Friends of Five Rivers

Who We Are and What We Do

in partnership with

Five Rivers Environmental Education Center

- Friends of Five Rivers is the non-profit support organization of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's (DEC) owned and operated Five Rivers Environmental Education Center. Friends of Five Rivers' mission is to support environmental education and land preservation at Five Rivers, as well as to enhance the experience of visitors.
- The Friends organization was established in 1972, the same year Five Rivers was established by the DEC. Friends is membership-driven and is run by a Board of Directors. The organization also relies on generous tax-deductible donations, sponsorships, and grants to operate.
- Friends' employs a full time Executive Director, Director of Education, and Advancement Officer, as well as two part time environmental educators. However, aside from those employees, the group relies primarily on volunteers to help run many other important aspects of the organization. More than 75 people volunteer their time and talents from Board members to Visitor Center greeters to Guided School Program instructors, and so much more.
- The Guided School Program (GSP) is the cornerstone of the Friends' programming. The lessons are outdoors, hands-on, and science-based, touching the lives of more than 2,500 school-aged children *every year*. Friends of Five Rivers also runs the Beautiful Day family programming. Participating children attend with an adult family member or guardian. Together, they gain an understanding of the importance of being good environmental stewards.
- The annual Fall Festival, held in mid-September, has been a capital area staple for more than 40 years. Attendees enjoy a family-friendly, hands-on activities, interactive exhibits from community groups, live music, and food vendors. Friends of Five Rivers also offers other community events, fundraising activities, and a variety of giving opportunities to bring awareness and funding to the organization.
- Five Rivers has over 450 acres of forests, fields, streams, ponds, and wetlands with 10 miles of trails open to the public daily from dawn to dusk. Enjoy hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, nature photography, birding, and picnicking. Nature's Accessible Backyard, Woodlot, and Fisher trails are accessible to people with mobility disabilities. Many of the trails are suitable for young children, either walking or in strollers. An electric scooter is available on a first come first serve basis when the Visitor Center is open. Bicycles are not permitted on the trails. Bike racks are provided near the Visitor Center. Admission is free and there is ample parking. Only trained service animals are permitted when they are serving the person they are trained to assist.
- The Visitor Center, open Monday through Saturday from 9:00 am to 4:30 pm except state and Federal holidays, is a gateway to the outdoors with exhibits that interpret the habitats and wildlife around Five Rivers. Popular features include a touch table, bird viewing area (winter only), and a small collection of live animals. The Visitor Center is a platinum LEED certified green building. Information about the green features can be found throughout the building.
- Friends of Five Rivers operates a Gift Shop in the Visitor Center filled with unique items for nature enthusiast.
- Five Rivers falls within the watersheds of five major rivers: Schoharie Creek, the Mohawk River, the Sacandaga River, the Hoosic River, and the Hudson River. The Education Center offers a snapshot of habitats found across the five-watershed region: forest, field, and wetland, and fosters an appreciation for the land, resource conservation, and stewardship within the Capital District and beyond.

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