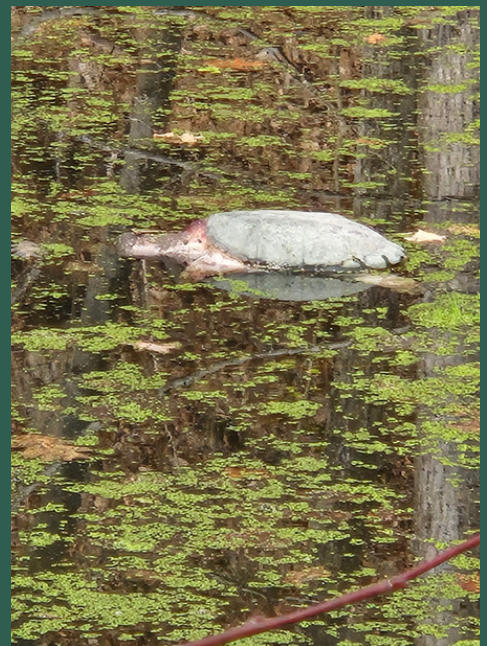
More wetland habitats will be coming soon to the Keuka Outlet Trail. Thanks to funds provided by the Great Lakes Restoration Initiative a crew from the Finger Lakes Institute of Hobart and William Smith College supported by the towns of Milo and Torrey Highway departments will be on the Outlet Trail sometime in late May or early June. When the gates that control the flow of water from Keuka Lake into the Outlet after heavy rain are fully opened, this causes nutrient pollution, streambank erosion and downstream flooding along the Keuka Outlet and impacts downstream Seneca Lake. A solution to this problem is the creation of wetlands in the abandoned Crooked Lake Canal that runs alongside the Keuka Outlet Trail.

Four locations along the Outlet Trail have been identified as viable diversion locations for this project. Two diversion locations will involve the installation of pre-cast concrete pond risers within tributaries flowing from the north into the Keuka Outlet. At two other diversion locations, water will be directed out of the Keuka Outlet via culverts. These diversion systems will only be necessary during times of heavy rain and when the Outlet is running higher than normal. This will mitigate flooding, reduce streambank erosion and reduce excessive phosphorus transport in downstream Seneca Lake. And in the process create wetlands along the Outlet Trail creating habitat for many bird, animal and amphibious creatures.

The project leverages the Keuka Outlet Trail and partnership with the Friends of the Outlet – an organization dedicated to preserving the history, environmental benefits and recreation access along the Outlet and to maximize public engagement. This past spring, SWIO and Keuka College Visual Communication Design students conceptualized and created interpretive signage for each of the four diversion locations highlighting the unique history and water quality solutions of the former Crooked Lake Canal. This project is an example of innovative repurposing of an abandoned canal



"This project is an example of innovative repurposing of an abandoned canal system to yield much needed environmental benefits for the Great Lakes Basin."





wetlands, cntd.

system to yield much needed environmental benefits for the Great Lakes Basin.

Unfortunately, this will cause some closures along the Keuka Outlet in the areas affected. Please, look for updates on all Friends of the Outlet social media listings.

Pollinator Garden Update

BY ALLISON LAWS

The pollinator gardens are a joint project between the Penn Yan Rotary and the Friends of the Outlet, with guidance from the Cornell Cooperative of Yates County

Establishing native species in a nature preserve is an excellent way to support the local ecosystem. Many insects, animals and birds have evolved to eat and breed on native plants. They may enjoy the nectar or leaves of other plants, but their systems are best adapted to native species. Some butterflies, for example, are unable to reproduce if a specific plant is unavailable, because their caterpillars can only eat a certain kind of plant (for example, Monarch butterflies only lay eggs on milkweed or butterfly weed).

In addition, native plants have adapted to the ecosystem and are usually hardier than other plants, strengthening



The bed pictured above was planted in spring 2024 at Fox Mills site

Some of the plants added to the bed at Fox Mills site (April 28, 2024)

- Winterberry
- Dwarf crested Iris
- Wild ginger
- Native geranium
- Leucathoe, variegated
- Baptisia
- Monarda (Bee Balm)
- Jacob's Ladder
- Black-eyed Susan
- Stonecrop
- Columbine

Ways you can help keep pollinator gardens

1. *Wait until May to mow or to clean up leaf litter and stalks with last year's seeds; the Friends of the Outlet will manage such clean-up on its pollinator gardens along the trail, so please look but don't touch*
2. *Try to include plants indigenous to this region into your garden. Enjoy the fact that deer will mostly leave such plants alone.*



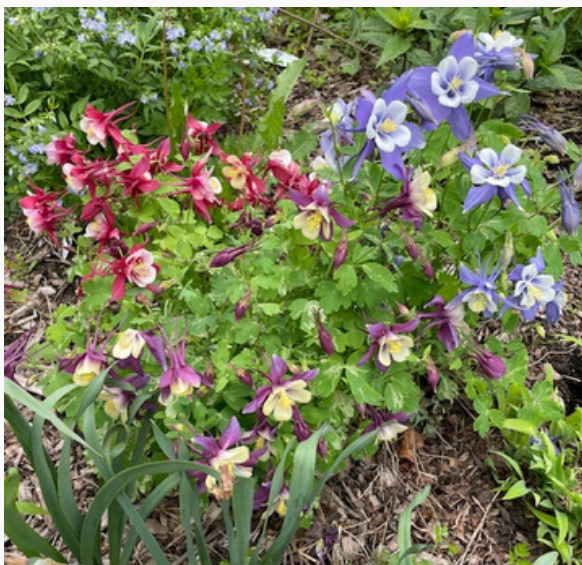
pollinator garden, cntd.

the forest and meadows. There are notable exceptions to this phenomenon, such as garlic mustard and Japanese knotweed. Such invasive species crowd out native plants, shrinking the food supply for many creatures. Nurturing strong, native perennial plants is one way to combat damage to the ecosystem.

The advantages extend to people as well: more resilient greenery creates better shade in the summer heat, and a healthy ecosystem fosters clean water and fights erosion, not to mention that healthy plants, flowers, berries, birds and animals are delightful to see.

One of the best things about this installation is that you can do a version of it at home, easily! It doesn't have to be large to make a difference; see instructions below. The list of native plants we put in here were selected especially for their adaptation to part-shade and their benefits to pollinators. Once you determine how much sun/shade your location will get, you can consult your local garden store or do some online sleuthing, perhaps starting with the Cornell Cooperative of Yates County:

<https://yates.cce.cornell.edu/gardening>. Our region boasts many native plant nurseries. 🦎



Pollinator Garden ABCs

1. Outline the area you wish to plant with logs or stones.
2. Line the bottom with cardboard (brown with black or no colored printing).
3. Add about 6-8 inches of good topsoil.
4. Cover with more cardboard.
5. Cover with 3-4 inches of aged mulch – green is ok if left to overwinter before planting.
6. Water well. After a few days, you can plant by digging carefully down through the cardboard to add plants.
7. Seek perennial plants that are native to your area, perhaps blooming or making berries at different times for season-long interest.
8. Weed as needed, but the structure of the bed should keep down weeds, especially as plants become established. And some weeds are beneficial; like Dandelions, which you can remove after they go to seed, or leave for extra green.
9. Enjoy year after year!





Third Annual Community Cleanup Features a Big Haul of Tires from the Keuka Outlet Trail

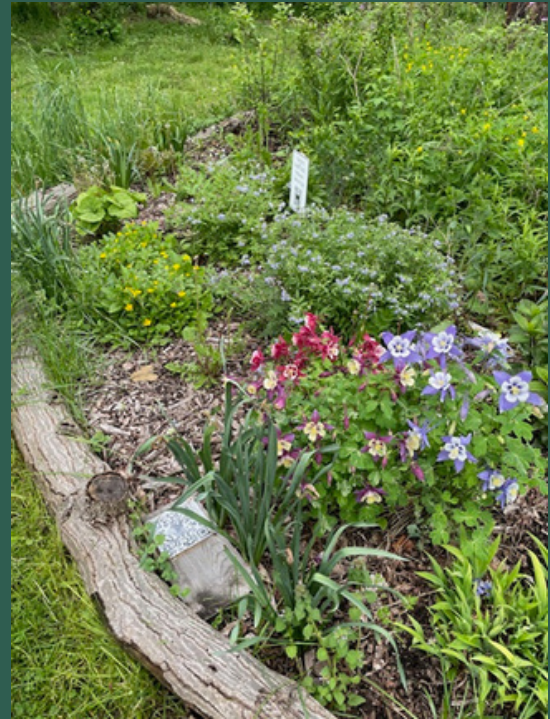
BY DONNA RAE SUTHERLAND

A big thank you goes out to a dozen local citizens who participated in the third annual Town of Torrey/Village of Dresden Community Cleanup that occurred on Saturday, April 18, 2026. The volunteers collected over 20 bags of trash from numerous roadsides, public parks, sidewalks, and most notably, the Keuka Outlet Trail, which has its eastern terminus in Dresden.

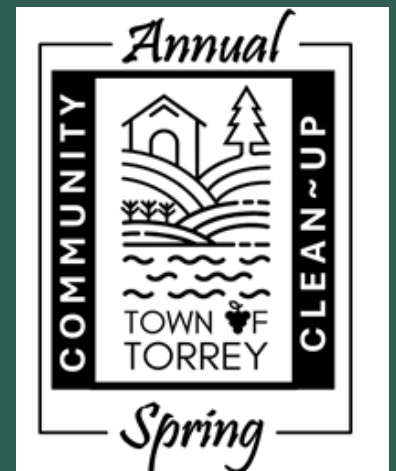
Volunteers, many donning their bright yellow T-shirts from last year's event, spread out in teams across the region. It was the Keuka Outlet Trail team who hit the trash jackpot and successfully removed ten tires from the trail, in addition to at least six bags of trash from the section of the trail running from Hopeton to the Dresden Parking Lots. We are especially grateful to Kathy McGrath, Town of Torrey Council Member, who enlisted the help of her husband, Terry Donahue, her neighbor, Mary O'Connell, and good friend, Larry Guttmacher to accomplish this hefty haul. (*cntd.*)



This year's participants included (sitting, front row) Michelle Arthurs, Darlene Smith, Patty Dean, Mary O'Connell, Kathy McGrath; (standing) Todd Eichas, Josh Wood, Peter Martini, Larry Guttmacher, Terry Donahue, and Grant Downs. (Not pictured Donna Rae Sutherland.)



The Pollinator Garden





community clean-up, cntd.

Josh Wood, Town of Torrey deputy Highway Superintendent, was on duty and effectively circulated around to all the teams picking up the collected debris. "We filled the back of Josh's pickup truck twice," Kathy said with an enthusiastic smile. After the morning event, the volunteers gathered at Seneca Stag Brewery on Route 14 for a complimentary beverage provided by hostesses, proprietors, and fellow volunteers, Darlene Smith and Michelle Arthurs.

The Community Cleanup is scheduled in conjunction with the annual Earth Day and offers numerous benefits. Foremost is the cleaning of the streets, parks and pathways after the long cold, snowy season and the inevitable flotsam and jetsam left over from winter. Equally important is the gathering of neighbors and the making of new friends in a shared cause and celebration of a long-awaited spring.

"As a Friend of the Outlet and a resident of Dresden, I spend considerable time on the eastern end of the KOT," Donna Rae Sutherland said. "I can't wait for the warmer, dryer weather to hike the new trail extension to Seneca Lake - always with my repurposed birdseed, dog food or soil bag ready to collect whatever I find. Anyone who wants to join me is always welcome."

The photos and results of this community initiative will be included in the Town of Torrey 175th Anniversary Time Capsule that is currently in development. The Time Capsule will be buried this September in Dresden's Washington Park near the Pavilion in the picture on the previous page. 🦎

There are many ways to help keep the Keuka Outlet Trail beautiful! To volunteer, please reach out to us. (contact info on page 10)

Follow us on social!



Help us steward the Outlet Trail

Become a member and donate at keukaoutlettrail.org.

You can also send a check to:

Friends of the Outlet
PO Box 125
Penn Yan, NY 14527

We appreciate your support!

Become a member



Donate





Spring Wildflowers Along the Trail

BY JUDY ERWIN

Make sure when you're out enjoying the trail, you notice all the wildflowers! With a keen eye, Judy captured these blooms, just as spring peeked out of the ground. Can you identify them below?



Key

Skunk Cabbage
(*Symplocarpus foetidus*)

A bold wetland native with large, cabbage-like leaves and heat-producing early blooms that emerge through frozen ground in swampy soils, skunk cabbage symbolizes resilience and transformation—one of the first signs that winter is loosening its grip.

Trout Lily (*Erythronium americanum*)

A delicate woodland ephemeral with mottled “trout-like” leaves and nodding yellow flowers that spread slowly in rich forest soils. Associated with patience and hidden beauty, as colonies may take years to bloom.

Spring Beauty (*Claytonia virginica*)

A low-growing woodland ephemeral with slender leaves and white-to-pink veined flowers that briefly carpet the forest floor in early spring, that represents renewal and fleeting beauty—here for a moment, then gone with the warming season.

Trillium (*Trillium* spp.)

A striking woodland perennial defined by its three leaves and three-petaled flowers, thriving in undisturbed, shaded forests. Long associated with balance and harmony.



Then & Now

BY KEITH PRATHER

The Hopeton parking access area—located approximately one mile west of the end of the Keuka Outlet Trail in Dresden—marks the site of an old iron-framed bridge and its remaining stone foundation. It is believed the bridge was built in the late 1800s, likely used to transport goods to and from the mill sites at Cascade Falls farther up the trail. Today, this deteriorating structure stands as a quiet reminder of what once thrived here: the now-vanished town of Hopeton.

Hopeton was established in the 1790s by Charles Williamson, who named it in honor of the Earl of Hopeton. The town's first grist mill was built in 1794, followed by several more mills constructed along the Outlet. A town square is believed to have stood near the intersection of State Route 54 and Hopeton Road, and a nearby cemetery dates back to this early period, when the surrounding area of Hopewell was flourishing.

This boom lasted for roughly thirty years. However, with the opening of the Crooked Lake Canal nearby Dresden—situated on Seneca Lake—gained a clear economic advantage. Hopeton gradually lost its importance. By 1865, only 18 houses, one hotel, and a schoolhouse remained. Today, nothing is left.

As you walk from the Hopeton Access toward Dresden, it's hard to imagine that mills once lined this stretch of trail. There is little to suggest the industrious past that once defined this landscape.

Happy trails! 🐸



Site of the iron-framed bridge near Hopeton



You can check out various old mill remains on the Outlet Trail



An old postcard photo of the Outlet Trail



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Upcoming Events

May

May 2 - Keuka College
Women's Cross Country
Alumni 5K

June

June 6 - Finger Lakes Fit
5K on Seneca St.

June 13-14 - Friends of the
Outlet table at the Keuka
Arts Festival

July

July 18 - Keuka Outlet Trail
Half Marathon

September

September 19 - Celebrate
Cascade & Mill to Mill
5K/10K