



**2024**

# ANNUAL REPORT



photograph courtesy of Carolyn Doyle



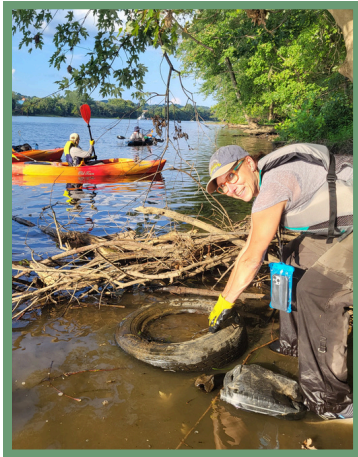
# trail stewardship

Friends' Stewardship Team ensures **safe, clean, and accessible trail corridors** through routine maintenance, remedial repairs, and enrichment training. By deploying volunteer groups, partnering with municipalities, collaborating with peers, and engaging communities around skill building, we **protect and enhance the Three Rivers Heritage and Water Trail systems.**



Our incredible Stewardship team

## SEASON STATS



We kicked off more water-based trail care this year

- » 1,654 volunteers contributed 4,930 hours
- » 90,359 lbs. of litter removed
- » 75 volunteer events held
- » 485 new trees planted
- » 905 trees cared for
- » 38 four-ton trucks of vegetation removed
- » 44 abandoned encampments removed



Volunteers cleaning litter from the trail



**Shoutout to Duquesne Light Company for sponsoring our 2024 public trail care events**

## TRAIL CARE

Friends hosts trail care opportunities focused on managing litter and vegetation, maintaining assets, installing amenities and restoring viewsheds.

*Out of all trail care participants this year:*

- 54% volunteered for the first time
- 55% volunteered more than once in 2024
- ! *over half of our volunteers came back again!*

## 2024 EMPLOYER TRAIL CARE PARTNERS

Employer volunteers play a critical role in advancing stewardship initiatives while gaining outdoor experience, team networking skills, trail awareness, and generating local impact:

Alcoa  
American Eagle Outfitters  
BNY Mellon  
Boston Consulting Group  
Caterpillar  
Duquesne Light Company

Eckert Seamans  
Google  
KPMG  
Larson Design Group  
Lochner

Microsoft  
Pittsburgh Penguins  
TPD Inc.  
U. S. Steel  
WESCO








**Thank you to U. S. Steel for their continued partnership!**

# TRAIN ON THE TRAIL

Our Train on the Trail series offers enrichment opportunities for the public to gain knowledge benefiting volunteerism and trail experience.

In 2024, we hosted 5 sessions on topics including:

-  **Identifying Birds of the Three Rivers Heritage Trail**
-  **Native and Invasive Species Identification**
-  **Tree Pruning**
-  **Understanding Riparian Ecosystems**
-  **Monitoring Water Quality on the Three Rivers**



Monitoring Water Quality



Tree Pruning



As a member of the Pittsburgh Canopy Alliance, Friends will leverage \$350K in Inflation Reduction Act funding to conserve tree canopy, suppress invasive species, and plant 500 trees in designated Justice40 Communities.



Volunteers planting trees

## COMMITMENT

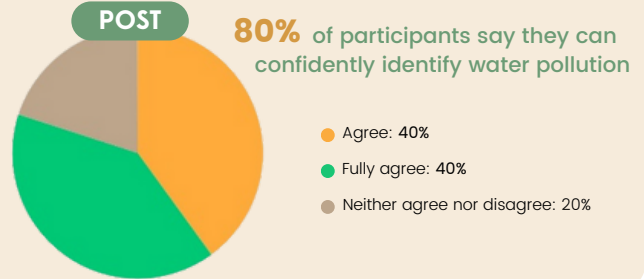
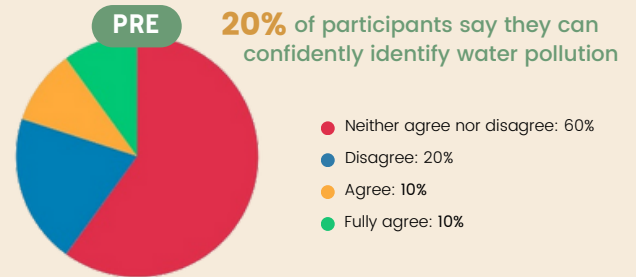
Volunteer Trail Stewards adopt a trail segment or water trail launch to ensure trail systems are monitored, cleaned, and cared for. Stewards receive training opportunities such as CPR/First Aid training and Paddlesports safety to prepare them in their roles.

### IN 2024, OUR 26 VOLUNTEER TRAIL STEWARDS:

-  actively monitored 11 trail segments and 7 water trail launches
-  removed 460 trash bags totaling 9,200 lbs
-  committed 935 hours
-  submitted 410 Activity Reports and 113 maintenance notifications

## OUR EDUCATION HAS AN IMPACT:

I can confidently identify water pollution along the Three Rivers Water Trail:



## RESTORATION



### THIS YEAR, WE...

- contracted professional tree pruning
- employed climate-friendly site preparation (goats)
- utilized licensed herbicide applications



# trail experience

Trail Experience oversees the Trail Ambassador Program, gathers public input, and plans events to create more accessible and enjoyable trail experiences.

## TRAIL AMBASSADORS

Trail Ambassadors are volunteers who monitor trail conditions and helps trail users feel safe. They also offer information, maps, and more.

### 2024 NUMBERS:

- 577 volunteer hours over the 7-month season
- 18 active Trail Ambassadors
- 1420 interactions with Trail users
- 37 reports made to \*311, 30 closed/completed
- 253 reports on trail conditions sharing stories/photos, and logging interactions



1,360+

people reached via outreach opportunities



210+

youth engaged on projects and programming



220+

individuals engaged who were new to Friends



\$1,350

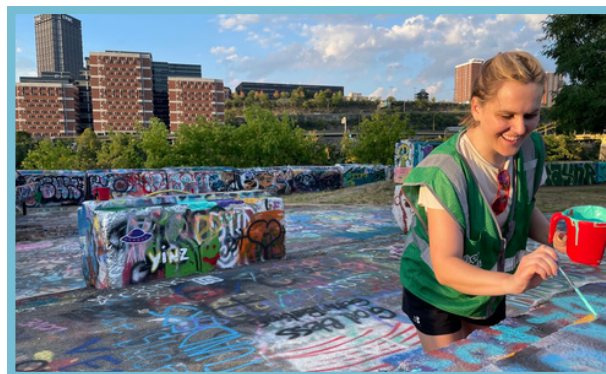
raised in support for local artists



Ambassador Diane (left) and Ambassador Dustin (right) at work!



Our Trail Experience Team hosted a Photography Bike Ride



Ambassador Jackie at our Graffiti Jam event

## OUTREACH

### MERCHANDISE

In 2024, there were more options than ever to support us by buying Friends merch.

We introduced new designs, colors, and items this year!





# trail development

A main priority of Friends is to continue to connect and expand the Three Rivers Heritage and Water Trails, as well as improve existing trail. Our Trail Development team works closely with municipalities, local government leaders, and partners, and we have over 35 miles of trail in various stages of development.

**16**  
public  
outreach  
events

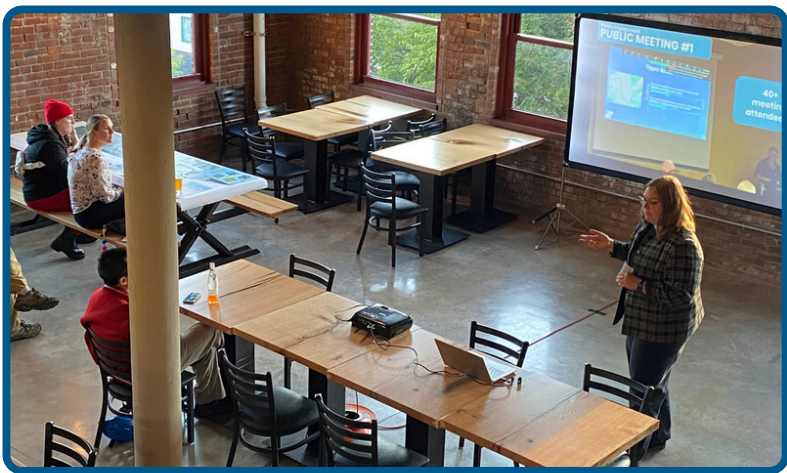
Continued  
work on  
**20+**  
trail projects

**\$1,250,050**  
in grant funds  
raised

## PROJECT SPOTLIGHT

### Hazelwood to Carrie Furnace

This project focuses on extending the Three Rivers Heritage Trail through Hazelwood to the existing Duck Hollow segment and extends to the Carrie Furnace site.

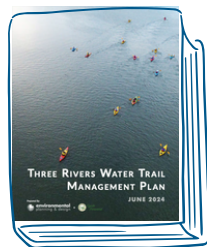


Fall public meeting held at the Hazelwood Brewhouse

This year, we continued public engagement and advanced landowner coordination for this project. We hosted public meetings and attended local events to keep trail users informed. Most notably, Friends has continued productive conversations with CSX Transportation regarding safe and accessible bridge crossings for trail users.

Keep tracking progress on our website!

Created a 150+ page comprehensive Water Trail Management Plan improving accessibility, standardizing maintenance practices, improving signage, and promoting the water trail



Went to Capitol Hill in Washington DC to advocate for bike and trail safety in PA



Hosted over 20 elected officials and 8+ organizational partners for a paddle and lock-through on the Allegheny River to promote the Water Trail as a recreational amenity



## HIGHLIGHTS



# A TRAIL FOR ALL

WE BELIEVE THE TRAIL IS FOR EVERYONE. Friends is committed to creating trails that are welcoming to all by improving connections in communities with limited access, offering programs that reflect a range of experiences, and providing resources to ensure everyone can access and enjoy the trail.

## IN 2024, WE:

Created an **accessibility brochure** and **accessibility website page** >>



<< Hosted **multiple youth-centered and safety events**, including Youth Skoot

Introduced **arts programming** that amplifies the work of diverse artists >>



<< Awarded **6 scholarships** to cover costs for Lock-Through Participants

## ORGANIZATION HIGHLIGHTS

📍 Hired seasonal **Crew Leaders** and an **AmeriCorps Service Member**

📍 Updated the **Three Rivers Heritage Trail** map

📍 **2024 Community Impact Partner** of Three Rivers Outdoor Co. (3ROC)

📍 5 Staff and volunteers were trained in the American Canoe Association (ACA) **Paddlesports Safety Facilitator (PSF)** certification program



📍 Created and distributed a **Trail User survey** to gather feedback and trail user information

📍 Purchased **9 kayaks and canoes** for more Water Trail programming and cleanup events

📍 Co-sponsored Pittsburgh's **Week Without Driving**



📍 Attended and presented at the first ever **Western PA Trails & Greenways Summit**







📍 Hosted the **2024 Litter League** tournament with Allegheny CleanWays



*over 50,000 lbs. of litter were collected!*



# communications & development

-  Raised **\$105,000** from individual donors LIKE YOU
-  Created a more **user-friendly** and **organized website**
-  Redesigned our **membership structure**, offering better benefits
-  Partnered with local photographer **Carolyn Doyle** for trail photos
-  **126 press mentions** about Friends or the trails
-  Over **1,600 new followers** between Facebook and Instagram

The Communications & Development team works to expand and diversify Friends' reach through a variety of avenues including campaigns, fundraising events, social media, e-newsletter and mailings, our website, and more.



Hosted FriendsFest, our free, members-only event, in June 2024 with 120+ attendees!



**See you at FriendsFest in June 2025!**

## Thank you to all of our major donors over the last year:

### TRAIL CENTURY CIRCLE \$1000+

Anonymous  
Mary Barenfeld  
Martha Berg  
H.M. Bitner Charitable Trust  
Damian Brennan  
Lauren Burge  
John Duffy  
John L. Gardiner  
Samantha Bute Hartzman  
Harris Jones  
Angela Martinez  
Shawn McClintock  
Mary McCormick  
Donald Menovich  
Mark Meyer  
Carol and Karl Moritz Fund  
Ethan Palenchar  
Martin & Solveig Rafanan  
Kelsey Ripper & Mike Zimmerman  
John & Kelley Schultz  
William Simpson & Jean Adams  
Susan Smith  
Clifford & Diane Stevenson

Roy Weil & Mary Shaw  
Susan & Victor Zimmerman

### 35 MORE MILERS \$500-\$999

Will Bernstein & Zabe Steiner  
Norma Bronder  
Kitty Brunkhorst  
Mr. and Mrs. Randal E. Bryant  
Nickolas & Tracy Certo  
Douglas Clark  
Jeanne K. Clark  
Robert Dayton  
Kevin Dixon  
Kyle Fragassi  
Durwood Hill  
David Hull & Natalie Glance  
David Maxwell  
Jon & Larissa Neumann  
Siddharth & Andrea Pant  
John Schaefer  
Mark Sitler  
George & Patty Williams

### QUARTER CENTURY \$250-\$499

Karen Benner  
Donna L. Blackmon & Timothy W. McGuire Jr.  
Al Bowers  
Carol Craige  
Monica Diel  
Ann Dugan  
Thomas Ferguson  
Kara Fitzpatrick  
Andrea Fox & Ken Thompson  
Lynne & Mark Frank  
Nanci Goldberg  
Janice Harrison  
Fonda Hollenbaugh  
Maureen McCarroll  
Zachary Milke  
Mark Minter  
Cleah Schlueter & Jacobo Carrosquel  
Kathleen Testoni  
James & Dorothy Valimont  
Alex and Kathryn Watt  
Mike Weiner  
Tiffany Yang



## STAFF

**Kelsey Ripper**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

**Kate Angell**

DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS

**Alex Toner**

DIRECTOR OF TRAIL STEWARDSHIP

**Courtney Mahronich Vita**

DIRECTOR OF TRAIL DEVELOPMENT & GOV. RELATIONS

**Katie Craig**

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT COORDINATOR

**Maddie Dayton**

DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

**Katie Kovalchik**

TRAIL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT MANAGER

**Ashley Martin**

TRAIL STEWARDSHIP PROGRAM COORDINATOR

**Lavender Sedlock**

TRAIL EXPERIENCE COORDINATOR

**Mary Beth Sklar**

OPERATIONS COORDINATOR

**Angela Valotta**

TRAIL STEWARDSHIP AMERICORPS MEMBER



## BOARD

**Samantha Hartzman**

PRESIDENT

**Will Simpson**

VICE PRESIDENT

**Christopher Hetz**

TREASURER

**Lauren Burge**

SECRETARY

**Doug Clark**

**Anthony Gilchrist**

**Brett Hollern**

**Harris Jones**

**Jared Marciano**

**Angela Martinez**

**Don Menovich**

**Anna Tang**

**Megan Winters**

thanks to our  
outgoing board  
members for their  
years of service:

**Jeanne Clark**

**Tom Demagall**

**Durwood Hill**



*Build safe, clean, and accessible riverfront trails as part of the Three Rivers Heritage & Water Trail systems to create and maintain an outstanding experience for trail users while providing economic, environmental, and health benefits to the Pittsburgh region.*

## Stay in the Know

Subscribe to our e-newsletter and follow us for trail alerts, updates, & more.

 [friends@friendsoftheriverfront.org](mailto:friends@friendsoftheriverfront.org)  @fotr.pgh  @friendsoftheriverfront  Friends of the Riverfront

*Our office location: 100 Hafner Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15223*