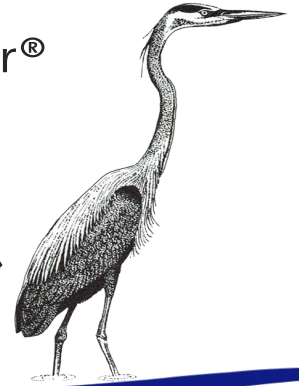


Save The River® Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper®

River Watch



Preserve. Protect. Restore.

Education Station

This year we launched our new Floating Classroom program, implemented a new curriculum about light pollution and created various new partnerships that we plan to take into next year!

Since March, our education programs have reached 1,775 people. We have done this through 6 *On The Water* trips, 28 *In The Schools* programs, 6 Riverkeeper outings, 4 Floating Classroom trips and several community outreach events and camps. 2023 has proven to be a very successful year.



Floating Classroom took place in July and August and brought in 36 new students that we ordinarily would not have reached without this opportunity. We feel that in its first year, Floating Classroom had great results with all of the kids leaving positive feedback. We hope to educate more students next year. Thank you to the St. Lawrence River Research and Education Fund and the Atkinson Foundation for supporting these programs!

Our reach is expanding and we are planning *In The School* programs with Canton's elementary students in the spring. We look forward to implementing the feedback, continuing our community wide partnerships, and an educational 2024!

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Our Mission

Save The River is a nonprofit, environmental organization whose mission is to restore, preserve and protect the ecological integrity of the Upper St. Lawrence River now and for generations to come.

Our Vision

Save The River envisions a healthy Upper St. Lawrence River that provides safe drinking water, is home to a thriving range of indigenous species and supports sustainable economic activity.

Our Values

The River is a commons to be nurtured and passed on undiminished for future generations to share.

Save The River / Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper is proud to be a member of the international Waterkeeper Alliance, the largest and fastest growing nonprofit solely focused on clean water.

Waterkeeper preserves and protects water by connecting local organizations worldwide. Our goal is swimmable, drinkable and fishable water everywhere. Today, [Waterkeeper Alliance](#) is made up of over 300 Waterkeeper Organizations & Affiliates protecting rivers, lakes and coastal waterways on six continents.



Our Strategic Plan

Save The River® Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper® recently completed its 2024 - 2028 Strategic Plan. This plan is the continuation of our strategic planning process that goes back many years.

After reading the plan [here](#), you will have a good understanding of the breadth of programs and issues Save The River works on. This work can only be accomplished with the help of our many volunteers, a fully engaged Board of Directors, and the support of our River Partners and members.

Thank you to everyone who supports and helps Save The River in this very important work - we really appreciate it!

From the Riverkeeper

Everyone on the River agrees that this September and early October were among the best in their memory. The winds were light, temperatures were perfect, and water levels remained at or above average. The water levels were the result of a lot of precipitation in the system late in the summer, an orderly snowmelt in the Ottawa River basin last spring, and a decision by the International Lake Ontario St. Lawrence River Board to try to keep the water levels up through early October for the benefit of recreational boaters.

Save The River's educators have had a busy summer and fall season educating boatloads of students about the River. We are fortunate to have such a strong education group, led by Assistant Director Lauren Eggleston and Education Committee Chair Heather White. Our outstanding Education Coordinator, Robin Hall, left us to return to Florida. She has made our programs even stronger and will be greatly missed by all of us.

[Shoal marking](#) volunteers have been busy over the past few weeks hauling and securing markers. Save The River is always looking for additional volunteers to help with this program. If you are interested in helping, please contact Chelsea at outreach@savetheriver.org.

Our 2023 Trash Free River cleanups have been very successful with hundreds of volunteers removing tons of trash, plastic, and construction debris from the River and shoreline. Plans are already being made for 2024 Trash Free River cleanups. If you know of a shoreline, island or riverbottom area that would benefit from a cleanup, please contact Chelsea at outreach@savetheriver.org.

I often get asked how Save The River accomplishes so much with such a small staff. Our staff is very dedicated and highly motivated and works with an outstanding group of volunteers. I also give a lot of credit to our equally dedicated Board of Directors. Save The River's Board works tirelessly throughout the year to help staff achieve progress in completing its mission. Some of the many areas our Board helps staff on during the year are:

- Education
- Hosting River Partner gatherings
- Media interviews
- Editing
- Sponsoring WEC and other events
- Meeting with government representatives
- Advising on water levels and water quality issues
- Trash Free River participation
- Providing tours to officials



Save The River's 2024 - 2028 Strategic Plan is the continuation of Save The River's strategic planning process that goes back many years. I think it is the mark of a strong strategic plan if the basic structure remains intact and allows for growth and addition of programs as merited.

Have a wonderful holiday season. Please stop in and see us if you are in Clayton.

John Peach
Executive Director & Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper

My Summer at Save The River

EMMA FRENCH



As an upcoming senior in college, I was thinking about what to do with my summer that was meaningful and aligned with my Communications Major and Earth & Environmental Science Minor. Save the River immediately came to mind because it's an environmental non-profit in my home region.

The Save Blind Bay campaign quickly caught my attention and the STR team brought me on to create a short documentary about the impacts a new CBP facility would have on the river. Through this project, I was able to talk with specialists, like Dr. John Farrell and Jeff Garnsey. It also brought me closer to people like Janet Burrows, who was my Dad's science teacher in 1975.

In addition to creating [Save Blind Bay: An Environmental Treasure](#), I became responsible for testing water as part of STR's Beach Watch program and helped cataloged samples from other volunteers. I also managed the storefront, which gave me the opportunity to speak with visitors about invasive species and current challenges STR faces.

Beyond the environmental issues, STR is an amazing team. Their staff is dedicated and passionate about protecting the St. Lawrence River environment. I'm so grateful they welcomed me this summer and that I was able to use my knowledge and skills for the betterment of our wonderful river.

SKYLAR SCHMITT

The Thousand Islands region is filled with diverse ecosystems, communities, people, events and organizations. I was unaware of the diversity of this region until coming here this summer as the Kenneth Deedy Environmental Steward. I was able to work with three different nonprofit organizations this summer including the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center, Thousand Islands Land Trust, and Save The River.

I wrapped up my last three weeks of the summer with Save The River, where my time was spent getting my hands dirty, both figuratively and literally. Within my first week I assisted with educational programming, community outreach and was able to attend the water chestnut pull on Guffin Bay. After all of this, I found myself on a Clayton Islands Tour boat helping do water quality testing for the Floating Classroom. Then I came full circle back to the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center for the Riverkeeper Training and Kayaking. Finally, I ended my experience leading an educational program about painted turtles, river otters, and common terns to around 180 kids in Fort Drum.



Being the Kenneth Deedy Environmental Steward showed me that conservation is about collaborating with the people around you, knowing those who came before you, and working to be better for those who will come after. I am extremely grateful for my time in the Thousand Islands region this summer and for the opportunity to continue the legacy of Ken Deedy.

Save Blind Bay



Photo: Chris Murray

Saving Blind Bay from eminent domain takeover by US Customs and Border Patrol (CBP) remains one of Save The River's highest priorities. Ever since CBP announced its plans to build an industrial style facility in Blind Bay over 18 months ago, Save The River and the Thousand Islands Land Trust (TILT) have been working with a coalition of River organizations to save this environmental treasure. More than 2,200 River residents have signed petitions, letters to the editor, and emails confirming their position that CBP should build their new facility in a location that is not environmentally sensitive. Bonnie Castle Recreation Center (BCRC) has been offered to CBP as a suitable site for their new facility.

Save The River and TILT's proposal to have CBP locate at BCRC has been supported by Senator Schumer, Congresswoman Tenney, NYS Senator Walczyk, NYS Assemblyman Gray, Jefferson County Legislators Reed and Cantwell, and the Townships of Orleans, Alexandria and Clayton. NYS Parks has indicated a willingness to have CBP moor their boats at a local state park. Members of the Save Blind Bay coalition also support building the new facility at BCRC. View the entire [Save Blind Bay Coalition here](#).

Save The River Executive Director and Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper, John Peach, said "Saving Blind Bay is as important to the River as our founding issue of blocking winter navigation. We cannot let an agency of the federal government take an environmental treasure from the River - especially when there is a much more environmentally friendly alternative. Save The River continues to work very closely with elected officials to Save Blind Bay and have CBP build their new facility at Bonnie Castle Recreation Center."

Over the past few weeks, rumors have been circulating that CBP has been surveying an alternative site. We encourage you to take the following actions:

- Go to saveblindbay.com and sign the petition
- Email your elected officials telling them CBP should build at BCRC and it needs to be listed as an alternative site
- Write letters to the editor encouraging CBP to build at BCRC
- View and share [Save Blind Bay- An Environmental Treasure](#) by Save The River's intern, Emma French - which is currently being shown on WPBS.

No Stone Un“tern”ed

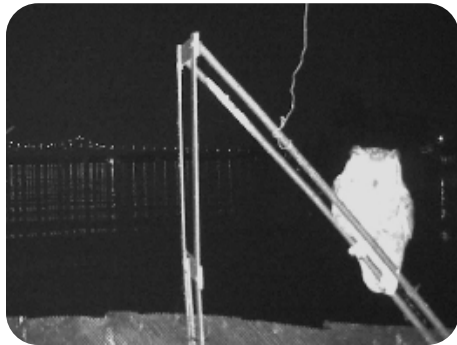
The 2023 season was a busy year for the common tern monitoring crew. We began the season by rebuilding and regravelling Nav Cell 180 - a project that had been postponed last fall because of water levels. Jim McGarry and Lyn Pohl coordinated the rebuild on the site, Dr. Lee Harper brought his work boat with a crane, John Peach coordinated the delivery of pea gravel, and Lauren Eggleston recruited volunteers from TI High School.



Eagle Scout Ethan Waterman contacted Save The River this spring, proposing a project to build and replace shelters for Nav Cells 209 and 213. Lauren and John recruited Jeff Garnsey to get rough cut pine for the project. Ethan gathered the pine and returned a few months later with 50 shelters for the navigation cells! Once the terns departed for fall migration, Lauren went out with Jeff Staples, Maria Cipullo, and the AmeriCorps Trail Stewards Jack Kelly, Anna Frisbie, and Nina Sone to weed and place the shelters.



Tidd and Eagle Wings both have plans in place to secure them for terns next year. Elaine Tack funded a tern platform for Tidd Shoal next year - this will give the terns a safe nesting location away from mink and protected from cormorant takeover.



STR and TILT continued to partner together in the [common tern project](#), evaluating an additional site for the 2024 season (Toothpick Island) and working together to put up the exclusion grid on Eagle Wings. We're thinking of ways to make the grid more effective in the next season; the gulls were too cunning this year and slipped in underneath the wires.

For the terns, this was a tough year. All birds were in danger from avian flu, a peregrine falcon found Nav Cell 180 and demolished the chick population, and gulls and geese took over Eagle Wings. We did have a good colony on



Nav Cell 213 (near Rock Island Lighthouse) and on Nav Cell 153.



Thanks to everyone who volunteered this year - let's hope the terns have a successful migration and a strong season next year!

Creature Feature



American Mink

Scientific Name: *Neovision vison*

Size: 18-27 inches (with tail)

Weight: 1.5-3.5 pounds

Lifespan: up to 10 years in the wild

Habitat: Forested areas in close proximity to water

Feline or Weasel? Like our household companions, minks purr when they're content and hiss when they're displeased.

Olympic Gold Swimmer: Mink can swim up to 100 feet underwater and dive to depths up to 16 feet!

Seasonal Snacker: In the summer, they eat crayfish, small frogs, shrews, rabbits, mice, and muskrats. In winter, they eat small mammals and birds.

What time is it? Mink are mainly nocturnal but have been known to make an appearance during the day.

Where am I?



Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

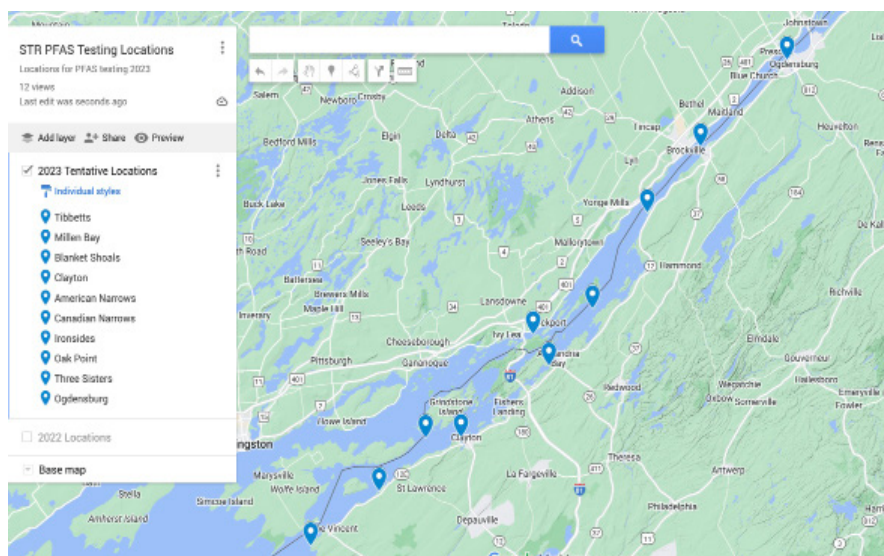
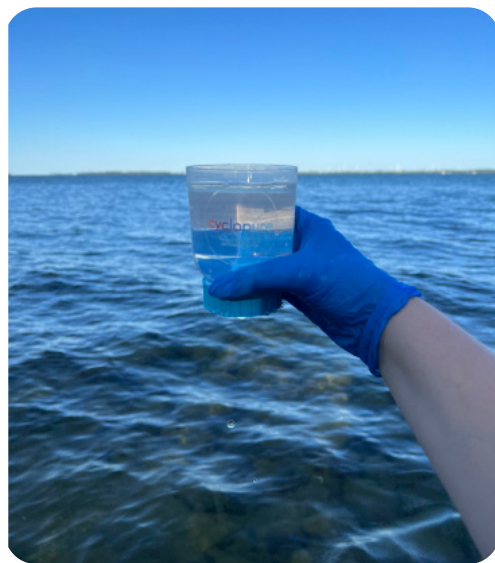
PFAS, the umbrella term for a diverse class of manmade chemicals, are water, heat, and stain resistant. When released into the environment, they don't degrade or break down. Ubiquitous worldwide, these 'forever chemicals' have been linked to cancer, liver damage, decreased fertility, and other health impacts. Exposure is common through drinking and ground water.

The Environmental Working Group published a study in early 2023, bringing attention to high levels of PFAS in freshwater fish, particularly the Great Lakes. The study equated the consumption of a single serving of freshwater fish per year to a month of drinking water contaminated with PFAS chemicals. Current guidelines for fish consumption can be found here.

Save The River® Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper® and other water advocates across the state continue to urge the Department of Health and EPA to set the lowest notification levels for PFAS contamination in our drinking water, to protect the health of all New Yorkers. View New York's DOH current guidelines here. The DoH has Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs) for PFOA and PFOS at 10 ppt for each chemical. MCLs are enforceable regulatory limits. DoH has also proposed to regulate an additional 23 PFAS with MCLs; how these standards are shaped will determine how New York's water is protected from emerging contaminants for years to come.

Monitoring the waters for PFAS is a difficult challenge. In 2022, Waterkeeper Alliance coordinated a study with over 100 Waterkeeper groups; the first study of its kind. 83% of all tests showed contamination by at least one PFAS chemical. While the Alliance is working toward the goal to continue large-scale monitoring, individual groups have had to raise funds to bridge the gap until the next round of funding is available. Three Waterkeepers continue to monitor for PFAS; Save The River Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper, Buffalo Niagara Waterkeeper, and Milwaukee Waterkeeper.

To date, we have sampled 12 additional sites along the St. Lawrence River: Cape Vincent, Carleton Island, Sawmill Bay, Blanket Shoal, Clayton, Alexandria Bay, Canadian Narrows, Ironsides Island, Oak Point, Three Sisters Island, Fort de la Presentation, and Ogdensburg. Sample sites were selected based on pinch points in the St. Lawrence and relative locations of facilities that may be handling PFAS. We use sample kits and laboratory analysis provided by Cyclopure, Inc.



Results

Results from the Spring and Fall 2023 samplings show the presence of PFAS chemicals at every site. The specific type of PFAS varied. PFOS was present at every collection site, ranging from 1.8 ppt to 58.2 ppt. In the spring we tested 10 sites, in the fall we added an additional 2, bringing us up to 12 sites.

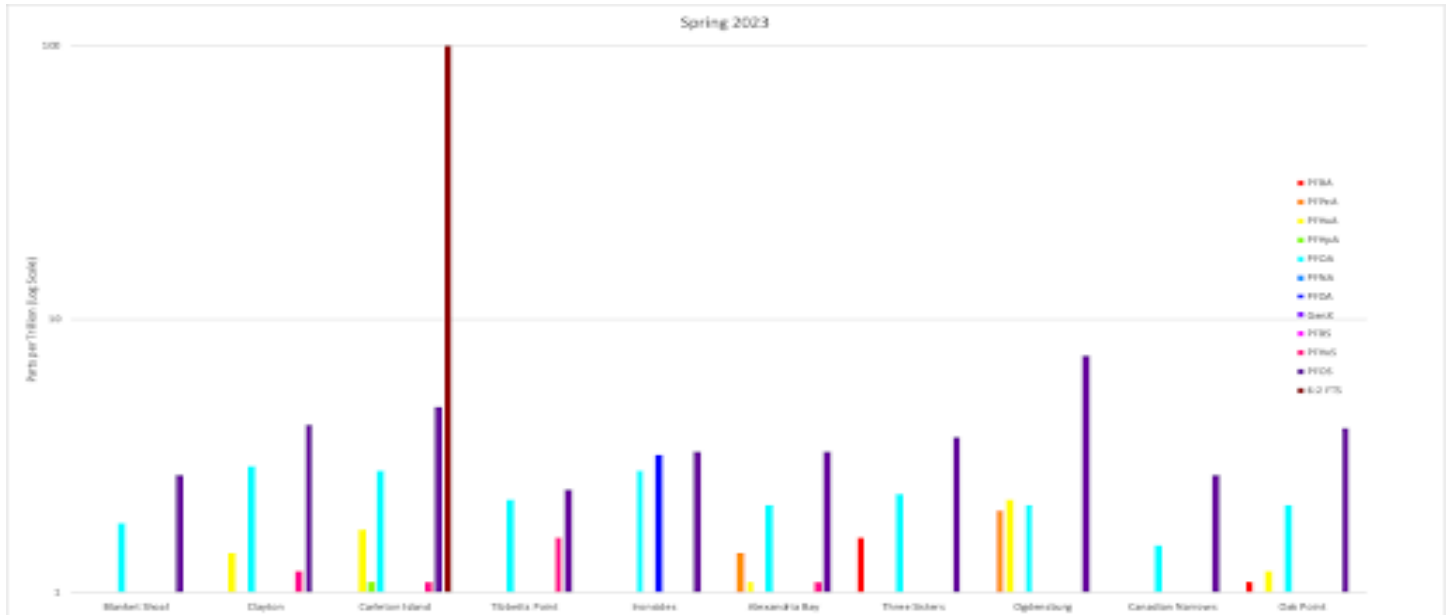


Fig. 1. Spring 2023 Cyclopure results. PFOA and PFOS present at all sites tested, but below the NYS MCLs at 10 ppt. EPA proposed limits are 4 ppt. *6:2 FTS = 560.1 ppt, only shown to 100 ppt to keep scales between figures comparable.

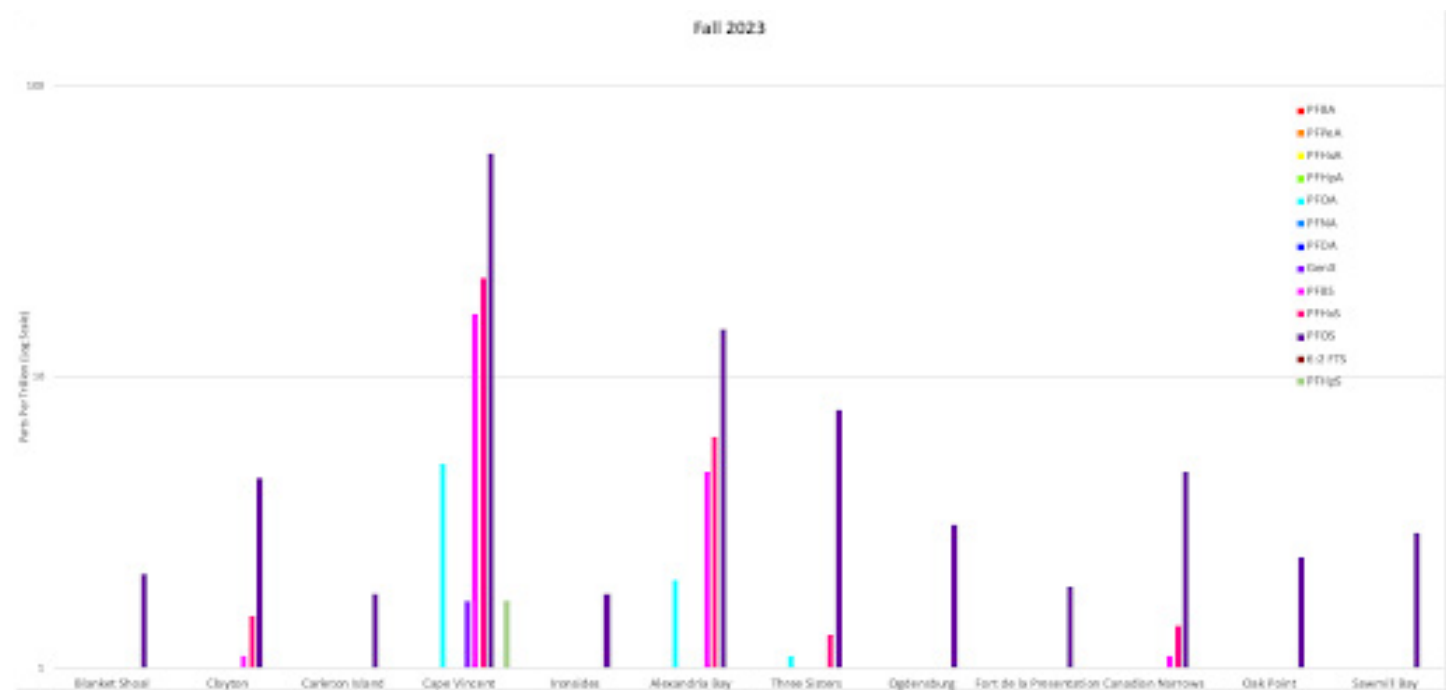


Fig. 2. Fall 2023 Cyclopure results. PFOS present at all sites tested, Cape Vincent and Alexandria Bay tested above NYS MCLs at 58.2 ppt and 14.6 ppt, respectively.

Trash Free River

Another year of *Trash Free River* is in the books!

River Days was very successful with 121 volunteers removing 1,450 lbs of trash along the River and shorelines from Cape Vincent to Oak Point. Overall, Save The River's crew of 270 volunteers hauled 5,257 lbs of debris from the shorelines in 2023! Thank you to everyone who volunteered this season - we hope to see you again next year!



Our cleanups are community based and volunteer powered; we focus on the riparian zone (about 10 feet into the water and 10 feet up on shore). Learn all about our *Trash Free River* program and future cleanup dates at trashfreeriver.org.

Interested in being a *Trash Free River* program sponsor?

We are always looking for ways to work with new people! Our cleanups are a great way to volunteer with your team, get out on the river, and promote your business. We are also looking for volunteers with boats, trucks, and dump trailers to help make our cleanups a success. Contact Bridget at bridget@savetheriver.org to learn more!

Our cleanup efforts are made possible thanks to the Leonard C. & Mildred F. Ferguson Foundation, Labatt USA, Community Bank, N.A., National Grid Project C, the Northern New York Community Foundation and ICC #TeamSeas.



Missed a cleanup?
Do a backyard/shoreline cleanup of your own - use Save The River's group on the Clean Swell app or use our NEW data form [here!](#)



Save The River® Upper St. Lawrence Riverkeeper®

35th Annual Winter Environmental Conference

January 27, 2024

We are excited to host our 35th Annual Winter Environmental Conference on January 27, 2024. The conference will be held at the 1000 Islands Harbor Hotel with an option to attend virtually via livestream. This year's conference will include presentations on American Eels, aquatic invasive species, polyfluoroalkyl substances or PFAS, and many other River topics. Save The River will also provide an update on River issues, our amazing programs, and more. More details to come via our weekly e-newsletters - [sign up here](#) - and on savetheriver.org. We hope to see you this January!

Want a refresh on past conferences? View them [here](#) or subscribe to our [YouTube!](#)

Apparel & Merch

Gear up for the winter and holiday season with some [new Save The River merchandise](#).

This year, we have NEW cable knit and cuffed winter beanies, along with our lowball/old fashion glasses!

We also have our cozy blankets and handy belt bags, which are the perfect gifts!

The last day for Christmas delivery is December 8th and pickup is available until December 22nd.

12/25/2023

Warmest
Wishes

LAST DAY FOR CHRISTMAS DELIVERY
DECEMBER 8TH
LOCAL PICKUP AVAILABLE UNTIL
DECEMBER 22ND

Member's Corner

Save The River members assist in protecting the Upper St. Lawrence River by being our eyes and ears on the River from Cape Vincent to Massena.

Membership support that began to protect the River from Winter Navigation and Seaway Expansion lead to:

- Monitoring water levels and invasive species
- Trash Free River cleanups
- Muskie and bass catch & release
- Common Tern restoration
- Shoal marking
- Wetland preservation
- Shoreline restoration
- Education programs
- and so much more!

Understandably, STR's one person staff slowly increased to six to effectively manage the purpose to keep the River drinkable, swimmable, and fishable now, and for your children and their children. Although Save The River's members are the most critical part of our watchdog team, I see firsthand every summer that they are part of something greater than themselves. Join us - [become a member!](#)



Bridget, Development Director

Ways to Give

This past summer, River lovers Jessica Baxter and Evan Butler of Murray Island reached out to Save The River regarding their upcoming wedding. In lieu of wedding favors, they wished to give us a generous donation of \$1,000.00. Together, we created small tent cards for the guest tables to let them know of Jessica and Evan's generous donation to Save The River in their guests' honor. Thank you for your creativity and generosity. Congratulations Jessica and Evan!

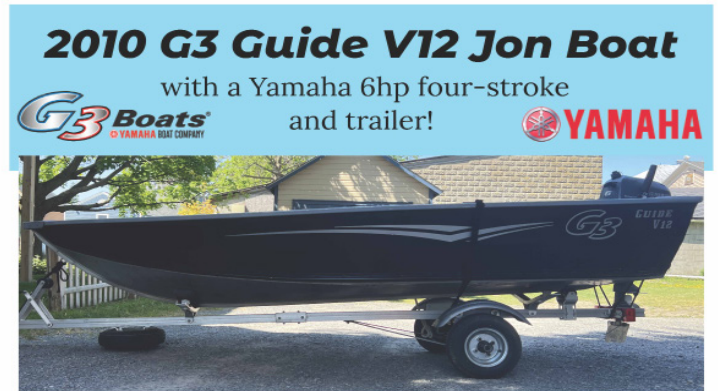


Raffle Mania

Summer Raffle winner: Jacqueline Leclair of Baldwinsville, NY

Jacqueline is the happy winner of the 2010 G3 V12 boat with the 4 hp Yamaha motor and trailer. We hope she will get many hours of enjoyment in this very generous gift from Dan and Lauran Throop.

Not one, but 2 raffles to try your luck!



Time to Dive!

Save The River, through a generous donation by Heather Chevreau of Citizen/Bulova, is so excited to be raffling off a classic (dare we say “sexy”) dive watch - perfect for your time on the River.

An iconic name with a reinvented construction, the Citizen Promaster Aqualand ISO compliant watch includes maximum depth memory, rapid ascent alarm, auto start dive mode and power reserve indicator with divers 200M. You won't want anything else when headed to the River! A stainless steel case compliments the ocean blue polyurethane strap and blue dial with blue and red bezel. Featuring Eco-Drive technology – powered by light, any light. Never needs a battery. Retail value - \$750.

You can buy your chance at this fantastic watch online at our website, at our office on Riverside Drive, or while attending the Winter Environmental Conference on January 27, 2024 at the Harbor Hotel.

“Super” Bowl Set

And, last but certainly not least, we are happy to be able to offer another unique item carved by the creative hands of Doug Drumm - an artisanal decorative bowl. What makes this raffle special is that we are able to pair this wonderful bowl with an engraved set of four (4) YETI Rambler 10 oz Lowball cups and a YETI Beverage Bucket (generously provided by Jack Butts/[Rosco Terminal Tackle](#)) for the ultimate “Super” bowl party setup! Drawing will be held at WEC (January 27, 2024).



Save The River Sponsors



American Legion Colon-Couch Post 821, Clayton





Northern New York
**Community
Foundation**



DONNMAR



Community
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St. Lawrence River Research & Education Fund



project c

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Interested in becoming a Save The River sponsor?

Save The River is celebrating its 45th Anniversary! Members, partners and businesses are sponsoring Save The River in support of our mission and to celebrate the progress our organization has made. We would like to thank our sponsors for assisting us in our vision to keep the River swimmable, drinkable and fishable now and for generations to come. You can make Save The River's 45th anniversary a memorable one by becoming a sponsor. If you are interested please contact bridget@savetheriver.org. You can make a difference today!

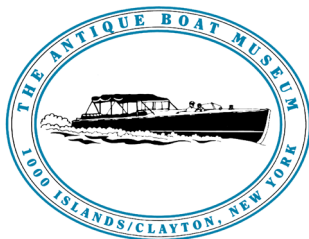
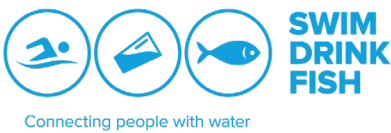
Save The River Partners



**INVASIVE SPECIES
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Blind Bay Coalition



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