

# Minnesetah Current Volume 6 Issue 1 – Summer 2025

*Friends of the Outlet Newsletter featuring the Keuka Outlet Trail*

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## FREE COMMUNITY CONCERT

Saturday, June 7, 2025, 12:00 pm

Cascade Mills Falls on the Keuka Outlet Trail



The Towpath Volunteers Fife and Drum Band & the Penn York Highlanders Bagpipe Band



- ❖ Bring your own lawn chairs
- ❖ Ice cream, hot dogs and beverages available to purchase
- ❖ **RAIN LOCATION:** Event will be moved to Fireman’s Field, Hicks St., Penn Yan
- ❖ Questions? Contact Lion Mike Gleason at 315-521-7001
- ❖ Additional Sponsors: Penn Moose Club and Elks Club



MARK YOUR  CALENDARS  
FOR THESE OTHER UPCOMING EVENTS  
on the Keuka Outlet Trail

Saturday, June 7 ~ **Finger Lakes Fit 5K** start on Outlet Trail behind Finger Lakes Fit (143 Seneca St) 9:00 AM

Saturday/Sunday, June 14-15 ~ **Finger Lakes Arts Festival** - Keuka Boat Launch to Penn Yan Community Park (across from Union Block and Blue Heron Bakery). Come visit our FOTO information booth.

Saturday, July 19 ~ **Outlet Trail Half-Marathon/10K Run**- starts at Penn Yan Community Park (corner of Lake St. and Liberty St.) 8:00- half marathon 8:15- 10k

Sunday, July 20 ~ **FOTO Information booth at ONCE** 655 NY-Route 14 (Seneca Lake westside), a percentage of all sales that day will go to Friends of the Outlet. Come visit us.

Saturday, September 13~

- **Mill to Mill 5K/10K Run** starts at Cascade Falls start times 10:45 10k / 11:00 5K
- **Celebrate Cascade** - Cascade Falls Pavillion area, 11:00am-3:00pm. Post race fun in the sun with live music by Blue Eyed Soul, food trucks, local breweries and wineries and a good time for all.

**VOLUNTEERS ALWAYS NEEDED:** Event volunteers are consistently needed to help with all roles. Please email us [contact@keukaoutlettrail.org](mailto:contact@keukaoutlettrail.org) to sign up.

## Runs on the Outlet Trail this Summer

Are you looking for a little motivation this summer? Three runs offered on the Outlet Trail this summer might be just what you need to get you moving. Exercise has proven to improve your health, promote positive attitudes and decrease the risk of disease. Having a goal when exercising is important when we find ourselves lacking motivation.

If you are looking for a big challenge, the Keuka Outlet Half Marathon/10K is being offered by Willow Run on July 19th. The half marathon is a 13.1 mile run that takes you the length of the Outlet Trail and even sends you through the streets of historic Dresden. The run finishes back where you started in Penn Yan at the Penn Yan Village Lake St. Park. The 10K (6.2 miles) is run entirely on the Outlet Trail and is a loop course as well.

If you are looking for a race to get you started, Finger Lakes Fit is offering the Finger Lakes Fit 5K. This more moderate 3.1 mile run will begin at Finger Lakes Fit on 143 Seneca St. in Penn Yan. The run will take place on the Outlet Trail which is behind the building and goes to Milo Mills and back. Little elevation gain and loss will make this a nice run for those looking to begin running.

Finally, Willow Run will offer the Mill to Mill 10K/5K run which will be on September 13, the same day as Celebrate Cascade. The run will begin in the Cascade Falls area and go past beautiful Seneca Mill Falls and return to Cascade Falls where runners will be rewarded with the Celebrate Cascade event featuring live music.



## Seneca Lake Footpath Trail ~ Coming Soon ~

by Donna Rae (dRae) Sutherland,  
Active Volunteer

As the daily Finger Lakes Railroad lays on its horn and rumbles by, I give my usual greeting, “Hello Wine Line.” It reflects my ‘someday - maybe’ dream of allowing passengers aboard that train, me especially! I visualize a Geneva to Watkins service running just three times daily on the weekends in the summer. Such a seasonal opportunity probably wouldn’t be cheap or a huge money maker, but it would definitely add a fresh spin –umm track– to our region’s tourism.

But with today’s freight train long gone and since it is raining - again - I’ll share a different, more promising ‘someday soon’ dream that is developing with the Friends of the Outlet and our venerable Keuka Outlet Trail.

We all know the waters of Keuka Lake have flowed directly into Seneca Lake for thousands of years creating our beloved Keuka Outlet waterway, the Minnesetah River to the



Haudenosaunee. With its enchanting waterfalls, hikers, bikers, fishing enthusiasts, and nature lovers of all ages appreciate the bucolic Outlet Trail that hugs the waterway through nearly seven miles of twists and turns. Yet many trail users have rightfully felt cheated because the KOT begins and ends approximately one half mile short of both Keuka and Seneca Lakes. Soon, the eastern terminus of the Keuka Outlet Trail will go all the way to the shore of Seneca Lake in Dresden.

Yesterday, a rare sunny day, I grabbed my litter bag and gloves and decided to hike the soon-to-be Seneca

Lake Footpath. As a former FOTO board member, I once toured the potential trail with Greenidge President Dale Irwin and a handful of other interested parties. That gathering kicked off four years of methodically investigating the legal, historic and environmental protocols for the Friends of the Outlet to enter into an agreement with Greenidge Generation LLC to have limited access to their property bordering the northside of the Keuka Outlet waterway from the Charles (Milo) Street Bridge in Dresden to Seneca Lake.



With the easement agreement signed, FOTO board member Judd Reid, a land use expert with Cornell Cooperative Extension, did a first pass at laying out the footpath with fluorescent strips tied to tree branches to mark the trail. I'd tried my best to follow it and failed due to wetlands and plenty of standing water from our rainy spring. I lost the path that winds through the woodland area and wound up using deer trails that led me to the edges of the river. I followed the riverway embankment as much as I could, stopping to pick up litter at a few old party places and fishing spots. The view of the river was godsent. I spooked a heron and it gracefully flew off. Then an old beaver dam forced me inland back to beautiful (but invasive) fields of dame's rocket gilliflower sprinkled across the tall grasses.

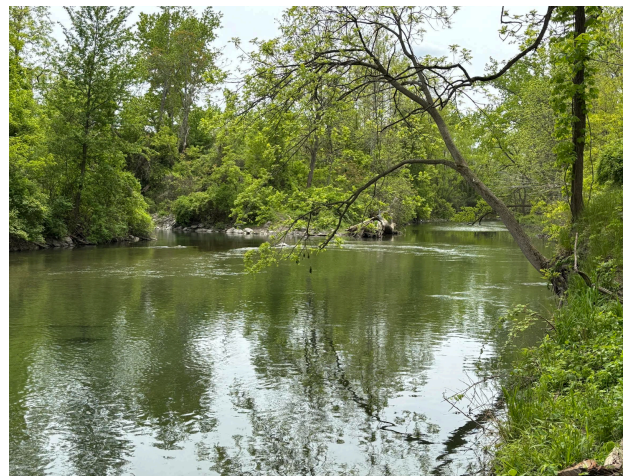


Over the hum of the bitcoin mining and energy plant operations came the songs of many birds. What kinds of birds I did not know, but I was smart not to have my earbuds in. With muddy sneakers and a happy heart, I came to the clearing and was afforded a spectacular view of mighty Seneca. I could just see the wind turbines in Geneva 20 miles north. On beached logs in the foreground, a group of cormorants were drying their wings just off shore. They too got spooked and flew away as I began picking up litter. I wish I had brought two bags.

Burdened with a heavy bag of trash, I turned about and headed back toward the marked trail, once again losing it to avoid a marshy area. At one point, I nearly stepped on a nesting fawn, and I watched a small frog cross my path and settle into a muddy patch. I spoke to both critters in a calm, cooing voice asking permission to take their picture. Unlike the birdlife, they obliged.

Due to many factors, from topography to limited finances to just being good stewards of the land, the plans for the extension trail to Seneca Lake is to be a narrow, single file footpath and will not be accessible to bikers, horseback riders, snowmobilers or any other motorized, wheeled traffic. Dogs will also be prohibited on this section of the trail. It will resemble a single file Indian footpath sometimes aligning with deer tracks, designed to retain the natural splendor of the area and to leave an undisturbed haven for wildlife. There will be no portapotty, trash cans or designated parking area. Hopefully, FOTO and the Village of Dresden will eventually install a bicycle rack, and allow automotive visitors to park a limited number of cars on the far side of the bridge. This new trail will be more like a rugged Adirondack footpath than the regularly mowed and maintained, 10-foot wide Keuka Outlet Trail that starts at the Penn Yan Boat Launch and ends at Dresden's train tracks on Seneca Street.

Hikers will be asked to stay on the footpath and not divert into the woodland to not only protect the wildlife in the area (which includes much poison ivy and many ticks), but also respect the adjacent neighbors. Over time, a dirt path will develop just as it did for native Americans and early settlers. And as



with all beautiful trails around the world, users will be asked to follow the critically important and simple protocol for responsible outdoor activities, which is **leave no trace**, and carry out anything you carry in.

People who would like to view Seneca Lake from the seat of their bicycles or cars can easily drive straight down Seneca Street (east). The street terminates in a small overlook area with two park benches and a paved turn-about loop. Additionally, the public is invited to enjoy Seneca Lake at the Town of Torrey Park just the other side of the Village. A pavilion, small playground, kayak launch and swimming area are available in season.

Also available in Dresden are a children's playground and tennis and pickleball courts. And across the street from these, I have another dream. Someday, Smokin' Pete's BBQ will open an offshoot in the old Dresden Hotel, a property I understand they recently purchased. After all, it's located adjacent to the train tracks where once stood an active train station. I imagine people getting off that train, headed to Pete's for dinner, or awaiting Uber and Lyft vehicles, or shuttles to nearby wineries. Maybe some folks will be able to rent bikes or even pickleball equipment.

I can hear that train hollering already.





## Preserving and Protecting Seneca Mill Falls with Support from Yates County

Earlier this year, Friends of the Outlet, Inc. was delighted to receive notice from Yates County that our organization would be awarded a

\$3,979 Natural and Recreational Resources Grant to help address the crumbling stone block walls (remnants from the old Seneca Mill) and streambank erosion at the Seneca Mill Falls (SMF) site. Yates County Soil and Water Conservation District pledged an additional \$57,715 to cover the balance of design costs for this critically important FOTO project.

As one of the most visited portions on the Keuka Outlet Trail, SMF is listed on the National Register of Historic Districts under the Crooked Lake Outlet. The remnant wall structures, once ranging in height from 15 ft. to 6 ft. above typical water level, originated as foundation walls and non-support walls for former milling operations and facilities. The walls are now crumbling from the constant effects of water erosion from the river, runoff and hydrostatic pressure from the embankments on the trail side of the walls. For several years, the FOTO Board and Maintenance Team have been concerned about the safety of both visitors and the maintenance crew at SMF. In 2022, Steele Landscape Architecture was hired to develop preliminary plans for SMF access improvements. After a New York State Department of Conservation review of the plans, Steele recently updated the concepts with a four-pronged focus: safe public access, long-term maintenance, environmental sensitivity, and historic preservation.

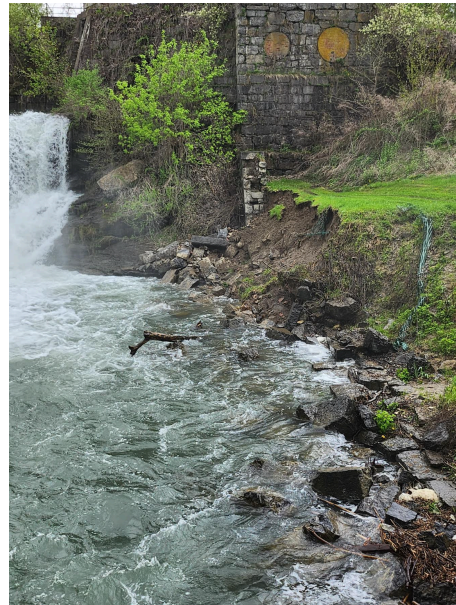
Like Mother Nature and the fast-moving water flowing over the falls and down the Minnesetah River (the Haudenosaunee name for the Keuka Outlet), this project is dynamic and capricious, but also exciting. In the past few weeks, more of the brick block wall just east and down river from the Falls fell into the water, as the photos below reveal. Steel has proposed three different concept options to transform the area into a well-designed parkland offering a public pathway down the hill from the Keuka Outlet Trail to the water's edge. All three designs would stabilize the shoreline, protect the water, provide waterfall viewing opportunities, and as important, create a long-term, reduced risk means of maintaining the area.

Like the transformation of Cascade Falls several years ago, the Seneca Mill Falls project actively illustrates the long-held mission of the Friends of the Outlet: "To preserve, protect and develop our properties and provide an area for natural, physical, outdoor and historically oriented recreation and education." Once a concept option is selected, updated SMF plans are reviewed by interested agencies and the necessary permits are secured, FOTO will be seeking additional support for the substantial work involved in the execution of the project. Sensitivity to environmental issues, such as the wildlife habitat, invasive species and erosion control will be balanced with aesthetics and public access.

**Photos from 2022**

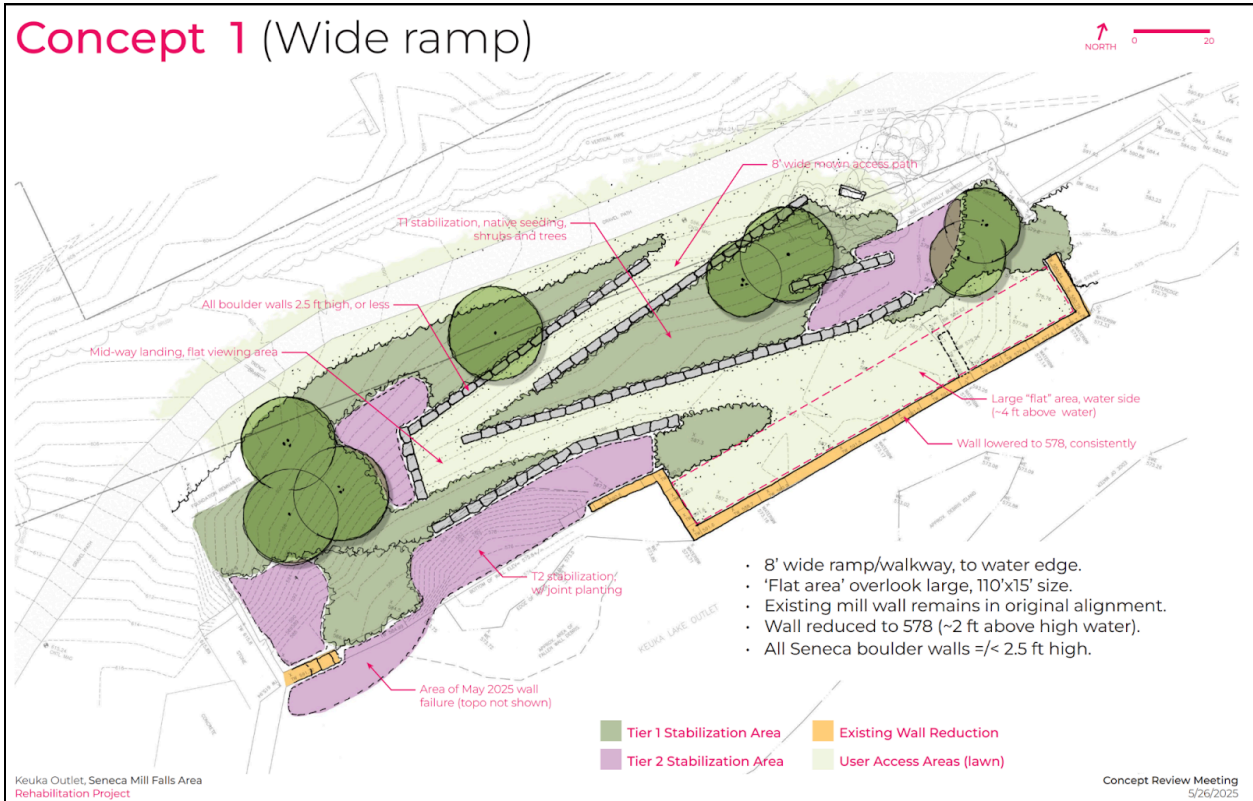


**Photos Spring 2025**



The following schematic was one of three concepts developed by Steele for consideration. We hope you will stay tuned to this project, and offer your support as needed when the time comes.

## Concept 1 (Wide ramp)



## HOPETON CAMPGROUND COMMENTS:

*"OMG: We LOVED the lean-to. It was a chilly night and there were 4 of us. We were able to get a good fire going with a combination of dry wood brought from home and wettish wood from the surrounding area. We weren't able to find the way to the outlet trail so we drove. We were initially following a trail marked with red diamonds but it*

*seemed to be leading us in a different direction so we knew it was not the trail we were looking for. What a little gem of an outdoor/active experience with avoiding the state campgrounds!!! We are training for a 50 mile backpacking trip so this lil trip was a training hike with our packs and one night of camping. Please extend our thanks to the Friends of the Outlet Trail for making this lil campground; We will certainly be back."*

- K. Levitsky, May 2025

The Hopeton Campground has reopened for its second season and advance reservations are recommended; sign up at <https://www.keukaoutlettrail.org/campground>



# Early Spring Flowers

by Allison Stewart



As you made your way down the Outlet Trail in early spring, you may have noticed the season's first flowers, most likely starting with snowdrops, which brave the snow and ice before spring even comes to mind. Once spring finally arrives, you start to see a group of wildflowers that has adapted to the early season. They take advantage of the fact that sunlight is available through the bare trees, and are the first to attract pollinators, to mutual advantage.



You may find **Coltsfoot**, which originates in Asia/Europe but has been naturalized here. It is used in many essential oil and beauty products and is useful in preventing erosion. The dandelion-like flowers appear first, ensuring pollination even if the leaves are damaged. **Cutleaf toothwort** is native to the US and sustains butterfly populations. Its seeds can be dispersed by ants, which are attracted to a fleshy structure called an elaiosome.



The familiar **Sweet Violet** came over from Europe and has been broadly naturalized. There are also native varieties. It uses ant seed dispersion and offers food and shelter to moths. It is an important early source of pollen for bees. Violets can be used in place of intrusive soil testing methods as they show distress when there are high concentrations of zinc or aluminum. They flourish with high concentrations of potassium and phosphorus. Oh, and you can put them in your salad.



**Dead Nettle** is Eurasian import, seen by the unenlightened as a lawn weed. In fact, it is an important early pollinator, indicates phosphate rich soil, prevents erosion and is a much better lawn choice than sterile grasses.



**White Trillium** is a native plant protected in NY state. It can take up to 10 years to flower, and can go dormant for seasons if conditions are unfavorable. Their presence indicates rich undisturbed soil and they use ant pollination. The Red Trillium, or 'Stinking Benjamin' is less widely dispersed. It has a mutualistic relationship with fungi to enhance the use of soil nutrients, and uses a stinky odor to attract carrion flies and beetle pollinators.

**Yellow Trout Lily** is another native plant that indicates soil health. It has an underground organ or

corm to sustain it through droughts and bad winters. Its yellow blossom had yet to emerge at the time it was photographed.

**Giant Blue Cohosh** is a mysteriously beautiful native that solitary native bees love.



**Siberian squill** (non-native) has bulbs that serve as nutrient reservoirs in tough environments. These bulbs also enhance soil fertility and prevent erosion. Their appearance is a signal for bees that it is time to pollinate.

And my favorite, **skunk cabbage**. This amazing plant generates its own heat through thermogenesis to melt snow and ice as it pushes upward. It stinks but is edible and was an emergency food for Native Americans.



The smell, as with the **Red Trillium**, attracts certain pollinators. It is an important indicator of ecological health, especially in wetlands.

The information in this piece comes from PictureThis, which helped me to identify a few things, various wildflower databases on the internet, Caroline Boutard-Hunt from the Cornell Cooperative extension and miscellaneous facts my brain has retained from forgotten sources over the years.



## **Utilizing Abandoned Canal Infrastructure to Create Innovative Water Quality Solutions in the Finger Lakes, NY**

*The following article appeared on the Environmental Protection Agency website last year providing an excellent overview of the project. Site work for this project should begin and be completed this fall. A series of information boards accompanies the project.*

GLRI funds are supporting an innovative approach to water quality improvement in the Finger Lakes region of New York State. Efforts are underway to reestablish surface water conductivity of the abandoned Crooked Lake Canal that runs parallel along the Keuka Outlet stream to create wetland habitats in sections of the unused, historic canal system. Keuka Outlet begins in Penn Yan as the outflow of Keuka Lake, extending about 8 miles and dropping 270 feet in elevation to ultimately empty into Seneca Lake at Dresden, NY. The Seneca Watershed Intermunicipal Organization (SWIO), Seneca Lake Pure Waters Association and Finger Lakes Institute of Hobart and William Smith College have long documented excessive nutrient pollution, streambank erosion and downstream flooding along the Keuka Outlet, impacting Seneca Lake downstream. Fortunately, remnants of the historic canal system provide a solution to these water quality issues.

Four locations along the Canal/Outlet channels have been identified as viable diversion locations for this project. Two diversion locations involve the installation of pre-cast concrete pond risers within tributaries flowing from the north into the Keuka Outlet. This management technology maintains normal flows under normal conditions. However, when flow rates increase, water begins to collect and eventually flows downhill into areas of the former canal when the flow of water increases. At two other diversion locations, water will be directed out of the Keuka Outlet via culverts. These culverts are set at an elevation such that water only flows into them under stormflow conditions when water quality is at its worst. Model estimates suggest the combined systems can divert 34 million gallons of stormwater flows and sequester 45 pounds of phosphorus from a single 10-year storm event. Project partners are leveraging the ecosystem

services of the former canal system/newly reconnected wetland areas to mitigate flooding, reduce streambank erosion and reduce excessive phosphorus transport in downstream Seneca Lake.

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



## President's Message

I love the Keuka Outlet Trail!

Whether I am going for a bike ride end to end, running one of the beautiful sections of the trail, looking for fossils with my class around the Hopeton section (See adjacent photo taken this past week), or taking a stroll with my family on our favorite section from Milo Mills past Turtle Pond to the Seneca Mill Falls area – I love the Outlet Trail. There is something to do for everybody who enjoys nature on this hidden gem in Yates County. Seeing people bird watching, fishing along the banks, painting pictures, taking photos and selfies, horseback riding, and couples sitting peacefully on the many benches along the trail is food for my soul. It is a place to slow down, reset, and just be in the moment.

And you, as a member, are an essential part of this wonderful experience. I hope you will bring people to the Outlet Trail to share these opportunities to enjoy nature while encouraging your friends and family to become members of the Friends of the Outlet as well. As you read in the articles above, we have so many important projects ongoing that need your support. Friends of the Outlet is made up entirely of volunteers and keeps the Outlet Trail in incredible condition because of donations from members like you.

Our 100% volunteer maintenance crew is top-notch. They put in a tremendous number of hours of service to keep the trail as one of the best in upstate New York if not the nation. Mowing, clearing debris and trees after storms, keeping the parking areas clean, building the Hopeton Campground, installing the new gazebo overlooking Cascade, and in the past several years, they have even cleared brush (including plenty of poison ivy) revealing remnants of the old mill sites at Fox's, Seneca's and Schutts' Mill.

This year a wetlands project will be constructed (see related story). This will capture runoff when the Outlet is experiencing high water levels to slow down erosion along the Outlet. It will also create wetland habitat for the many species of animals along the Outlet and the auxiliary benefit is reducing farm runoff into Seneca Lake.

Perhaps the biggest project slated for 2026 is the Seneca Mill Falls project. As you read, we are in the process of developing the conceptual plans to make our biggest tourist attraction safe and enjoyable for everyone. As we embark on this project, we hope we can have your support!

Enjoy your time on the trail!

***Keith Prather***

President of Friends of the Outlet Board of Directors

**Please encourage your friends and relatives to become current members.**

**Memberships can easily be submitted at**  
<http://www.keukaoutlettrail.org/membership>.

**Or send a check to: *Friends of the Outlet*,**  
**PO Box 125, Penn Yan, NY 14527**

**Current Friends of the Outlet: Officers, Board of Directors and the Maintenance Team:**

<b><i>Board of Directors:</i></b> Keith Prather, President Denise Hopkins, Vice President Megan Wilkinson, Treasurer Allison Stewart, Secretary Tim Chambers Damian Clemons Judy Erwin Michael O'Brien Judson Reid Kenneth Walker	<b><i>Thank you to the Keuka Outlet Trail Maintenance Team:</i></b> Dave Baum Mike Bishop Tim Chambers Jim Culver Martin Gariepy Tom Hietanen Tom Hohman Keith Kier Norm Koek Deanne Lamborn Tim Oppel Mickey Orr Eric Sheldone Terry & Judy Shoff Al Vyverberg John Warner
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## ***Friends of the Outlet 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.*