



Scenario B: Winning with Healthy Waterways Scientific and Historical Background for the Teacher



The Chemung River flows through southern New York State from its origin west of Corning NY at the confluence of two rivers, continuing through Elmira, NY and emptying into the Susquehanna River in northern Pennsylvania at Sayre. The Chemung contributes to the fresh water entering the Chesapeake Bay. ¹

Important in the past for transportation of people and goods, the river was polluted by industries and population growth in Corning and Elmira in the 19th and 20th centuries. Many of the factories moved after the flood and destruction caused by the remnants of Hurricane Agnes in 1972, leaving an economy in Elmira that is currently based on service industries, tourism, and agricultural use along the river between the two cities. Similar to many waterways in the Eastern United States, the water quality in the Chemung River has improved due to the decrease in industrial waste since the 1970s.

The health of the Chemung River and the quality of its water are important to the Chemung River Valley for several reasons. The river provides 65% of the drinking water for the 68,000 customers who reside in Elmira. Local residents are utilizing the area and using the river facilities for low-cost or free recreation, making it a quality-of-life marketing tool to employers who want to recruit new employees to the area. New York City and its suburbs are within a five hour drive from the river, promoting tourism growth in the region. Visitors from all over the world are attracted to the area to attend NASCAR events, visit the Corning Glass Works, and visit the wineries in the nearby Finger Lakes region. It just happens that these visitors discover the Chemung River Valley while they are in the region. ¹

The Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, a non-profit group of residents in the Chemung River Valley, was established in 2009 to “protect and promote the Chemung River and its tributaries and encourage the public to better use, enjoy and respect our waterways.” ³ You may locate more information about Friends of the Chemung River Watershed, including its mission and activities, on its website: www.chemungriverfriends.org.



References

¹ About Us. (n.d.). www.chemungriverfriends.org. Retrieved March 6, 2012.

² Peiffer, James, CEO, Friends of Chemung River Partnership, telephone interview, March 5, 2012.

³ Friends of the Chemung River Watershed brochure, Mission Statement

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