



Sweet Inspiration



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So often we hear of the ripple effect that results from an experience at Five Rivers. Generally, a child is exposed to nature in a class or activity. An idea takes root and influences the child's future. We recently learned of an impact that travelled in the other direction: the child's curiosity gave rise to a family hobby and beyond, influencing the lives of the parents too, straight through to retirement!

- 2 In 1990, Larry and Kathleen Skinner were looking for a winter activity for a scout group that included their 8 year-old son Nick. Other projects had slowed down for the cold months, so they signed up for a Maple Sugar program at Five Rivers. There they tapped trees, boiled down the sap and tasted the samples.
- 3 Nick was fascinated. "Hey dad, we have some maples in the yard, why can't we do that?" The family decided to try.

- 4 It would be an activity that would last only two or three months. Expectations were low. There were no "starter kits" to order online. Even spiles (taps) were not readily available. Larry had grown up on a farm, so he knew that sumac was hollow. Perhaps they could carve a few spiles out of branches they gathered. Success! They worked just fine.

The sap was collected in old buckets on 1.5 acres and boiled down on the kitchen stove. The yield was small, but there was always next year...

Yes, next year and every year since, the family has been tapping trees and making syrup. First on their own property, and now on a neighboring sugarbush (land dominated by maple trees) of 28 acres.

The activity has grown from a hobby to a small business. The wooden spiles and kitchen stove have given way to modern equipment and updated methods.



The acreage has been used as field learning for Kathleen's college biology classes, an excellent source of information about the effects of climate change. Now retired, Kathleen and Larry sell their maple syrup and sweet products at farm markets under the name "Skinner's Sugarbush". There's also a cookbook (co-authored by Kathleen) that encourages the used of local and natural products.

Nick still helps out. The family is growing. All are looking forward to more years of an ever-changing and rewarding adventure that all began with an afternoon at Five Rivers.

2017 Five Rivers Maples Open Houses
March 11, 18 & 25 (1:30—3:30 pm)

President's Message

Maggie Moehringer

Dear Friends,

Oh my goodness, moving day to the new Visitors Center almost here! The DEC staff is packing up and will be settling in over the new few weeks. I would like to brag that they couldn't do it without the Friends, but in fact they're packing and moving all without asking us to lift a box. That does not mean, however, that we don't play a role in the move – before, during and after.

For example, how do we best serve the public and help the DEC staff to do the same in the new center? What products and services do we want to provide in our new store space? What do we do about other things we'd like to have on display about the Friends in the new center?

We do know that we need to develop a more robust "greeter" function, with volunteers that are well trained in the features of the new center and its surrounds, and coverage that extends beyond our past efforts. The displays and exhibits will be changed, and we will have a new raptor. There will be a lot of interest, we anticipate, in the green features of the building, and the greeters will need to be well versed in them. Greeter recruitment and training is high on the to-do list.

Our volunteers in all areas will be critical. After a two-year hiatus, we are likely to have a Fall Festival this year, with all that means for the DEC and FFR staff and volunteers. We have paid some attention to how and with what tools we recruit volunteers, and how we match a willing prospective volunteer to the right task within the right time (i.e. while enthusiasm is high). But while we've worked hard to develop a new volunteer directory, nothing squelches enthusiasm like inattention, and not having attractive work ready to be done can discourage the most willing of workers. We are grappling with the timing of training opportunities, the planning of new programming with volunteer and community participation in mind, the presentation of a series of volunteer "open houses". We want our volunteers to feel welcome, appreciated and recognized for what they do and for the services they provide. A first step: vests and tees!

We all have the sense that the opening of the new center this spring offers opportunities to build community and spark interest that won't last forever, and we need to work hard, and, more importantly, get the community to work with us, to make the new building a true gathering space for those who love Five Rivers and what it does.

See you at the Center!



How do Friends members make a difference?

As you know, members are the heart and soul of our organization. Your special affinity for Five Rivers means that the Friends is a perfect outlet for your creative energy. Friends are people like you who volunteer their time, services and support. Our friends provide hundreds of volunteer hours working to enhance our environmental education programs and the experiences that connect people to our natural resources and the environment we live in.

Our Friends also provide ongoing financial support that funds our Guided Environmental Education programs:

- ◆ Guided School Program (Serves 5,000 students annually)
- ◆ Talk n' Trek (Serves 100+ adults annually)
- ◆ Family Fun Program (Serves 100+ adults and pre-school children annually)
- ◆ Summer Family Program (Serves 100+ adults & children annually)
- ◆ Volunteer Winter Book Club (Serves 50 adults annually)

Your membership in the Friends of Five Rivers helps us continue to work on behalf of the Greater Capital Region Community to provide these programs as well as our special events (Earth Day Amazing Race and the Fall Festival), the care of the Center's animals and additional new projects to enhance the Five Rivers experience for all.

Visit our website www.FriendsofFiveRivers.org for updates and to become a member!

Family Fun Programs

WHO: Adults (parent, grandparent, or guardian) and children (ages 2-4)

WHAT: Participants will take part in exploring the natural world at Five Rivers during different seasons of the year.

WHEN: Early spring session will take place over a 5 week period (February 28— March 29) and participants may come either on Tuesday or on Wednesday. No need to make a commitment to either day - both days will be identical). Sessions run from **10:00 to 11:30 am**. You may sign up for as many sessions as you like.

HOW: Each **1 ½ hour** session will begin with the sharing of a story book on a nature topic followed by an outdoor activity that is suggested by the book. After their guided walk, they will return indoors to take part in a craft or take home project.

Visit our website for more details—www.FriendsofFiveRivers.org

Mark your calendar—Summer Family Program!

Parents, grandparents or guardian with children ages 2 to 8.

Three identical sessions will be held:

July 25- July 28, Aug 1 – Aug 4, Aug 8 – Aug 11

More information is available on our website: www.FriendsofFiveRivers.org.

Register early as these sessions fill quickly.



Winter Talk n' Trek Guided Walks for Adults

Come Wonder as We Wander Five Rivers

Let's head outside and enjoy the beauty of winter before it is gone. Together we'll wander the trails, discover animal signs, and investigate the area. Then we'll discuss our findings and use appropriate reference materials to learn a bit more about the animal and how it goes about meeting winter's challenges. Each week will be an adventure led by the animals who call Five Rivers home.

Participants are asked to dress for the weather, wear sturdy walking shoes, and bring a snack. Please meet at Five Rivers' Guided School Program Building.

Time and Dates: 1:00 - 3:00 pm on Thursdays (2/2, 2/9, 2/16, 3/2 and 3/9)

Fee: \$50

Registration: Contact Nancy Conway by email at gsp5rivers@outlook.com or call 475-0297

Maximum Participants: 10 Adults

Deadline for registration: January 31, 2017

This program fills quickly - register today!

Protect Your Oak Trees from Deadly Disease

Prune in Winter!

Oak wilt, a deadly fungal disease for oak trees was discovered in six new locations in New York last year. This disease can be spread by beetles that are attracted to freshly cut or injured trees. Pruning in winter protects oaks from becoming infected.

Benefits of winter pruning:

- Diseases are rarely spread during this time, since insects and fungi are inactive.
- A tree's branch pattern and damaged limbs are easier to see without leaves.
- Leafless cut branches are lighter and easier to carry.
- Nearby plants are less likely to be damaged by falling branches or trampling.
- Removing weak and damaged branches before heavy snowfall reduces additional breakage.
- Trees pruned in winter respond more vigorously in the spring, putting out new growth.



How does oak wilt spread and kill trees?

The oak wilt fungus clogs the trees' transport vessels, cutting off water and food from leaves and the rest of the tree. One way oak wilt spreads is when fungal spores ride on insects. Sap beetles, one of the main culprits, are extremely attracted to fresh tree wounds. Pruning oaks during the growing season greatly increases the chances of insects infecting them with oak wilt.

What else can I do to protect my oak trees?

1. Prune oaks between October and February—NOT during the growing season.
2. Follow existing regulations and quarantines meant to protect our trees and forests.
3. Don't move firewood. Firewood can transport oak wilt and other deadly pests and diseases to new areas.
4. Learn to identify the symptoms of oak wilt which included discoloration around the entire leaf edge and sudden loss of a substantial portion of leaves during the summer.

For questions, contact the DEC Forest Health office at 1-866-640-0652, or email photos of tree symptoms to: foresthealth@dec.ny.gov.

For more information visit the DEC website at www.dec.ny.gov.

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Volunteer Greeters

If you are interested in learning more, please feel free to email us at FriendsFiveRivers@outlook.com or call 475-0295.

Friends of Five Rivers/Five Rivers Limited, Inc. (FFR/FRL) is a not-for-profit corporation formed in 1972.

It is tax-exempt under the Internal Revenue Code and is registered as a charitable corporation under New York State law. FFR/FRL is a private corporation, separate from the State of New York and is governed by its own board of directors and its members.

**Visit the Friends of Five Rivers at:
www.FriendsofFiveRivers.org or
call us at (518) 475-0295.**

Providing your email address to the Friends will save postage and paper, helping us direct more funds to environmental education and preserve the environment. Friends will never share your email with anyone. Email us today at FriendsFiveRivers@outlook.com to be placed on our list.



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