

A Tourism Plan for the Rogers Environmental Education Center



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INTRODUCTION

The REEC (REEC) in Sherburne, NY is a 600-acre natural area dedicated to environmental education, passive outdoor recreation, and resource protection. Originally managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), management of the nature center was transferred to the not-for-profit group, the Friends of Rogers (FOR) in 2011. Today, FOR organizes diverse environmental education programs, maintains the visitor center, trails, and signage on the property, and fundraises to support REEC activities.

This report is the culmination of the efforts of SUNY ESF's Ecotourism and Nature Tourism class during the fall, 2017, semester. The Friends of REEC requested the class' assistance in conducting a thorough assessment of the resources, facilities and programs at the REEC. The inventory of facilities is below, followed by detailed assessment chapters, and finally recommendations for the future of the REEC.

Inventory of resources:

- Outdoor classroom
- Wildlife and viewing spots
- Visitor center (educational opportunities; kitchen; exhibits)
- Picnic area with grills
- Trout ponds (opportunity to feed the fish)
- Fenced area for special events
- Docks for visitors to walk out on
- Kayak use for staff guided programs
- Trail vehicle
- Fishing for visitors only with staff (catch and release site on Adams parcel)
- Full time staff members & DEC paid interns
- Kiosks were well done
- Garden & composting area
- Trail well maintained
- Trail -- potential for expanding ADA
- Bird cabin exhibits
- Parking
- Lean-tos
- Peaceful setting
- Diverse habitats (wetlands, forests, meadows, ponds, stream, farm fields)
- Two sets of restrooms (good facilities)
- Good community & corporation support

- Equipment rentals (skis, snowshoes, canoes (off site rentals only), kayaks (off site rentals only), binoculars, books)
- Equipment on site (telescope, fishing poles, binoculars)
- Book share booth
- State maintenance of trails (only for downed trees) and facilities
- Staff CPR & First Aid Certified
- Active & diverse board
- Ecotourism destination potential
- Long history in community
- Trail cams used for security purposes
- American chestnut plantation
- Diverse difficulty levels on trails
- Bat boxes and wayside exhibits
- Indoor bee hive
- Some benches along trails
- Trails are clean

Concerns and issues:

- Some interpretive markers missing; posts not installed properly to prevent removal
- Other missing signs & vandalism
- Need more complete visitor count that includes trail use
- Confusing front entrance signage
- Directional signage at trail intersections
- Signage updates needed
- Young adults to middle-aged adults programming needed
- Locks on bathroom stalls broken
- No AED on property
- No easy interconnection between the three parcels
- No transport vehicles for visitors
- One water fountain
- Wasp nests on buildings
- Indoor exhibits need repair
- Trail repair needed in some spots (some drainage issues; flooding issues in spring)
- Events flier & interpretive brochure not easy to obtain (should be on rack)
- All trails are not on the main map; confusion on trail length; maps don't have trail marker colors; convert to color map; include scales on maps
- Build connections with other small local business
- Need for an endowment
- Visitor evaluation form is not easy to find

- Need some more help with the gift shop
- Bird cabin needs lots of care; needs sign showing that it's open to the public; needs to be staffed; post hours; "bird cabin" sign needs to indicate that exhibits are inside; needs to be more interaction
- Visitor center exhibits need to be cleaned & repaired; need more cohesive theme; exhibit on bees needs more information and seemed unconnected to other exhibits; some exhibits seemed unrelated to the REEC (Alaskan bear, coral reef, sea turtle); poor lighting (switch to LED); no background sound (e.g., bird sounds); need to be more sustainable with regard to energy
- FOR newsletter not posted in visitor center
- Bat boxes out of the way; not on maps
- More benches needed along trail
- More picnic tables needed (had some ADA tables but not along accessible path)
- Need more promotion of events and facility use (confusing sign near pavilion "for educational use only" suggests that it can't be reserved for other meetings)
- Need guideline for community use of facilities (charging vs. not charging)
- Need more structure for operations

Vision:

The REEC is a great source of community pride and a regular destination for the people of Upstate New York who seek to experience and learn about our natural environment. We are a vital educational resource for schools and families, and a welcoming and accessible environment for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Our events and activities form the core of a community-wide respect for and understanding of the natural environment of Central New York.

Within the next five years (2019-2023), we envision that the REEC will:

1. Improve cohesion in indoor and outdoor exhibit space throughout the REEC to communicate an interpretive theme to visitors;
2. Provide a more stable base of funding for the REEC by increasing the membership base, attracting more visitors (program revenue), seeking grant opportunities, creating a long-term endowment, encouraging individual and corporation donations, developing creative fundraising efforts, and establishing a rental system for outdoor spaces;
3. Enhance facilities by improving visitor resources (maps, signage, online services), trail access and maintenance, lighting, and energy efficiency;
4. Expand volunteer and paid staffing (e.g., senior environmental educator, student interns, gift shop and bird cabin staff); and
5. Continue board development and expectations with regard to fundraising and educational programs.

Priorities:

#1. By 2023, we will continue to enhance our value as a frequent destination for families, school groups, organizations, and people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities who are looking for excellent environmental education and outdoor experiences, and view us as an exceptional organization to be associated with.

#2. By 2023, we will enhance Roger's science-based, multidisciplinary environmental education programming to be fun, innovative, interactive, and experiential.

#3. By 2023, we will continue to advance a diverse and adequate funding stream to support our staff and programming needs.

#4. By 2023, we will continue to maintain and enhance our facilities and surrounding property to meet the environmental education goals of our visitors, enhance access for all, and improve sustainability measures.

#5. By 2023, we will have a clear and easily recognizable brand and image both internally amongst our board staff and volunteers as well as externally among our members, donors, and broader community.

Interpretive theme:

“The REEC is a place to expand your role in the stewardship of nature, while deepening your connections between community and environment.”

Brand:

Connecting community with nature in a beloved, educational setting

Marketing slogan:

Community. Conservation. Connection.

PARK SETTING ASSESSMENT

Introduction

In December 2010, New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation budget experienced reductions for the upcoming fiscal year that left the REEC (REEC), a state-operated and -funded operation for about fifty years, susceptible to closure. At this time the Friends of Rogers, a not-for-profit group formerly known as the Mid-York Conservation Fund, helped mitigate the option of the closure of the facility. The Friends of Rogers Board of Directors composed a strategic plan that, to this day, is still being followed and amended on a regular basis to meet the goals of the group.

The mission statement for the group is as follows: "The REEC is a great source of community pride and a regular destination for the people of Upstate New York who seek to experience and learn about our natural environment. We are a vital educational resource for schools and families, and a welcoming and accessible environment for people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities. Our events and activities form the core of a community-wide respect for and understanding of the natural environment of Central New York." (Solomon, 2017).

Background

Location. The REEC is located just west of Sherburne, New York, within Chenango County (Fig. 1). In relation to larger cities across New York State, the environmental center is near the cities of Syracuse, Binghamton, and Albany. Part of the property's 600 acres borders the Chenango River, a tributary of the Susquehanna River (NYS DEC, 2017).

There are three properties currently being managed by Friends of Rogers in the area. The entrance to the main property is located off State Highway 80 (Figure 1); the other two properties (Adams Farm and Cush Hill) are located off of Route 80 and are difficult to find. Adams Farm is 2.5 miles from the entrance to the main property; Cush Hill is within a mile of the main property. Most of the soil substrate around the main property is poorly drained and frequently flooded; the other properties have well drained soils on steeper slopes (NRCS, 2017).

History. The land on which the REEC is currently located was originally purchased from Native Americans in 1788. Soon after in 1793, European settlers turned the forestland in Sherburne into farmland. In 1909, the Sherburne Pheasant Farm was recognized as the first game farm in the state of New York with Harry and Gertrude Rogers as the heads of the farm. Over the course of the next 35 years, the rest of the REEC properties were acquired. In the late 1940s, the facility was renamed Rogers State Game Farm. In 1963, the State of New York made the executive decision to phase out the game farm, and by 1968, New York State's first interpretive center was opened and named the REEC. In 1994, the Mid-York Conservation Fund, a not-for-profit organization working with the REEC, was renamed Friends of Rogers. In 2010, the New York State conservation budget was reduced drastically, mandating the Department of Environmental Conservation to shut down the interpretive center. In 2011, Friends of Rogers took over operations at the REEC in conjunction with the Department of Environmental Conservation through a mutual agreement (Solomon, 2017).

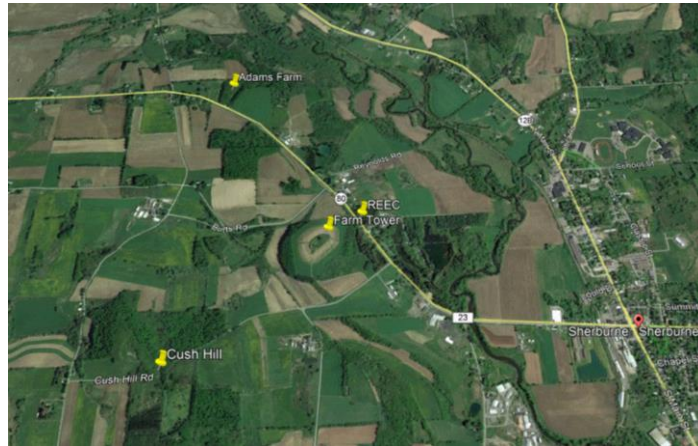


Figure 1. Location of the REEC along Rt. 80 and the adjacent properties of Cush Hill and Adams Farm (Google Earth, 2017)

Present uses. Currently the REEC is used mainly by citizens from the surrounding area of Sherburne and Chenango County. The property boasts beautiful views, as well as many sites used for public gatherings. The interpretative center also puts on many educational events, primarily targeting children and offering only limited programs for teenagers and seniors. Friends of Rogers has a summer program for children to come and learn about the environment during the summer months when they are not in school. Local high schools also visit the REEC for school field trips during the academic year. Among all of these organizations and groups, the largest visitor population tends to be the general public coming to enjoy the natural scenery.

Existing structures. There is no shortage of facilities on the main property. The main visitor center building is a short walk from the visitor parking area. Built in the 1960s, this building is out-dated and in need of renovation. The building houses two floors of exhibit space, program rooms, rest rooms, a small library, staff offices, and a gift shop.

A separate building, the “Bird Cabin,” provides space for the REEC’s large collection of bird taxonomy specimens. Signage located on one end of the cabin is not clear as to the purpose of the cabin. In addition, the cabin is not easily staffed by FOR members due to its proximity away from the visitor center, and thus is not regularly open for visitors. The building is out-dated and many of the taxonomy specimens, though of excellent diversity, are in poor condition.

The REEC also has a separate public rest room building. Though slightly out-dated, the bathrooms are in relatively good repair and are maintained by FOR staff.

The last building on the REEC property, the pavilion, is a beautiful, up-to-date architectural structure built from a veneered beam system. This facility, located adjacent to the visitor center, is frequently used for educational programs and events.

Other facilities. The parking lot located on Route 80 is relatively large and suitable for day-to-day operations, but may not be able to accommodate larger events. Trout ponds are also found on the main property. The ponds are surrounded with green space and a wooden split rail fence that provides a safety barrier. The REEC also has an extensive trail system on the main property, as well as additional trails on Adams Farm and Cush Hill. The trails are home to many species of wildlife and diverse habitat. Adjacent to the main property of the REEC are maintenance facilities still owned and operated by the NYSDEC.

Infrastructure. Recently, within the past eight years, a 40-year lease was negotiated by the NYSDEC for the use of municipal water. The center has two preexisting wells that are no longer in use because of the recent lease. The REEC is on a sewer system, and is one of the furthest locations from the treatment facility. The power supply for the main property is brought into the main parking lot by overhead lines from the electric grid; the rest of the main property is fed by underground lines running to structures. The overhead lighting around the property is sufficient, and parking lot lighting was recently replaced after tree roots had severed the cable buried underground (Solomon, personal communication, November 1, 2017).

Use classification. The Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) is a resource management framework used to classify lands for recreational purposes. The framework helps managers determine which facilities are suitable for a specific area, and when too much development is occurring. The majority of the REEC (especially the undeveloped portion of the main property and both the Adams Farm and Cush Hill properties) is classified as “roaded natural” according to the ROS (Figure ____). This type of area comprises a natural landscape where human impacts are apparent; trails, roads, and limited buildings exist; rustic facilities are provided for resource protection and human comfort; there are moderate to low visitor encounters per day; motorized vehicles and equipment are permitted; on-site staff are common; and moderately complex information is available for visitors.

The parking area, trout ponds, and visitor center area of the REEC is classified as “Rural.” Rural areas are defined according to the ROS as having apparent signs of human influence (including some paved areas); trails, roads, and distantly-spaced buildings; natural, mowed and agricultural lands; facilities designed for human comfort; some synthetic materials present for facilities; moderate to high visitor encounters per day; motorized equipment common; on-site staff common; and sophisticated information (such as visitor center exhibits) for visitors.

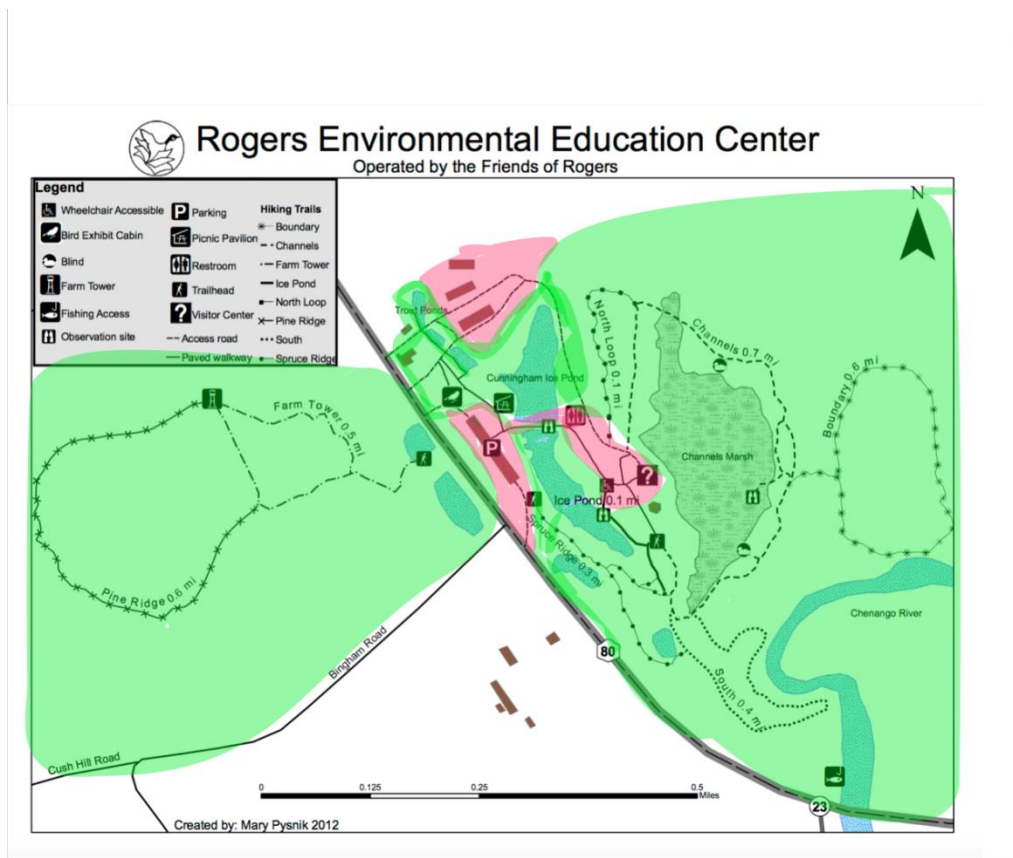


Figure 2. ROS classification of the REEC (map adapted from Friends of Rogers, 2017). Pink areas are classified as Rural and green areas are classified as Roded Natural.

Summary

The REEC is a beautiful gateway to an informative and educational natural setting. The REEC is not only a historical destination in Sherburne, but an important and integral component of resident life in Chenango County. The interpretive center serves not only the residents of the surrounding community, but also those who travel to visit the center. The REEC offers a great chance to escape into a natural setting to partake of a myriad of activities. Over the past couple of years, Friends of Rogers has been working towards making the REEC a popular tourist destination in the county. The FOR has completed one strategic plan and is beginning an update of this strategic plan in order to better cater to REEC users. The dedicated staff and volunteers of the REEC are important assets to the center who are making it possible for the REEC to attain its goals.

TRAILS ASSESMENT

Introduction

The REEC has an extensive trail network across three different parcels of land, totaling 600 acres. Altogether, the Rogers Center has fifteen different trails which can be enjoyed by the public. The trails have a range of difficulties from easy to moderate and take the visitors through a variety of different habitats.

Trail description

The Rogers Center has approximately 60 miles of trails which take the visitors through stream, meadow, forest, and marsh habitats. The main trail, the Channels trail, takes hikers around the Channels Marsh where visitors can view many different types of waterfowl. Several of the trails merge and contain board walks over the marsh, streams, and ponds (Friends of Rogers, n.d.). They are made up of different surfaces, including grass, compact soil, gravel, and blacktop. While the Rogers Center does not know exactly how many people use the trails, it can be inferred that only walkers, runners, and hikers use them because dogs and bicycles are not allowed. The REEC also uses the trail system for programs such as Storytime and Hike programs for preschoolers, and the Goose Run which is a 5k walk/run (Solomon, personal communication, September 11, 2017).

Positive trail attributes

The trails bring visitors to several different areas throughout the REEC and help highlight the surrounding natural habitats. The trails appear to be well maintained overall. Some sections are edged with logs and covered with gravel to allow for good drainage. These trail sections were extremely pleasant to walk on because one did not have to worry about catching their foot on a root or stepping in a hole. No litter was observed on the trails or in the surrounding forest. The majority of the trails on the main property are flat and short; the longest trail is 0.7 miles long (Friends of Rogers, n.d.), allowing for people who are looking for an easy hike, walk, or run to enjoy themselves. However, almost all of the trails interconnect allowing guests who may want a longer hike to achieve this. The board walks over the marsh and the blinds for waterfowl viewing along the trails add to the visitor experience and make it more enjoyable for all visitors.

Trail concerns

Although the Rogers Center has a good trail system, it does have several issues that need to be addressed promptly. Firstly, the REEC has only one very short ADA accessible trail which is not clearly marked as ADA accessible. This trail is located outside of the visitor center and is only 0.1-mile long (Friends of Rogers, n.d.) preventing disabled visitors from seeing some of the other unique qualities that the REEC possesses. The Channels Trail (Fig. 1) loops around the Channels Marsh and could easily be converted into an ADA accessible trail.

Second, the surface of the Channels Trail is made up of at least three different materials including grass, compact soil, and gravel. The use of these different surface materials gave the trail a sense of disjunction from the rest of the REEC. It also became clear that the REEC has some major flooding issues on the Channels Trail during the spring and summer months, likely

due to the trails being located close to the marsh and the surface materials being too compact to allow for proper drainage. It is obvious that the REEC has tried to combat this problem in some spots by installing culverts; however, over the years the trail has eroded around these culverts, creating a new hazard that visitors may trip on.

Third, some of the bridges and board walks along the REEC trails appear to be in need of repair to prevent liability. The boardwalks and bridges look unstable and some lean to one side, potentially causing a person to lose their balance and fall.

Fourth, another possible liability exists on the Boundary trail. The section of trail that runs along the Chenango River has no railing or even signage to prevent visitors from entering or falling into the river.

Fifth, the trails on the Adams Farm and on Cush Hill are not connected to the main property. Because of this connection problem, visitors wanting to hike these different parcels must get in their car and drive which could cause visitors to lose interest.

Finally, while walking along the trails it is clear that large groups of people tend to feel safer; because some segments of the trails are secluded, it is understandable how some individuals may not feel safer in groups. Also, several areas along the trails appear to be overgrown causing the sense of security for individuals to drop even more.

Trail signage

The signage along the trails is good; however, it did not appear to be consistent or cohesive because the signs were created using different styles. An example of this is at the trail head for the Channels Trail where three different signs can be seen, each one with a different style. This non-cohesiveness also appears at the junction between the Channels trail and South trail. While most intersections along the trails are marked with signs, there are some that were not marked which created confusion about which way to go in order to stay on the trail. Missing signs could be due to vandalism along the trails (Solomon, personal communication, September 11, 2017). Due to the recent flooding of some of the trails, Rogers Center staff did post some temporary laminated signs to warn visitors of the trail conditions ahead.

Trail maps

The Rogers Center offers four different trail maps for their visitors: one map for the main property, one for the Farm Tower trail, one for the Adams Farm, and one for the Cush Hill property. These maps are available in the visitor center and are free. The map of the main REEC property does a good job of detailing the location of facilities on the property and the length of trails; the other three maps do not provide trail lengths. The maps could also be confusing to visitors because not all three parcels of land are depicted on one map. In addition, some intersections along the Channels trail and North Loop were not listed on the map nor did they have signs, making the trail route confusing at times.

Summary

The existing trail system at the REEC is currently in decent condition and clearly serves an important purpose for the surrounding community. However, some aspects of the trails in regard

to safety, liability, appearance, and accessibility need to be enhanced in the future. These enhancements may include addressing drainage issues, extending the ADA accessible trail, adding railings or fences, and updating maps and signage. These improvements will bring the REEC one step closer to becoming an ecotourism destination that is able to serve its visitors even better.

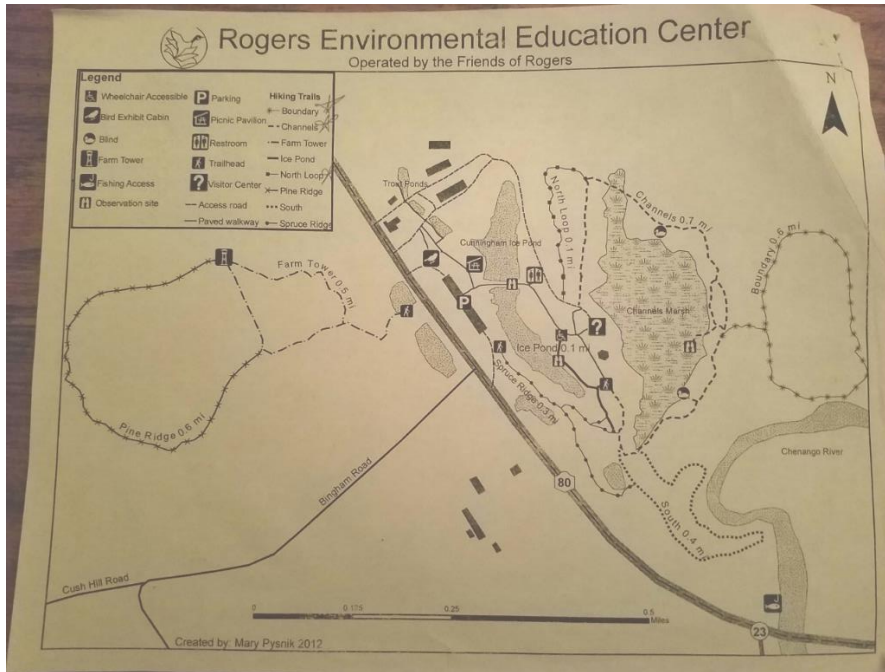


Figure 1. REEC Map

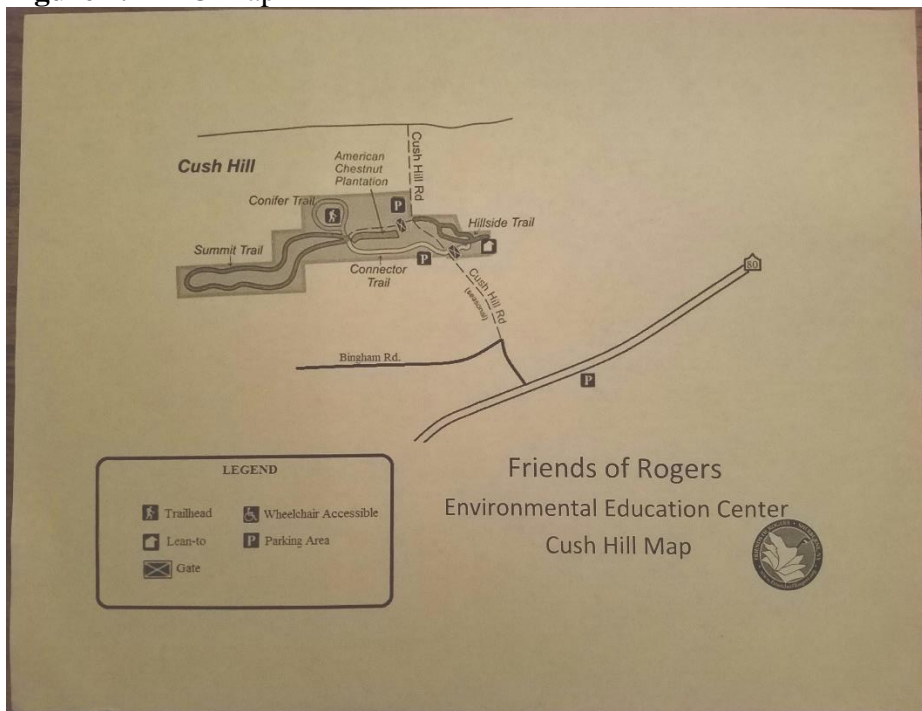


Figure 2. Cush Hill Map

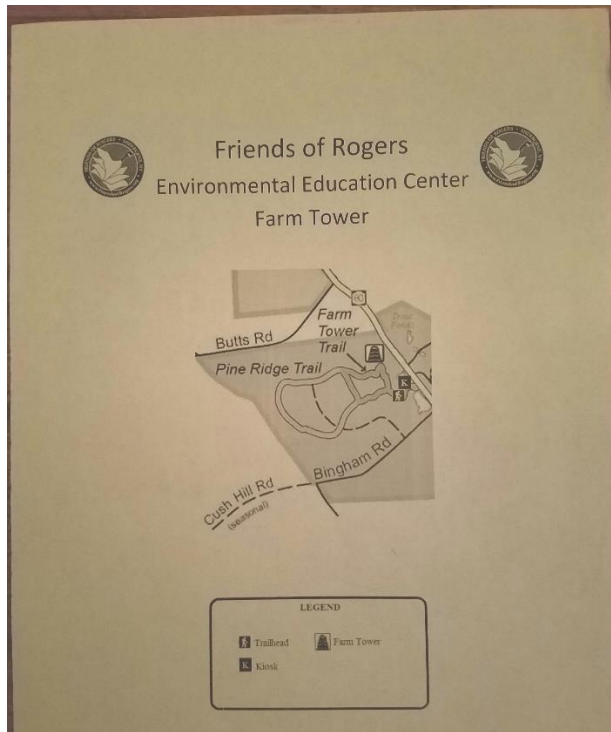


Figure 3. Farm Tower Map

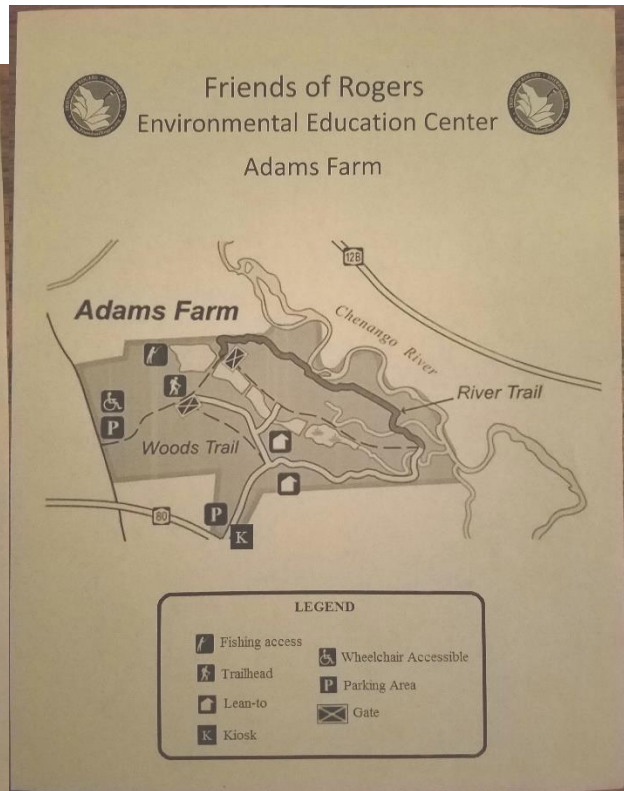


Figure 4. Adams Farm Map

OUTDOOR INTERPRETATION ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Interpretation is how an organization imparts its message to visitors (Beck and Cable, 2011). At the REEC, many visitors come to enjoy the trails and property, and never set foot inside the visitor center or attend an interpretive program, making the outdoor interpretation especially important at this site. If interpretation is done properly, visitors do not need to read each display to understand the theme (Beck and Cable, 2011). When a theme is carried throughout and interpretive design is used, even casual observers will come away with the message (Beck and Cable, 2011). Without interpretive elements, trails are solely for recreation and no longer methods for education (Beck and Cable, 2011).

Current outdoor interpretation

At the REEC there are three types of outdoor interpretation: interpretive signs, interpretive displays, and the interpretive trail. All contain educational information that is interesting and relatable to the REEC or its programs; however, there is no cohesive theme to tie elements together. Even within elements, there is no consistency in message or design.

Trailhead signs. There are trailhead signs at the beginning of some of the trails (Figure 1). They have a consistent design amongst themselves. Each trail name is in blue which does not follow the color scheme of the trail map. A colored trail map is an inset on each sign.



Figure 1. The trailhead sign for the North Loop Trail, showing the design of trailhead signs in the REEC. (Photo by Marissa Nolan.)

Interpretive signage. There are interpretive signs throughout the REEC main property and informational signs at the trailheads for the Adams Farm and Cush Hill properties. The Adams Farm and Cush Hill trails do not have any interpretive signs, displays, or brochures; therefore the rest of this section will only focus on the main REEC property. The interpretive signs at REEC were not planned together. They were erected in different years and were designed by different staff.

Another group of signs with a consistent design are the “New York State” signs placed along the path to the picnic pavilion. They focus on organisms important to New York State and are in a highly visible, well-trafficked spot. They are newer than other outdoor interpretation and do not match other signs or displays at REEC.



Figure 2. The New York State sign on bluebirds is part of a series of New York State organisms, these signs are close to the parking area and path to the visitor center. (Photo by Marissa Nolan)

The fish ponds also has informational signs near them. Each has a picture of one of the species present in the ponds and a few paragraphs about that fish (Figure 3). The signs are printed pieces of paper that have been laminated and taped to wooden boards, giving them a temporary and unfinished look. The text is in long paragraphs and contains a lot of information, but it not presented following interpretive principles.

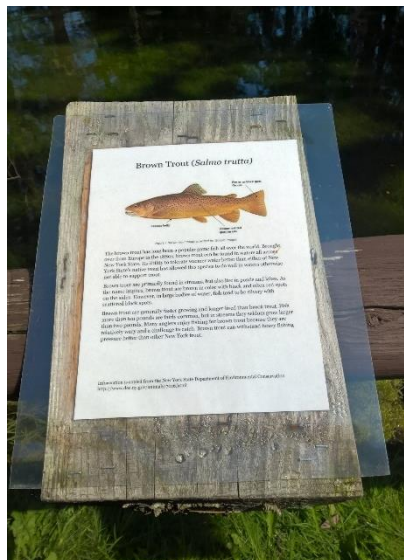


Figure 3. This makeshift sign around the fish pond gives information on Brown Trout. (Photo by Marissa Nolan.)

Near the fish pond is an overgrown garden. This area has old signs that are fading and scratched (Figure 4). There are also missing signs with empty posts standing over the garden boxes.



Figure 4. Left is a faded sign near the garden; on the right are posts with missing signs overhanging the overgrown garden.(Photo by Marissa Nolan.)

There are some large single- and tri-panel signs around the parking lot and picnic area. Some of these contain general information about the REEC, while others are about specific topics such as predators or birds. The general information sign (Figure 5 on the left) matches the design of the trailhead signs. The current REEC logo does not appear in this design template. The tri-panel signs are a different design and match an old DEC interpretive design (Figure 5 right). The main section on each is a well maintained image of different REEC landscapes.



Figure 5. Left is the first sign most visitors see and gives general information and rules; on the right is in an older sign about some of the birds on property.(Photo by Marissa Nolan)

Interpretive displays. Some interpretive signs are part of larger displays. On the way from the visitor center to the start of the South Trail is a composting display (Figure 6). Multiple methods of composting are described on signs, and the different containers needed for each method are there as well. The design of these signs matches the DEC color combination of yellow words on brown backgrounds. The only other place that this design is used is the sign on the road for the REEC. Some of the composting methods displayed have not been kept up (Figure 7). There is also a garden in the center of the composting methods that has no signs about it. The vegetables grown are not being collected but left on the vines. This area is within sight of the visitor center but is not marked on any of the trail maps.



Figure 6. These two signs describe how someone could compost at home and critique different methods for composting. (Photo by Marissa Nolan.)



Figure 7. Some of the composting methods displayed are not well maintained. This area is missing the cloth that is supposed to enclose it and is overgrown with grass. (Photo by Marissa Nolan.)

There are bat boxes near the visitor center and along the trail (Figure 8). There are interpretive signs near the bat boxes explaining what they are giving information about bats. These signs use their own design template. The information does connect to one of the displays inside the visitor center about bats. The bat boxes near the visitor center and the nearby beehive, are not easy to find from the visitor center. None of these displays are on the trail map.



Figure 8. There are multiple signs for the bat boxes along the trail describing what they are and why they are important. (Photo by Marissa Nolan)

Interpretive trail. An interpretive trail route was created at the REEC, which comprises several trails marked with numbered wooden posts (Figure 9). The numbers correspond to numbered information contained in a series of interpretive brochures. Each trail's numbering is separate. The trails can be distinguished by the color with which the numbers are painted; the colors match the trail map on the trailhead signs. The trail maps available at the visitor center are in black and white, and each trail has a different symbol to distinguish it. The posts do not have the corresponding symbols on them to match the black and white map. The numbers are legible on all the posts, but a few had peeling paint. Some of the posts are missing due to vandalism.



Figure 9. The red post marks the interpretive trail along the Channels Trail and the blue is for the Boundary Trail. Without the interpretive brochure there is no way to know what these are marking. (Photo by Marissa Nolan)

Each trail has a separate brochure that gives the interpretive information for a number of stops (marked by the posts) along the trail. The brochures are not on display in the visitor center or available at the trailheads; the brochures have to be requested by a visitor and then printed by an employee. The trailhead signs do not mention the interpretive trail and there is no sign on the posts explaining their purpose either.

The brochures sometimes refer to natural elements not present in all seasons (for example, spring ephemerals) or to natural features no longer present (for example, a fallen tree that was not visible). The text in the brochures is not always interpretive, and is sometimes only informational. Most of the stops only have a few short sentences written about them, but some have longer paragraphs. There is a mix of drawings, photos, and clip art images decorating the brochures. They are printed in black and white with no mention of the color of the trail posts or the corresponding black and white map symbols.

Summary

There is a lot of outdoor interpretation at REEC. Most of the signs and displays are in good shape, but there are old, temporary looking, and missing signs as well. The New York State signs provide a good design template, but most outdoor interpretive areas are inconsistent with this template and random. Some of the REEC's features are not mentioned on the trail maps or trailhead signs which lessens the chance people will find them. In the case of the interpretive trail, people will not know that it exists or what it interprets. The interpretive trail is a great tool for new and recurring visitors but is not being used to its potential. The lack of consistent theme for the content and design of the REEC's outdoor interpretation makes outdoor interpretation feel piecemeal. REEC has beautiful trails and natural elements, crafting a unified interpretative theme and design around it will not be difficult.

INTERPRETATION INSIDE THE VISITOR CENTER BUILDING ASSESSMENT

Introduction

In 1968 the Roger's Environmental Education Center (REEC), then called the Rogers Conservation Education Center, first opened its interpretive center to the public. The Center's objective was to interpret department policies, provide information, and relate environmental concerns to the public (Friends, 2013). Today, the REEC's mission is to provide outstanding education opportunities for all people to enjoy and to inspire them to protect our natural world.

Visitor Center exhibits

There are many exhibits and interpretive signage throughout the inside of the visitor center. Several of the exhibits are "hands on" and interactive (e.g., honey bees, soils, and the touch table). Interpretation signage educates visitors on information, including birds, mammals, invertebrates, and history of the park. The building is split into two levels; guests have a choice to descend to the bottom floor, or go upstairs as they enter the building. There is no signage on the walls indicating to the guests what is located on the different levels of the center.

The bottom floor of the visitor center begins in a hallway that, on one side, looks into a children's day care center and teaching facility. Next to the stairs is a small water fountain designed for children's access. The hallway is poorly lit and fails to properly illuminate the exhibits on mineral identification, ground water, soils, and fossils. Some of the exhibits are in need of repair such as the interactive soil exhibit, which is missing a door.

The bottom floor's back room overlooks the water outside, and is the back side of the building. A mural of the water surrounding the facility is positioned above the window indicating to visitors the natural systems of the area. The position of the mural is facing downward, and the lighting from the ceiling creates shadows throughout the painting. The right side of the room has an exhibit on composting, information on snakes of NY, and a "touch me" table. The table has many objects associated with what guests would expect to see around the facility and NY; however, objects such as the brain coral seemed out of place for the facility. The left side of the room has a taxidermy bear, and three chairs that blocked visitors from an interactive exhibit on birds. A large display of back issues of the conservationist is located on this side of the room, along with poster boards positioned on the floor, stacks of brochures, and taxidermy birds. Dust was found throughout the room, and was mostly concentrated on the left side along with the numerous interpretive materials.

The top floor of the building has a gift shop on the right with irregular hours of operation, a large room on the left, and a room in the back of the building with tall ceilings. Informational brochures and a guest book are located near the top of the stairs. The hallway leading to the back room has interpretive signage on the history of the REEC. The large room located on the left side of the floor looks like an informal classroom and has many cabinets displaying information on

macroinvertebrates, taxidermy birds, and an exit door that leads directly to outside. A large table with chairs is located by the exit door. On the other side of the room is more cabinet storage, a fish tank, fossil station, and information on birds and mammals on storage cabinets. It was unclear if the visitor should open the cabinets to explore the potential information located inside.

The large back room of the floor has many exhibits and information, including bird wing span, on the ceiling. Taxidermy specimens of birds and mammals such as an Alaskan bear are displayed throughout this room. Most of the taxidermy is located on the left side of the room and, for the most part, are what visitors would expect to see in the REEC; however, the Alaskan bear seemed out of place. More history of the REEC is located on the right side of the room along with an interactive bee exhibit educating visitors on the bee life cycle, and a live bee display. A large window overlooks the water and there are telescopes visitors may use to view the wildlife. Many interactive displays in this room include, diversity, food webs, and changing environments; however, the sea turtle survival exhibit seemed out of place. The room has decent lighting and great materials; however, general repairs and organization will give the visitors a better experience in this facility.

Summary

There are many fantastic exhibits and interpretive materials throughout the visitor center. The facility, packed with materials, may give visitors information overload. A general cleaning, repairs, improved lighting, and cohesive interpretive theme will help the REEC achieve its goal in connecting visitors to the natural world.

INTERPRETIVE STAFF, PROGRAMS AND EVENTS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The REEC is not only a place for self-guided recreation, but also recreation that is structured through programs and events. There are many events and programs that take place here, all possible because of the volunteers, interns, and staff that help make this center an event hub for the community.

Staffing

The staff at the Roger's center is composed of two full-time employees, one part-time environmental educator, one children's coordinator with very few hours per week, and 8-14 interns per season that cycle in and out.

Current programs and events

Most recently, there have been 47, 44, and 33 programs held in the REEC respectively in the years 2015, 2016 and 2017. The low number for 2017 is due to the year not being over by the time this report was written (data was still being recorded on visitors and numbers of programs being held). Of these programs over the three years, 17 have been repeated, suggesting that they are the most popular. Their name and attendance numbers are listed below in Table 1. Table 2 lists the top 10 most attended programs for each of these three years, and table 3 lists the top 10 least attended programs. Figure 1 shows the number of programs that are conducted per month for each year. Figure 2 shows the attendance of the story time programs for each year per month. These are separated from regular programs because they were recorded as separate data.

Table 1. Name of repeated programs and their attendance. “N/A” indicates that no data is available for the program during that year.

Program Name	2015 Attendance	2016 Attendance	2017 Attendance
Snowshoe hike	3	0	N/A
Owl prowl	16	24	6
Winter Living Celebration	700	350	475
Bird Bingo	2	0	N/A
PLT early childhood	15	N/A	10
Teddy bear snuggle	N/A	6	0
For Goodness Snakes	N/A	15	8
Wildflower walk	13	8	5
Catch up and Mustard	N/A	22	65
Kitchen Science	18	0	N/A
Earthfest	900	175	275
Fossil Program	15	15	29
Fishing day	100	35	85
Teddy Bear Picnic	N/A	29	10
Animals of Halloween	150	220	N/A
Wreath workshop	15	29	N/A
Holiday Crafts	18	0	N/A

Table 2. The top 10 most attended programs of the Roger’s Center for the years 2015, 2016, and 2017. Listed from lowest to highest attendance (attendance is in parentheses).

2015 Program and attendance	2016 Program and attendance	2017 Program and attendance
Canoe trip (19)	Catch up and Mustard (22)	Fish and dish (22)
Outdoor Playhouses (2)	Owl Prowl (24)	Fossil Program (29)
Signs of Spring (24)	Pumpkin Carving (25)	Bioblitz (30)
Home Sweet Gnome (25)	Teddy Bear Picnic (29)	BaH (40)
Toad Abode (30)	Wreath Workshop (29)	Ribbon Cutting (40)
Cornell Canoe/Kayak (31)	Fishing Day (34)	Catch up and Mustard (65)
Fishing Day (100)	Wild Goose Chase (62)	Fishing Day (85)
Animals of Halloween (150)	Earthfest (175)	Earthfest (275)
Winter Living Celebration (700)	Animals of Halloween (220)	Solar Viewing Party (468)
Earthfest (900)	Winter Living Celebration (350)	Winter Living Celebration (475)

Table 3. The top 10 least attended programs of Roger’s Center for the years 2015, 2016, and 2017. Listed from lowest to highest attendance (attendance in parentheses).

2015 Program and attendance	2016 Program and attendance	2017 Program and attendance
Winter (0)	Holiday Crafts (0)	Learn to ski (0)
Critter Condo (0)	Paper (0)	Learn to ski 2 (0)
Raised garden beds (0)	Kitchen Science (0)	Teddy Bear Snuggle (0)
Hibernation (2)	Spring Bingo (0)	Cryptozoology (0)
Food for Thought (2)	Snowshoe (0)	Artists and Naturalists (0)
Bird bingo (2)	Bird bingo (0)	Ticked Off (4)
Snowshoe hike (3)	Branching out (1)	Full Moon Hike (5)
4H River Day (4)	Trail trek (3)	Wildflower walk (5)
Food for Thought 2 (5)	Winter Tree ID (4)	Teen Scavenger Hunt (6)
Compost (5)	Water features (5)	Owl Prowl (6)

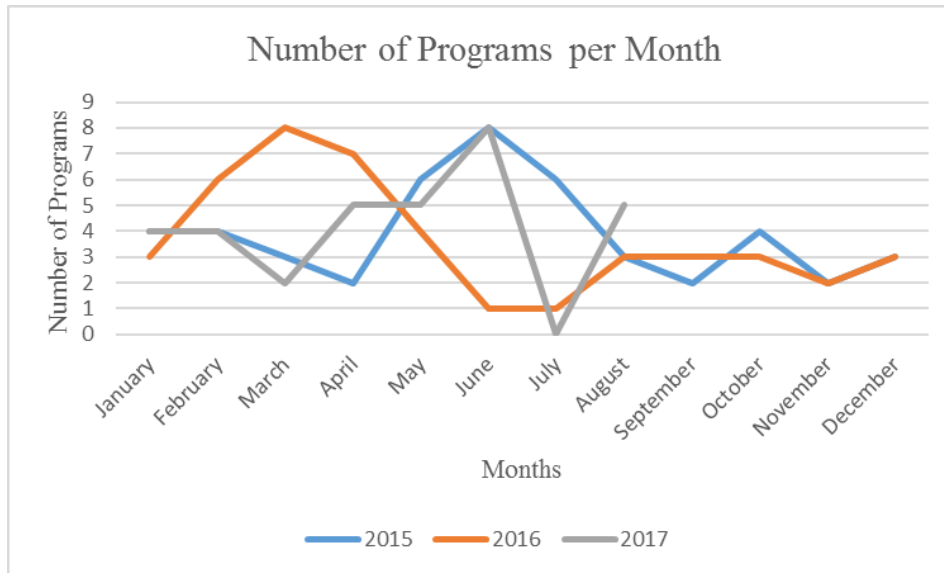


Figure 1. The number of programs at the Roger’s Center over the years of 2015, 2016, and 2017 shown by month.

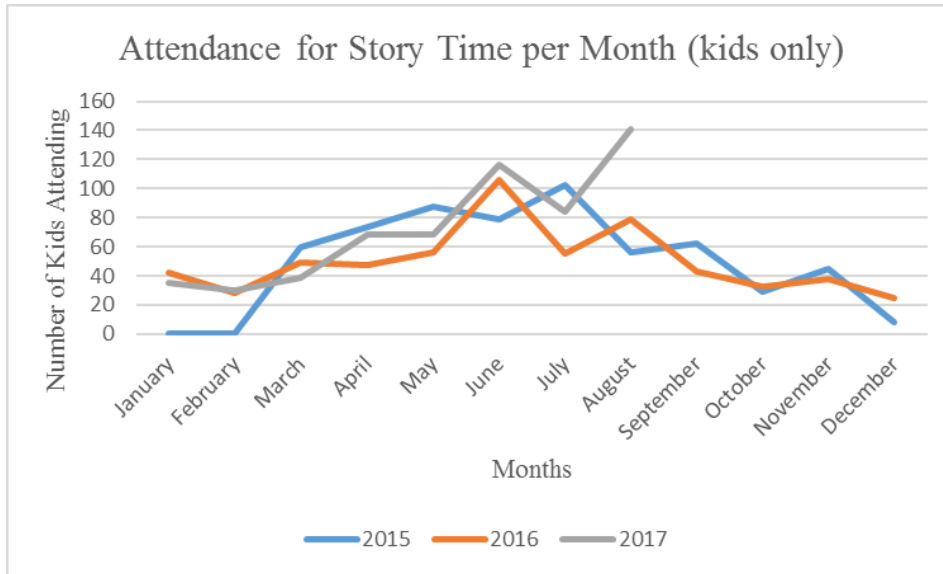


Figure 2. Number of kids attending story time per month at the Roger’s Center shown over the years 2015, 2016, and 2017 for comparison.

Summary

The REEC is able to provide unique and diverse programs due to its dedicated staff and volunteers; however, an increase in staff may be needed to provide programs for a greater volume of visitors. The number of programs per month is variable, and is not consistent year to year. The attendance of children for story time seems to be oppositely correlated with colder weather; the attendance dips down in the colder months, yet the number of times story time is held remains virtually the same throughout the year. The programs with the consistently highest number of people in attendance are the Winter Living Celebration, Animals of Halloween, Fishing Day, and Earthfest. Very few programs are repeated if they are not doing well, showing that the staff at the REEC pays attention to what is and what isn’t popular among their visitors.

MARKET GROUPS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This assessment aims to identify the visitors' demographics at the REEC. This analysis is based on a 2017 REEC survey and the Chenango County Strategic Plan. It will help site planners to improve and promote this destination to a larger market, and attract local visitors and residents for outdoor education and recreation experiences.

Demographics

Where visitors are from. According to the 2017 REEC survey of its members, over 92% of responding members are from New York State, and 30% of responding members are specifically from regions and counties nearby. According to the 2010 US Census, the population of Chenango County decreased by 1.8% from 51,401 residents in 2000 to 50,477 in 2010. The population is expected to decrease to 48,000 by 2020 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Gender, age, education level and income level. Members who finished and returned the REEC member survey were mostly female (73% of respondents). Population distribution by age for Chenango County in 2010 is shown in Figure 1; population distribution by age for New York State is shown in Figure 2. Chenango County has a higher percentage of population in the 45-54 age group as compared to the state. The main reasons identified may be that young adults are leaving the area in search of better job opportunities, as well as the 20-24 age group moving away for college and job opportunities (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

Over 28% of residents in Chenango have a college-associated degree; the percentage is 40% for New York State (Commerce Chenango, 2014). The survey showed that the average years of education for responding members is 16 years (i.e., high school plus two years of college). Although it was not included in the survey, school groups are also an important market group for the REEC.

According to the Chenango County census data, about 24% of households had an annual income over \$75,000 and 38% received less than \$35,000 in 2010 (Commerce Chenango, 2014). According to the member survey, the annual household income of 33% of responding members was over \$75,000; 30% of respondents received less than \$50,000 in 2017.

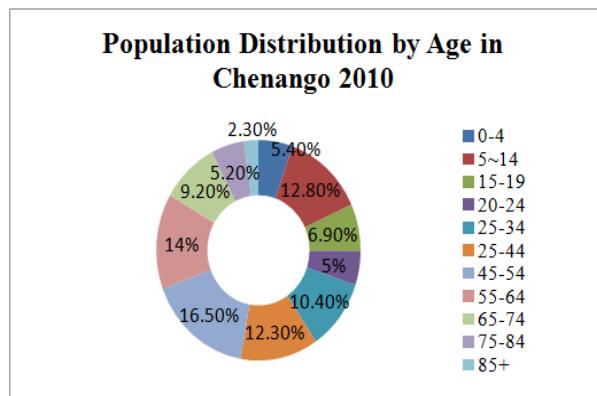


Figure 1. Population of Chenango County according to age, 2010 (US Census Bureau, 2010).

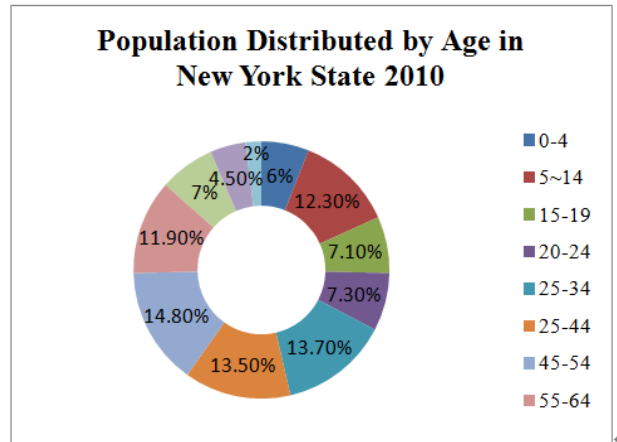


Figure 2. Population distribution by age for New York State, 2010 (US Census Bureau, 2010).

Group composition. Approximately 73% of responding members indicated that they visited the REEC with families; 39% visited with their friends. Teenagers comprises the smallest number of individuals in member groups visiting the REEC on average (0.6 individuals per group); adults aged 35 to 64 comprise the highest number of individuals in each group (nearly 2 individuals per group), followed by seniors (1.3 individuals per group), young adults (1.2), and children (1.1).

Repeat visitation. Many visitors returned several times after visiting this destination (Figure 3 and Figure 4). There are 29.85% of visitors visited this site 6 to 10 times in 2016 and 29.60% of visitors visited 21 or more times. It reflected the value and potential of REEC as a place for family meetings and friend reunions. As many visitors chose to return and bring friends and family members to this destination, it is a good place for exercise and recreation in nature for small groups.

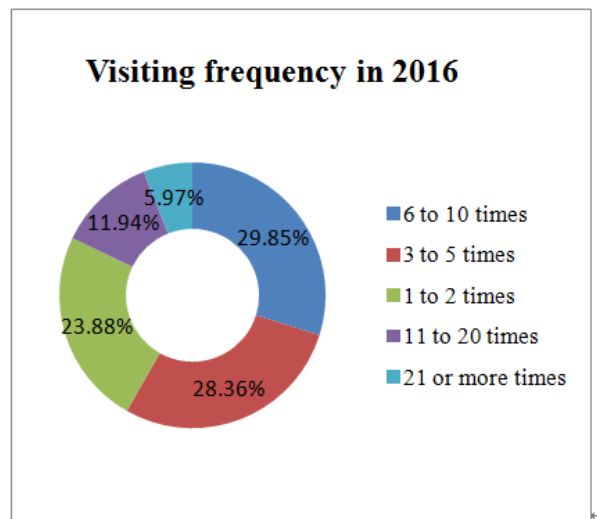


Figure 3. Frequency of visits by responding members in 2016.

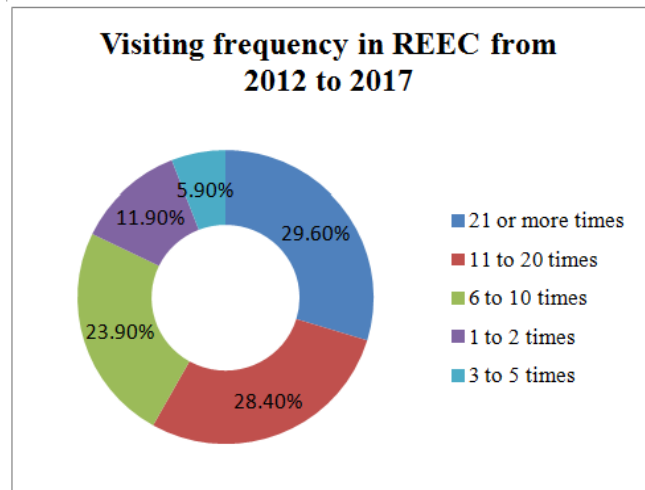


Figure 4.Number of REEC visits by responding members, 2012-2017.

Facilities, activities, and interests. Trails and the visitor center were the most popular facilities with responding members, with 74% of responding members visiting both. About 86% of members walked the trails and 69% observed wildlife. The survey showed that REEC members are most interested in environmental events and nature observation.

Summary

The findings of this assessment suggest that main visitors at REEC are people from New York State and mainly from surrounding areas. REEC is a natural destination with great potential for educational and recreational purposes. It is in a good location to be an important tourism destination for Chenango County because it attracts local residents and students from schools around the county.

It is important, however, to recognize one important limitation with the member survey: the people who received the survey were REEC members. Other visitors who have participated in the activities and events at the REEC were not included, and may have different demographic characteristics and interests in recreational activities than the members.

The REEC is an ideal place for environmental education. Expanding promotion of this destination and its programs to schools and institutions nearby could help expand attendance and, consequently, support for REEC efforts. The REEC also has the potential to attract visitors from surrounding areas in the state that are within a one- to two-hour drive of Sherburne. In addition, focusing on the expansion of programs designed for Seniors and teenagers could help increase visitation.

PROMOTIONS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This assessment examines the promotional information readily available at the REEC for general visitors, as well as the online resources available.

Information available on site

At the REEC, plenty of information was available, but not all was particularly relevant to the Rogers Center. On an otherwise empty brochure rack on the first floor (outside of the gift shop), maps of the three parcels owned by the Friends of Rogers were placed. Downstairs in the visitor center was a disorganized table of random brochures, under a bulletin board of similar random brochures. Many of the brochures were for different DEC programs or warnings against harmful algae blooms or advertisements for water assessments, as well as different flyers advertising healthy daily activities, medical brochures, and many other irrelevant brochures that had little to do with the REEC or its parcels. The disorganization is likely confusing to visitors and does not provide adequate information about the REEC itself.

Information not available on site

A great deal of needed information was not provided on-site at the REEC. Information on the property itself, its parcels, and different the functions of REEC (e.g., FOR memberships, programs, facility and equipment rentals, interpretive trail brochure, etc...) should be readily available for the visitors when they first walk in, and then again when they descend the stairs to the lower level. Staff in the gift shop have to be asked for copies of the interpretive brochures by visitors. Since the gift shop doesn't have set hours and visitors may not know about the interpretive brochures, this creates a communication problem for visitors.

Information available online

The online resources for the REEC are abundant. A google search of the REEC quickly provides the REEC page on the NYS DEC website. Down the right side of this webpage is a bar with links to maps and to the Friends of Rogers website. The page gives contact information, lists features of the Visitors center and the other properties, guidelines, and even directions to the center.

The Friends of Rogers (FOR) website has lists of upcoming programs. Information on trails, the trout ponds, and the gift shop is available, as well as how to become a member or make a donation. General information is also available about the different types of programs FOR offers to groups and a calendar of public programs. The website lists some of FOR's corporate members, as well as other places online that information is available on the REEC. While the website has everything it needs to be effective, its appearance could be improved in order to better attract potential visitors.

An important website for providing a link to the FOR and REEC websites is the I Love NY website, the official state Tourism Promotion Agency website. However, the REEC isn't easy to find on this website. To find it, a visitor has to search for it with the filters 'Nature,' 'Central

New York,' and 'Sherburne.' For the REEC listing, there is only a short blurb on what is offered, contact information, and information on the story time event. The information is unhelpful to visitors and difficult to find for visitors unfamiliar with the REEC.

Searching for the REEC online also offers links to its Facebook page, which is up to date and provides general information. Here you can also find several reviews on the REEC, which could be helpful in providing prospective visitors with more information about what to expect. The REEC is also listed on other sites, such as CNY Hiking, alltrials.com, and the commerce Chenango website.

The online resources for the REEC are adequate and there may not be very much room for extensive improvement. However, older people aren't going to look online for information, so by only having this depth of information online, the Friends of Rogers are missing an entire cohort of prospective visitors.

Summary

The REEC is in need of help with its promotion. In the center itself, FOR needs to expand the literature provided about the REEC and to organize the remaining information about non-REEC events and organizations. With no information on the REEC readily available to the everyday visitor, that visitor is less likely to return. Having to ask for information will not work well for the REEC in the future since most visitors will not know what to ask for. Despite not having adequate information on site, the online resources for the REEC are plentiful and provide visitors with the information needed before their visit; however, the demographic of older people is missed due to most information being online. One important type of promotion has not been discussed, though — word of mouth. As more and more younger adults come across information on the REEC, they are likely to share it with family and friends interested in experiencing a fun day out.

TRANSPORTATION

Introduction

Transportation plays an important role in providing access to any tourism site. For this assessment, the types of transportation available to REEC visitors is examined, as well as aspects of transportation corridors.

Access to the REEC

The REEC's location puts it close to the village of Sherburne (a mile from village center; figure 1) which allows it to be closely connected to Sherburne's community. This enables the REEC to be deeply involved with hosting community events like local AA meetings or youth organization programs. The close proximity also enables access to the REEC from Sherburne via walking, biking, or motor vehicle. Though bicycles are not permitted on the REEC trails, they can be locked up at bike racks near the REEC parking area. The road shoulder along Route 80 is currently two-foot-wide and paved, with an additional one-foot wide section of gravel; shoulders considered adequate for safe bicycle use are generally four to six feet in width. In addition, safety is a concern for pedestrians due to the speed of vehicles traveling on the road (55 MPH). The REEC has a large parking area that can provide parking for ___ motor vehicles. The navigability of Chenango Creek for use by canoes and kayaks is unknown at this time.

With regard to public transportation, taxis and Greyhound buses are available in Sherburne. Though taxis could stop at the REEC, there is currently no bus stop near the REEC.

Road visibility

The REEC's visibility from the road needs some work. The REEC relies on an old-fashioned DEC sign of brown and yellow that is difficult to see from a car traveling 55 MPH. In addition, finding the REEC's satellite sites (Cush Hill and the Adams Farm) can be a challenge due to limited signage (the Friends of Rogers website does provide brief information about both locations and maps of the trails, and trail maps are also available in the visitor center). A single trail map connecting all three sites is not available.

Summary

In summary, the REEC has a good location and is very accessible to the public; it just needs some minor tweaks such as putting out flags or newer signs to help visitors find the entrances easier or using a simple sign to talk about the satellite areas and providing a visual reference for visitors (see figure 2).



Figure 1. Map-showing distance from Sherburne to the REEC (Image captured from Google maps)

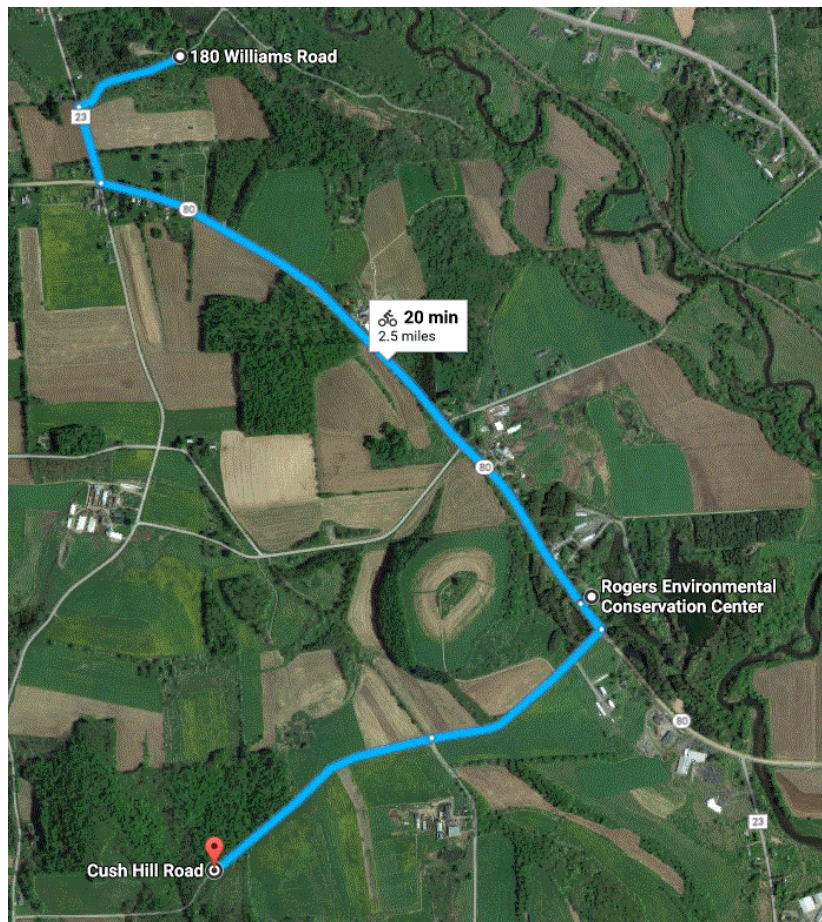


Figure 2. Map showing the relationship between the two satellite sites and the main property of the REEC. Image captured from Google maps

PARKS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

Chenango County contains over 79,959 acres of State-owned land. There are many parks that provide great opportunities for outdoor recreation for all ages in the county. This study assessed thirteen parks in the county and Chenango Valley State Park that, although outside County boundaries, is just a one-hour drive to the REEC. This assessment examined the location, distance from REEC, history, amenities, activities and positive and negative aspects of the parks.

Figure 1 is a map of Chenango County showing the location of all the parks that were assessed and Table 1 shows the distances of these parks to the REEC.



Figure 1.Map of Chenango County showing the locations of the assessed parks and the REEC.

Description of the Parks

Chenango Valley State Park.Chenango Valley State Park is located on State Park Road in Chenango Forks, just outside Chenango County. The park’s kettle lakes, Lily and Chenango Lakes, were formed by the melting of the ice that was left by the last glacier. Some of the activities visitors can enjoy at the park are: biking, fishing, hiking, recreation programs, sledding, and X-country skiing. For bird watchers, some of the birds that can be seen at the park are: woodpeckers, nut hatches, warblers, thrushes, herons, ducks and kingfishers. For fishing, there are trout, bass perch and bullhead in Chenango Lake. There are 184 campsites in the park and 24 cabins. The amenities and services the park provides are boat rentals, cabins, camper assistance program, camper recreation, campsites, dumping stations, food, nature trails, pavilions, picnic tables, playgrounds, showers, swimming beach, tent/trailer sites and a golf course. Some of the **Table 1.**The distance of the assessed parks to the REEC.

Park Name	Distance to the REEC (in miles)	Driving time (in minutes)	Walking time (in minutes)	Biking time (in minutes)
Gaines Park	1.1	2	22	6
Paddleford Park	1.7	4	34	9
Historic Park	2.0	5	39	10
Rexford Falls	2.9	5	53	17
Norton Park	9.6	13		
Mill Brook Recreation Park	10.9	18		
Hunts Pond State Forest	12.5	24		
Bowman Lake State Park	21.7	36		
General Clinton Park	32.3	43		
Pathfinder Park	32.8	45		
William S. Payne Memorial Park	34.0	47		
Chenango County Cook Park	34.8	51		
Chenango Valley State Park	42.8	58		
Oquaga Creek State Park	43.2	61		

positive aspects of the park are that it has many great activities for people to enjoy and it is well maintained and managed. Also, the park is ADA accessible. On the other hand, although it seems they have made some improvements, the park could use some renovation of its infrastructure to make it even more attractive to visitors, since by reading visitors reviews online, some were concerned with the appearance of some of the structures in the park.

Cook Park.Cook Park is located one mile east of the Town of Greene, in southern Chenango County. The name of the park comes from the Town of Pitcher Supervisor, Gaius M. Cook, who helped with the development of the park. After he died in 1970, the park became known as Gaius M. Cook Memorial Park. Before, it was known as Green Pond. Green Pond was an impoundment created in 1961 by Chenango County and the Soil and Water Conservation District on a parcel of land outside the Town of Greene. For many years the property was leased to the Greene Campers Club, but then Chenango County appropriated \$110,000 to develop roadways, campsites, and a well. The goal of the park as described on the Chenango County Parks website

is “to provide a relaxing and enjoyable atmosphere for all of our visitors” (Chenango County, 2014). The season for camping at the park goes from May 15 through Columbus Day. The park has forty campsites, a bath house with hot showers, a pavilion for camper use, and a dumping station. Also, it has 30 or 20 amp electrical hook-ups, potable water, and garbage pick-up. Other day recreation activities are: fishing for large mouth bass, pickerel, bullhead, and sunfish, boating, kayaking, paddle boarding, hiking trails, and bird watching. The picnic area has tables, grills, and bathrooms. One of the positive aspects of this park is that it has a half-mile of fully accessible trails; the park is also well maintained.

Paddleford Park. Paddleford Park is a nice, small park located on Chapel Street in the city of Sherburne. It has a community pool, playground, pavilions, lighted baseball fields and youth recreation programs. The river creek next to the park is beautiful and adds a nice atmosphere to the park. On the other hand, the park needs more programming. It is a good park for people for those who wish to picnic and use the playground.

Rexford Falls. The Rexford Undeveloped Park is located along Route 80. A pedestrian bridge goes over the Mad Brook gorge at the crest of Rexford Falls. The pedestrian bridge leads to the undeveloped park on Route 80. Rexford Falls is about 75 feet high. The spring at the foot of the falls has been used for cutaneous diseases. One of the negative aspects of Rexford Falls is that it does not seem well maintained; there is litter in the surrounding areas of the bridge and there is no signage for visitors. The location is gorgeous and has potential for educational purposes.

Norton Park. Norton Park is located at 359 Bell Road in the Town of Columbus. Barrett and Phyllis Welch donated the land to the town in 1999 to create a park for residents. Norton Park was named in honor of Mr. and Mrs. Norton, the original owners of the property. The park has been developed by volunteers and the Town of Columbus. The park has pavilions, nature trails, jogging track, and areas for playing baseball, basketball, volleyball, tractor-pull track and horse shoes. The Park mission, as described on the park website, is: “Preserving Norton Park as a recreational asset for the enjoyment of our community.” And the park vision statement is: “Norton Park will be utilized as a historic, environmental, cultural and recreational facility within our community” (Town of Columbus, n.d.). A positive aspect of Norton Park is that it emphasizes the environment, culture and history of the place, providing potential for developing educational programs in the park. Another positive aspect is that the community is engaged in the management of the park. There is a park committee that meets the first Monday of every month and everyone is welcome to join. The park is well maintained and the infrastructure is in good shape, but the playground area could use some renovation.

Millbrook Recreation Park. The Millbrook Recreation Park is located off King Settlement Road in the town of New Berlin. Some of the activities visitors can enjoy when visiting the park are: swimming, fishing, hiking, camping, cross country skiing, volleyball, and basketball. Users must bring their own equipment if they want to use the volleyball and basketball facilities. There is a playground, protected with a fence, for kids. Inside the fenced area there is a pavilion and there is a second pavilion outside the fenced area. One negative aspect of the park is that they don’t have lifeguards all the time and visitors have to bring their own equipment for using the volleyball and basketball courts. The map of the park on the park website needs to be updated and improved.

The park seems to be used a lot by people from the community and is very well known in the area.

General Clinton Park. The General Clinton Park is located in the town of Bainbridge. The park is 50 acres and is named in honor of General James Clinton, who led soldiers down the Susquehanna River from Cooperstown in 1779 as part of the Sullivan-Clinton Expedition during the Revolutionary War. In 2005, the park was given to the Town of Bainbridge by the Chamber of Commerce. One of the main events held in the park is the Canoe Regatta in May. Facilities at the park include: a one-mile stone dust walking trail which circles the park; a band shell; a large, enclosed pavilion and two open-air pavilions; bathrooms and showers; motor home hookups; enclosed cooking facilities for fundraising purposes; sports fields for soccer, softball and baseball; a playground and a gazebo; and parking. Pets are allowed in the park. This park is that it has many activities all year round like dog shows, motor home enthusiasts, car shows, among others. The park is very well maintained and managed. The one-mile trail is in good shape and is made of stone dust.

Oquaga Creek State Park. Oquaga Creek State Park is located in the southeast corner of the Town of Bainbridge, and is part of Broome and Delaware Counties. The park has six miles of trails for hiking, cross-country skiing, and snow shoeing. In the middle of the park is a 55-acre Arctic Lake, a man-made body of water with a sand beach for swimmers and anglers. Some of the fish caught are black bass, bullheads and rainbow trout. The park has a car-top boat launch and boat rentals. During the winter, ice anglers can enjoy the frozen lake and visitors can sled on the hills. The park also has a playground, nature trail, food concessions, and a first aid station. For camping, the park has 95 sites and six rustic cabins, with dumping stations. There is also a full-service cottage to rent. One of the positive aspects of Oquaga Creek State Park is that it has food concessions, a source of income for the park. The park is well maintained and managed. Since it is a State Park, it is well-known and promoted extensively, and receives a large number of visitors all year.

William S. Payne Memorial Park. The William S. Payne Memorial Park is located at the corner of Front Street and Walnut Avenue in the Town of Bainbridge. The park has a pool, playground, volleyball and basketball courts, restrooms, and a pavilion; the pavilion has picnic tables and barbecue grills. In the park is a car-top boat launch for access to the Susquehanna River. The small park looks well maintained and it is used mostly by the community.

Pathfinder Park. Pathfinder Park is located along Route 7 in the village of Bainbridge. The park opened in 2005 as an Eagle Scout project for Bainbridge Troop 52. The park was established to commemorate Jedediah Strong Smith, an early pioneer and explorer of the West who was born in Bainbridge. The park has a monument to Jed Smith, a gazebo, a stone bench, an information kiosk, picnic tables, and a grill. The park is maintained by the Village of Bainbridge. Although the park is easy to access, it does not have restrooms.

Bowman Lake State Park. Bowman Lake is located in Oxford, NY. The park facilities are: boat launches, boat rentals, camper assistance program, camper recreation, campsites, dumping stations, food, nature trails, pavilions, picnic tables, playgrounds, showers, swimming beach, and tent/trailer sites. The activities that visitors can enjoy at the park are: biking, fishing, hiking, hunting, recreation programs, snowmobiling, and X-Country Skiing. Some of the recreation

opportunities that the park offers during winter are snowmobiling and cross-country skiing; the park designates 13 miles of trails for this purposes. The sandy lake has several picnic areas adjacent to it. There are 103 species of birds for birdwatchers. The park also has a nature center. The park also has rustic cabins that can accommodate four to six people. Seasonal campsites do not include electricity, water or sewer services. Household pets are allowed with some restrictions. This park is well maintained and has many different amenities and activities for visitors to enjoy. They have a nature center which is focused in educating visitors. Based on some online reviews, the trails are not very well marked and the terrain of some of them is rough.

Hunts Pond State Forest.Hunts Pond State Forest, the most recently established State Forest in Chenango County, is located in the town of New Berlin and is open for recreation all year round. There is no fee to enter the property. The forest's 1,397 acres go across the valley of a feeder stream to the Unadilla River. Acquired in 1960, the forest has open fields, softwood plantations, hardwood forests, and beaver meadows. The activities visitors can enjoy at the park are: boating, paddling, camping, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting and trapping, and snowmobiling. The forest only allows electric motors for snowmobiling. Also, some of the trails are unmarked and logging lanes crisscross the forest. The park is managed by the NYSDEC and is included in the Between Rivers Unit Management Plan. In terms of wildlife, the open grassy fields are maintained to provide habitat for wildlife species. Some of the infrastructure and signage in the park could be improved.

Historic Park Society and Museum. This park is home to the Sherburne Pageant of Bands and is also where the Sherburne Town Historian's Office is located. The park is run by volunteers and the community seems to be engaged with the management and maintenance. The historical society meets every second Thursday of every month at 7:00pm in the log cabin in the park. One of the main events the park holds is the Sherburne Heritage Days. In terms of infrastructure, the park could use more signage.

Gaines Park.Gaines Park was established in 1951 and is located on East Main Street in Sherburne. The park is named in memory of Thomas Gaines (1864-1945). The facilities in the park are: benches and a gazebo. A special event that is held at the park is the Sherburne Arts Festival. This is a very small park and the facilities are well maintained, but more benches and signage (specifically entrance signage) could be added to park to make it more attractive to visitors.

Summary

There are many great parks in Chenango County. This assessment shows some similarities in the activities and amenities offered in the parks. For example, most of the parks had pavilions, trails, and bathrooms, as well as similar recreation opportunities (hiking, fishing, and bird watching, among others). What makes each park unique is its history and location. Some parks are next to rivers or lakes that give them a unique character and biodiversity that attracts visitors. However, except for the state parks, most of the parks are not well promoted and it was hard to find information on them for this assessment. For example, in the Chenango County website not all the parks are listed under the parks and recreation section. Another important aspect that this assessment revealed was that most of the infrastructure in the parks needs improvement. Specifically, some trails need to be improved to make them ADA accessible. Also, it seems

that none of the parks partner on events or programs, even though some are close to each other. The assessment of the distances showed that the parks are not far from the REEC, indicating the potential for creating a park network in the future.

NEARBY ATTRACTIONS & EVENTS ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This chapter assesses the attractions and events near the village of Sherburne, New York, and within the surrounding area (Chenango County). Tables 1 through 2 list the attractions and events that are available through summer activity magazines and online for residents and visitors.

Table 1. Public events in Sherburne & Chenango County, New York.

Event	Contact Information	Experiences Provided
Chenango Blues Festival	Eric Larsen (607) 334-5653 eric@laralngmt.com 168 East Main Street Norwich, NY. Summer Concert Series (June-August) http://www.chenangobluesfest.org/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A blues music experience • Family fun • Local vendors
The Norwich Pumpkin Festival	(607)336-1811 October 27 th -October 28 th Downtown Norwich's east and west parks, NY www.norwichpumpkinfestival.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family fun • Pumpkin history • Contests • Interpretation on bats and other things. • Rides and games
Chenango County Fair	(607) 334-9198 August 8-13 th 168 East Main Street Norwich, NY chenangocountyfair.homestead.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Games and rides • Family fun • Daily shows • Exhibitions
Norwich Apple Fest	(607) 334-4928 Wednesday Sept 13 th East Park, Norwich During September https://madisoncountycourier.com/?p=84305	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Games and prizes • Local vendors • Demonstrations • Farmers market
Norwich Family YMCA Turkey Trot	Shannon Gawronski (607) 336-9622 ext:1024 norwichymcafitness@citlink.net Norwich Family YMCA, 68 North Broad Street, Norwich, NY Thanksgiving https://raceroster.com/events/2017/14239/the-36th-annual-norwich-family-ymca-turkey-trot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraising • Food and drinks • Community impact • Family fun
Sherburne Pageant of Bands	(607) 674-2300 sherbvil@frontiernet.net 15 West State Street, Sherburne, NY During June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family fun • Parade fun • High School Band showcase

<http://www.secsd.org/SherburnePageantofBands.aspx>

Table 1 (continued). Public events in Sherburne & Chenango County, New York.

Event	Contact Information	Experiences Provided
Sherburne Historical Society's Civil War Heritage Weekend	(607) 674- 6312 11 School Street, Sherburne, New York Last Saturday in July http://www.townofsherburne.net/history/sherburne-historic-park-society-and-museum/heritage-day/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge about local history • Community involvement • Learn about agricultural practices in the town of Sherburne. • New theme every year
Sherburne Arts Festival	(607) 674-2279 sherburneartshow@aol.com Second Saturday of June www.sherburneartshow.blogspot.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vendors • Contests • Live music • Auctions • Food and drinks
Greene Applefest	(607) 656-8225 greenefumc@yahoo.com Ball Flats, Greene, NY During September http://fumcgreene.com/applefest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crafts and games • Apples • Food vendors • Pumpkin painting
Colorscape Chenango Arts Festival	(607) 336-3378 info@colorscape.org Weekend after Labor Day http://colorscape.org/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poetry slams • Book activities • Art exhibits • Demos and instructions • Food available
Annual Car Show and Flea Market	(607) 334-8549 168 East Main Street, Norwich, NY Barbara Mastin Memorial Weekend http://raocc.org	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitions • Antique goods • Family entertainment • Auctions • Muscle Cars
Dairy Day	(607) 334-5841 ext: 16 Ashly Russell Anr72@cornell.edu During June http://ccechenango.org/agriculture/dairy-day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Milk run • Parades • Zoo mobile • Face painting • Duck derby • Hay rides • Family fun • Food and drinks

Table 1 (continued). Public events in Sherburne & Chenango County, New York.

Event	Contact Information	Experiences Provided
Chenango County Historical Society's Annual Antiques Show and Canal Boat Derby	(607) 334-9227 s.mahan@chenangohistorical.org https://www.facebook.com/events/672736329537466	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prizes • Derby tickets • Vendors • Community involvement • Food & drinks • Performances
East Durham Irish Festival	(518) 634-2886 Terry Patterson 2267 Route 145, East Durham Eastdurhamirishfestival.com During May (Memorial Day Weekend)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traditional irish dancing • Performances • Adult beer garden • Stories and yarns • Cultural experiences • Arts
Taste of Country Music at Hunter Mountain	(855) 821-9208 Route 23A, Hunter NY www.tasteofcountryfestival.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camping (RV, Car, Tent) • Music Performances • Mountain views • Concessions
Annual Mountain Jam	(518) 628-4423 Route 23A, Hunter NY http://mountainjam.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dancing • Music Performances • Camping (RV, Tent) • Concessions
Grey Fox Bluegrass Festival	(888) 946-8495 (315) 404-5738 1 Poultney Road, Oak Hill NY https://greyfoxbluegrass.com/festival/	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music • Family fun • Open mics • Camping • Workshops • Dancing • Concessions
Mountain Brauhaus Festival	(518)622-3751 info@crystalbrook.com 430 Winter Clove Road, Round Top NY www.crystalbrook.com	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family fun • Entertainment • Beer hall • Food • Music

Table 2.Public attractions in Sherburne & Chenango County, New York.

Attraction	Contact Information	Features	Photo
<p>Sherburne Historic Park Society and Museum</p>	<p>(607) 674-6312 sherburnetownhistorian@frontiernet.net 11 School Street, Sherburne, New York, 13460 Open Tuesdays (9am – 12pm), and Wednesdays & Fridays (11:45am – 2:45pm). http://www.townofsherburne.net/history/sherburne-historic-park-society-and-museum/</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical documents • Old school house from the establishment of the town of Sherburne, NY. • Public pavilion • Ring-able antique school bell • Chenango river water marks 	 <p>Source:https://tinyurl.com/yc4unu8s</p>
<p>Chenango Canal</p>	<p>Canal Rd & Co Hwy 81 & CO Hwy 43 CCA@Chenangocanal.org www.chenangocanal.org</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towpath trail • Built in 1830 by the Irish and Scots • Fishing decks • Audio tours • Museum that used to be a barber shop 	 <p>Source: www.chenangocanal.org</p>
<p>Leland Ponds</p>	<p>(607) 753-3095 fwfish7@dec.ny.gov Bureau of Fisheries 1285 Fisher Ave Cortland NY http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/61642.html</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eutrophic lakes • 15-foot dam from 1830s • Boat launches • fishing 	 <p>Sources: https://tinyurl.com/y7f2pylx http://www.panoramio.com/photo/102082532</p>
<p>Earlville Opera House & Gallery</p>	<p>(315) 691-3550 18 E Main St, Earlville NY www.earlvilleoperahouse.com Tuesday – Friday 10am-5pm, Sat. 12pm-3pm.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • opened in 1892 • art exhibits • historical architecture • performances • ornate tin ceiling • historic landmark 	 <p>Source: http://nyslandmarks.com/treasures/09feb.htm</p>

Table 2 (continued).Public attractions in Sherburne & Chenango County, New York.

Attraction	Contact Info.	Features	Photo
<p>Northeast Classic Car Museum</p>	<p>(607) 334-2886 24 Rexford Street, Norwich NY https://www.classicarmuseum.org/ Open daily 9am-5pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • family fun • historical cars and exhibits • war airplane engines • photo opportunities • vintage fashion exhibit • special events 	 <p>Sources: https://tinyurl.com/y7k8jsf6</p>
<p>Wolfe Mountain Nature Center</p>	<p>(607) 627-6784 twmncwolves@yahoo.com 562 Hopkins Crandall Road, Smyrna, NY http://www.thewolfmountainnaturecenter.org/ Sept-June: Sun.12-4pm; July-Aug: Fridays 11-3pm, Saturdays 12-3pm, and Sundays 12-4pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • interpretive events • wolves, coyotes, and arctic foxes • special programs • guided tours • opportunities to see feedings 	 <p>Sources: http://www.thewolfmountainnaturecenter.org/</p>
<p>The New Echo Lake Resort</p>	<p>(607) 639-2666 Route 41, 185 Echo Lake in Afton NY https://www.facebook.com/events/672736329537466</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • camping • live music • hot showers and electricity 	 <p>Source: https://thelodgeonecholake.com/</p>
<p>Critz Farms & Brewing</p>	<p>(315)662-3355 (800)442-3225 3232 Rippleton Road State Route 13, Cazenovia, NY http://www.critzbrewandcider.com/ Thursday-Sunday: 11-6pm</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • seasonal festivals • family entertainment • alcohol tasting area • pick your own berries activities • holiday family fun events 	 <p>Sources: http://www.cazenoviabeveragerail.com/business/harvest-</p>

Summary

The village of Sherburne and Chenango County offer a variety of activities and attractions that provide visitors and residents opportunities to visit communities, historic sites, and festivals. Many of these attractions range in cost, with many being free to the public. Many of these events are focused on music and community; attractions focused on the natural world could be important places for the REEC to consider for partnership efforts.

WORKING WITH LOCAL BUSINESSES

Introduction

Local businesses offer the REEC tremendous opportunities for partnerships and sponsorships. REEC already has a great start working with local businesses like Chobani and Gilligan’s Island in Chenango County. However, there are numerous opportunities for the center to expand this particular aspect to reach its desired goals. Table ___ lists local businesses, describes what they offer and their potential contributions, and provides contact information.

Table 1. Restaurants

Business	Description	Contribution	Contact Information
Hops&Chops	Family friendly traditional comfort food	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 674-9055 Mobile:(607) 316-2137 Email: erinmsb15@gmail.com 93 N Main St. Sherburne, NY 13460 http://www.hopsandchopsny.com/aboutus.htm
D&D Diner	Home town restaurant that serves breakfast, lunch and dinner	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 974-9697 47 N Main St. Sherburne, NY 13460
China King of Sherburne	Chinese food	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 674-6808 11 E State St. Sherburne, NY 13460
Gilligan’s Islands	Small town drive in that serves burgers, hotdogs, milkshakes and more.	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 674-4397 64 N Main St Sherburne, NY 13460 http://www.gilliganssherburne.com/
Joe & Vinny’s Pizzeria	Pizzeria	Information placement, marketing packages,	Phone:(607) 674-2495 10 N Main St Sherburne, NY 13460

		event coordination	
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Table 1 (continued). Restaurants.

Business	Description	Contribution	Contact Information
Richie's Bar & Grill	Bar and grill food	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 674-6080 20 Classic St. Sherburne, NY 13460-9723
Judy's Coffee Shop	Quant coffee shop where you can enjoy a variety of beverages	Information placement, marketing packages	Phone:(607) 674-6672 2 Canal St Sherburne, NY 13460
Bohemian Moon	Sophisticated comfort food with an ethnic twist	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 334-9480 103 E Maine St, Norwich, NY 13815
Norwich Buffet	Chinese buffet	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 336-2227 37-39 N Broad St Norwich NY 13815
Holy Smoke BBQ and Catering	Home of mouth watering BBQ, side dishes, salads and desserts	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(315) 691-2352 428 County Rd 22 Earlville, NY 13332
Remember When Café Antiques	Family owned and operated café, antique shop and guest homeB	Information placement, marketing packages, event coordination	Phone:(607) 847 9799 Email: Rememberwhengh@frontiernet.net 34 North Main St. New Berlin, NY 13411

Table 2.Local lodging.

Business	Description	Contribution	Contact Information
Water Edge Bed & Breakfast	Bed and breakfast	Information placement, marketing packages	Phone:(607) 656-4891 Email: cmhwatersedge@aol.com One Washington St. Greene, NY 13778
Octagon Guest House	Small, historic lodging for individuals, couples or small groups creates an intimate home- like setting	Information placement, marketing packages	Phone:(315) 653-7271 Email: Ms8guesthouse@frontiernet.net 1607 State Highway 26 South Otselic, NY 13155
The Conron House B&B	Privately held company where rooms are able to be rented	Information placement, marketing packages	Phone:(607) 336-6845 Email: conronhouse@adelphia.net 132 South Broad St. Norwich, NY 13815
The Preferred Manor	Offers an opportunity to enjoy overnight relaxation and comfort in elegant surroundings.	Information placement, marketing packages	Phone:(607) 847-6238 Email: preferredmanor@pminsco.com 45 S0. Main St. (Route 8), New Berlin NY 13411
Just Memories Bed & Breakfast	Cozy home away from home where you can choose from 6 guest rooms in a Victorian home.	Information placement, marketing packages	Phone:(607) 336-5003 Email: info@norwichbandb.com 75 South Broad St. Norwich 13815 http://splendorinn.com/

Table 3. Religious Organizations

Business	Description	Contribution	Contact Information
Catholic Charities	Not-for-profit agency serving the residents of Chenango County.	Event coordination, information placement	Phone:(607) 674-5404 289 Granville Hill Hardscrabble Rd, Sherburne NY 13460
World Channel Outlet Ministries	Christian Church offering an array of services	Event coordination, information placement	Phone:(607) 674-4026 125 Country Rd 20, Sherburne, NY, 13460
United Church of Christ	Christian Church offering an array of services	Event coordination, information placement	Phone:(607) 674-9300 1 Main St., Sherburne, NY 13460

Table 4. Miscellaneous.

Business	Description	Contribution	Contact Information
Glasbergen Cartoon Service	Sells cartoons for use on social media, newsletters, etc...	Marketing	randy@glasbergen.com
Kenyon Press inc.	Full service printer located in Sherburne, NY.	Marketing	Phone:(607) 674-9066 sales@kenyonpress.net
Evolve Fitness	Dedicated to helping clients reach their fitness goals.	Event collaboration, sponsorship, marketing deals	Phone:(607) 373-3635 6142 NY-12 #2 Norwich, NY 13815
M.Y. Farm	A family run farm that produces high quality food.	Event collaboration, sponsorship, marketing deals	Phone:(315) 750-8163 tom@MYSherburneFarm.com
Mayhood Sporting Goods	Seller of outdoor gear.	Event collaboration, sponsorship, marketing deals	Phone:(607) 334-2001 5217 State HWY 12 Norwich NY 13815
Chobani	American brand of yogurt	Event collaboration, sponsorship, marketing deals	Phone:(877) 847 6181
Mountain Top Golf Course	9 hole “mountain top” golf course	Marketing deals, information placement, sponsorship	Phone:(607) 674 4005 3635 State Highway 80 Sherburn NY 13460

Summary

There are a variety of businesses that the REEC can potentially collaborate/partner with. Each provides a unique contribution to the various aspects of the education center. These contributions could help improve events, educational programs, sponsorships, and income, benefiting both the REEC and the cooperating business. For example, the Glasbergen Cartoon Service could create a unique cartoon that REEC could use on social media, newspapers, and flyers to potentially reach the younger age group. Many of the other local businesses have similar potential as well.

WORKING WITH LOCAL NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

Introduction

This chapter discusses some of the not-for-profit organizations that might be interested in collaborating with the REEC. These organizations are divided into four tables below, based on type of organization. These organizations were found through various means, including internet searches on databases such as volunteermatch.org, as well as on the Chenango County Youth and Family Activity Opportunities handout (Clemens, 2010).

Table 1. Youth-centered organizations

Organization	Mission	Contact
Christian Neighborhood Center of Norwich	An Americorps program that places people of ages 17 - 25 in volunteer positions to provide services to meet environmental, educational and other types of human needs. Served over 600 youth.	Marjorie Grap (607) 336-9696
Boy Scouts of America	Develop character, citizenship and personal fitness through meaningful service and related experiences for boys.	Sr. Executive Christian Averill christian.averill@scouting.org
Girl Scouts of America	Develop character, citizenship and personal fitness through meaningful service and related experiences for girls.	(607) 337-1700
Chenango Nursery School	Provides a safe environment for child development, conducts after-school programs with students in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Rooms are all named after animals (caterpillar room, e.g.) so students may be interested in after-school educational field trips to Rogers.	(315) 824-1810
Norwich Family YMCA	Works to foster positive development in members through promoting community-minded living involving healthy behaviors and community service.	68-70 North Broad Street, Norwich, NY. 13815 (607) 336-9622

Table 2.Senior-centered organization.

Organization	Mission	Contact
RSVP (Retired Senior Volunteer Program)	Places adults 55 and older into meaningful volunteer opportunities (many seniors have a lot to offer in terms of environmental knowledge of their area).	Linda Campbell (607) 336-6414

Table 3.Environment-centered Organizations

Organization	Mission	Contact
Cornell Cooperative Extension- Chenango County	Help people improve their lives and communities through collaboration and service.	CCE-Chenango Education Center 99 North Broad Street Norwich, NY 13815
Chenango Land Trust	Members work to protect natural areas throughout Chenango County. May be interested in volunteering time to preserve the lands of REEC.	ecallahan5@frontiernet.net
Chenango County Grange	Fosters advocacy and service in the area of agriculture.	167 Court 32A, Norwich, NY 13815 (607) 334-9046
American Chestnut Foundation- NYS Chapter	Could offer technical Assistance in caring for the American chestnut trees in the plantation on Cush Hill.	Allen Nichols, President 302 Bateman Rd. Laurens, NY 13769 (607) 263-5105

Table 4.Other Organizations

Organization	Mission	Contact
Chenango Arts Council	The Arts Council works to support the Arts in the Chenango Region. Sponsored events teach about craft-making.	(607) 336-2787
Chenango Valley Amateur Radio Association	Gives amateurs a chance to collaborate in producing a radio station. Possible advertisement/visibility increase for the Rogers Center.	(607) 895-6560
Moose International	Provides community service to a number of charities, including the Special Olympics North America, Salvation Army, and Big Brothers-Big Sisters.	(607) 563-8791
Oxford Historical Society	Works to conserve and promote Oxford's history with museum exhibits and educational presentations.	Fred Lanfear, President: (607) 821-1223
Finger Lakes Beekeeping Club	Provides help and guidance to new beekeepers. May be able to offer technical assistance in upkeep of the beehive at the REEC.	Info@flbeeclub.com

Summary

There are many different not-for-profit organizations that could help REEC reach its goals of imparting stewardship and environmental responsibility to visitors. Each of these organizations has something unique to offer the center, from agricultural knowledge (NYS Grange) to a possible advertisement opportunity (Chenango Valley Amateur Radio Association).

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Introduction

The REEC was originally owned and operated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). In 2011, the DEC approved a Use and Occupancy Agreement with the Friends of Rogers allowing the center to stay open after state budget cuts. While the Friends of Rogers is closely affiliated with the DEC, creating and strengthening relationships with other government agencies at the local to state level may greatly benefit the growth and success of the Rogers Center. These contacts could provide sources of advertising, funding, volunteers, and new members. The following sections outline potential partnerships with government agencies.

Local

Local government organizations include departments within the Village and Town or Sherburne. Due to land ownership by the DEC, local agencies who typically oversee parks in the area (such as the town departments of Zoning, Comptroller, and Assessor) will not have the same jurisdiction as they would over a village or town run park. However, partnerships between local government and Friends of Rogers could foster continued local development and tourism to the surrounding area, financial assistance and support for increasing staff, and increased community connections and memberships through educational programs.

Table 1.Local government.

Name	Mission/ Role	Contact Info
Sherburne Area Local Development Corporation	The Corporation's Mission includes undertaking projects and programmatic initiatives in furtherance of and to advance the job opportunities, health, general prosperity and economic welfare of the people of the Village.	William Acee Phone: (607) 674-2300 Email: sherbvil@frontiernet.net Website: http://www.sherburne.org/saldc/
Sherburne-Earlville Central School District	Offers potential for school-related field trips to the REEC.	13 School Street Sherburne New York 13460 Phone: 607-674-7380 Website: http://www.secsd.org/highschool_home.aspx
Village of Sherburne Recreation Department	Coordinates summer recreation programs and advertises for local recreation areas.	Savannah Irwin Phone: (607) 316-2145 Website: http://www.sherburne.org/recreation/

Table 1 (continued).Local government.

Name	Mission/ Role	Contact Info
Town of Sherburne Recreation	Advertises and coordinates recreation areas and events within the town of Sherburne.	http://www.townofsherburne.net/community/recreation/
Town of Sherburne Planning Board	Coordinates planning efforts within the Town of Sherburne.	Chairman: Rich Kellogg Phone: (607) 674-6997 Email: shertown@frontiernet.net Website: http://www.townofsherburne.net/government/planning/

County

The Friends of Rogers has a great opportunity to create strong and lasting relationships with county wide tourism and recreation efforts. While there is some advertising of the Rogers Center at the county level, there is a lack of active partnership with the departments outlined in Table 2.

Table 2.County government.

Name	Mission/ Role	Contact Info
Chenango County Youth Bureau	The mission of the Youth Bureau is to build a strong foundation for all youth to become healthy, productive members of our community.	Kathryn J. Clemens County Office Building 5 Court Street Norwich, New York 13815 Phone: (607) 337-1656 Website: http://www.co.chenango.ny.us/youth/
Chenango County Parks and Recreation	With over 79,959 acres of State-owned public land, Chenango County provides ample opportunity to enjoy the great outdoors.	5 Court Street Norwich, NY 13815 Website: http://www.co.chenango.ny.us/parks-recreation/
Chenango County Travel and Tourism Guide	Chenango County is filled with picturesque landmarks, great rolling hills, lush green valleys and more! Around every corner, in each town, there are new treasures to discover. Come and see the place so many others have come to for vacation and now call home.	Website: http://www.chenangocounty.org/index.php

State

Although the Rogers Center already has a long history with the NYS DEC, opportunities exist to connect with other state initiatives for promotional and financial support of the center. Table 3 outlines some potential state governmental organizations that align with the REEC’s mission and goals.

Table 3.State Government Organizations.

Name	Mission/ Role	Contact Info
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)	To conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being.	625 Broadway Albany, New York 12233-0001 Phone: 518-402-8044 Email: contact@dec.ny.gov http://www.ny.gov/agencies/department-environmental-conservation
Empire State Development (I Love NY campaign)	The mission of Empire State Development is to promote a vigorous and growing state economy, encourage business investment and job creation, and support diverse, prosperous local economies across New York State through the efficient use of loans, grants, tax credits, real estate development, marketing and other forms of assistance.	625 Broadway Albany, NY 12245 Phone: (518) 292-5100 http://www.ny.gov/agencies/empire-state-development
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation	The Mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources.	NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Albany NY, 12238 Phone: 518-474-0456 http://www.ny.gov/agencies/office-parks-recreation-and-historic-preservation

Summary

There are an abundant number of opportunities for programming, advertising, and financial support from various government agencies for the Rogers Center. Currently, the most developed relationship has been with the NYS DEC, but consideration should be taken into creating and maintaining other governmental relationships to ensure continued support for the growth of the center.

EMERGENCY SERVICES AND VISITOR SAFETY

Introduction

The REEC hosts approximately 12,000 visitors per year. As an organization that promotes outdoor recreation and education, it is essential that the REEC provides a safe place for these activities. After an examination of the grounds and facilities at REEC, some hazards (though few) were identified. This section also includes information about emergency services in or near Sherburne including first responders and the nearest hospitals, and addresses risks and safety considerations at the REEC.

Emergency Services.

The REEC greatly benefits from the close proximity of both a fire and police department. In addition to traditional fire department operations, the Sherburne FD also operates two advanced life support ambulances, each with a full-time paramedic. The fire and police departments are located only a mile from REEC, with response times ranging from only five to ten minutes from the time a call is placed. Table 1 provides the address, contact and distance to each department.

Emergency services are dispatched by the 911 center located in the town of Norwich. Upon receiving a call, the 911 center dispatches the appropriate agencies to the location of the caller. There are two Chenango County Sheriff offices near Sherburne. The office in New Berlin is about 13 miles from REEC, while the office in Norwich is approximately 14.5 miles away. However, the primary law responder to the REEC is the Sherburne PD, located only one mile away. In addition, the NYS DEC office is located on the same property as the visitor center. The DEC coordinates with the other agencies (FD and PD) to conduct search and rescue trainings.

Table 1.Emergency services covering REEC response area

Emergency Services	Address	Phone Number	Distance (mi)	Travel Time (minutes)
Sherburne FD	15 West State St Sherburne, NY 13460	(607) 674-2204	1.1	2
Sherburne PD	15 West Street Sherburne, NY 13460	(607) 674-2203	1.0	2
Chenango Co. Sheriff	20 S Main St, New Berlin, NY 13411	(607) 847-8599	13.3	19
Chenango Co. Sheriff	279 County Rd 46, Norwich, NY 13815	(607) 334-2000	14.5	24
Department of Env. Conservation	2721 NY-80, Sherburne, NY 13460	(607) 674-4017	0	<1

Health Care Centers

There are two hospitals servicing the town of Sherburne, located in relatively close proximity to REEC. Chenango Memorial hospital, in Norwich, is 10.5 miles from the REEC (15 minutes in normal traffic conditions); Community Memorial hospital is ten miles away in the town of Hamilton (about 14 minutes from the REEC). Community Memorial has an affiliated urgent care on its campus. Both hospitals are adequately staffed with physicians, physician’s assistants, and RNs specialized in emergency medicine. Each hospital also has an emergency department to handle most medical and traumatic emergencies. Community Memorial has a helipad on its campus, and is capable of flying patients to other hospitals to provide higher levels of care in the case of serious emergencies. Neither facility has pediatric specialization; if higher levels of care are necessary for young patients, emergency transport to Upstate Medical Center in Syracuse would be arranged. Table 2 provides the address, contact information, and distance of the health care facilities to the REEC.

Table 2.
Nearest hospitals and urgent care centers to REEC

Health Centers	Address	Phone Number	Distance (mi)	Travel Time (minutes)
Chenango Memorial Hospital	179 N Broad St Norwich, NY 13815	(607) 337-4111	10.5	15
Community Memorial Hospital	150 Broad St Hamilton, NY 13346	(315) 648-6411	10.0	14
Community Memorial UC	164 Broad St Hamilton, NY 13346	(315) 648-6411	10.0	14
Upstate Medical Center	750 E Adams St, Syracuse, NY 13210	(315) 464-5540	53.4	64

Auto Repair Facilities.

There are no car or truck repair shops in the town of Sherburne. The nearest shop, Small Town Auto Repair, is about four miles from the REEC in Earlville. Monro Muffler, a corporate auto shop, is located in Norwich about 12.5 miles from REEC. For motorcyclists, two shops perform repairs. RSD Motorsports, LLC, is approximately 2.5 miles from the REEC in the town of Sherburne. RSD also has a towing service for both cars and motorcycles. Black Vest Cycle Works is located in the town of Hubbardsville, about 11 miles from the REEC. For minor needs, the town of Norwich has an AutoZone, about 12.5 miles from REEC. There are no bicycle repair shops within a reasonable distance to the REEC; however, this may not be an issue, as no bicycles are allowed on the REEC’s trails. Table 3 lists the nearby auto and motorcycle mechanics, as well as their location, contact information, and distance.

Table 3.Automotive repair shops near REEC

Repair Shops	Address	Phone Number	Distance (mi)	Travel Time (minutes)
Small Town Auto Repair	83 S Main St, Earlville, NY 13332	(315) 691-2886	5	3.9
Monro Muffler & Brake Service	5607 NY-12, Norwich, NY 13815	(607) 336-1899	12.5	21
RSD Motorsports LLC	7918 NY-12 #1, Sherburne, NY 13460	(607) 674-4323	2.5	5
Black Vest Cycle Works	1841 Wickwire Rd, Hubbardsville, NY 13355	(315) 691-2133	11.3	15
AutoZone	5617 NY-12, Norwich, NY 13815	(607) 334-8430	12.5	20

Risk assessment

When participating in outdoor recreation, there are always assumed risks. Participants are exposed to the elements in an uncontrolled environment. Despite being a relatively safe environment with easy to moderate terrain, the grounds at the REEC do present some hazards. Most importantly, REEC does not currently possess an Automated External Defibrillator(AED). This is a major concern, considering the large number of users that visit the REEC yearly.

Possibly the most common place for risks are the trails. Most of the trails meander through wooded areas, and are surrounded by trees both young and old. Some of the older trees have dead branches stretching out above the trails. High winds could dislodge these branches, causing them to fall onto the trail and potentially onto users. Other hazards include the condition of the trails themselves. There are burrow holes on the edge of some trails, created by small mammals. These holes present a hazard as visitors may inadvertently step into one and injure themselves. Additionally, the conditions of the trails may present a hazard if users are not prepared with the proper equipment. For example, when trails are wet or flooded after a rainfall, they may become slick from mud or water. Users without proper footwear could injure themselves by slipping and falling. Wooden bridges also tend to become very slippery when wet.

Some of the trails are distant from the visitor center, where most foot traffic likely occurs. The Adams Farm trails are more isolated than the other trails, utilizing a separate parking lot. This puts users further from REEC staff, and limits users' ability to find help if needed. Additionally, the Adams Farm trail is on a separate parcel of land, about one mile from the visitor center. There are no trails connecting the two parcels, requiring visitors to utilize the road to access the farm's trails. There is minimal parking available at the Adams Farm trailhead, potentially forcing

visitors to walk one mile along route 80 to access the property. This presents a major hazard, as route 80 is a busy road with high speeds of travel.

Finally, the bodies of water found on the property also present a hazard if guests are not carefully monitored. During summer programs, when children or groups are boating in the REEC, there is the potential for someone to fall into the water or capsize a boat. There is also a trail that runs along the very edge of the river, separated only by shrubs and bushes; visitors could get too close and fall into the water.

Summary

The REEC is fortunate to have emergency services in such close proximity. The location of the REEC in relation to the town of Sherburne is ideal for short response times from EMS. While REEC is a relatively safe area to participate in outdoor recreation and education, it does present a few risks. Most of the hazards are not uncommon in the outdoor setting found along the trails and near bodies of water. Visitors are at risk not only of accidents and injury but environmental and wildlife exposure as well. During the summer, the REEC employs staff and interns that are trained in first aid and CPR. Trainings are conducted in-house which makes it easier for employees and ensures proper, consistent training. However, the REEC needs to address the first-aid equipment available; most importantly, an AED, is needed. Lastly, the REEC does not currently have an emergency management plan in the event a visitor needs immediate medical attention.

ORGANIZATION STRUCTURE AND STAFFING

Introduction

The REEC was maintained and operated by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYC DEC) for about 45 years (FOR BOD, 2012). In 2010, the NYC DEC implemented budget cuts and cut off much of its support for the REEC (FOR BOD, 2013). The Friends of Rogers Board of Directors (FOR BOD) took over operations and created a Strategic Plan for 2013-2018 to organize its plans for the next five years. The REEC has a small number of staff members, with large support from volunteers, interns, and other unpaid individuals. This assessment was created with the help of personal communication with REEC staff members, the 2017 Newsletter Supplement, and the Strategic Plan, 2013-2018.

Relationship with the NYS DEC

The NYS DEC currently has a limited role in the REEC’s operations. The DEC provides minor maintenance and repairs and lead programs at the REEC on occasion. The center is not run or directed by the DEC, and the FOR BOD is careful to present the REEC as an organization that is separate from the DEC (S. Solomon, personal communication, September 10, 2017).

Friends of Rogers Board of Directors

The FOR BOD serves as the management entity of the REEC. This Friends group created the Strategic Plan, 2013-2018, and manages the hiring process for the center. Friends of Rogers board members and their positions are listed in Table 1 (Friends of Rogers, 2017).

Table 1. Friends of Rogers Board of Directors and their responsibilities.

Board Member	Position
Adam Schoonbaker, PhD	President
Sharon Pelosi	Vice President
Daniel Auwarter	Secretary
T.J. Moorehead	Treasurer
Thurston Packer	Emeritus
D. Lukas Brown	Board member
Dianne Daugherty	Board member
Eric Diefenbacher	Board member
Kevin Doonan	Board member
Marsha Guzewich	Board member
Brian McDowell	Board member
John Pumilio	Board member
Chris Rossi	Board member
Bruce Selleck	Board member
Carol Smith	Board member
Fred von Mechow	Board member

Current staff members

The FOR currently manages the hiring process for the REEC. When new positions become available, they are posted on the Friends of Rogers' website. The REEC currently has two full time staff members (Executive Director, and Fundraising and Marketing Coordinator) and two part time staff members (Environmental Educator and Children's Coordinator; Friends of Rogers, 2017). These staff members are described in Table 2.

Table 2: REEC staff members and their positions

Staff Member	Position	Responsibilities
Simon Solomon	Executive Director	Supervises daily operations and maintenance, interns and volunteers, rentals, and organization of events.
Jessica Moquin	Fundraising and Marketing Coordinator	Builds community and business relationships with the REEC; responsible for marketing and fundraising.
Sarah Freedman	Environmental Educator	Leads educational programs, serves as the summer camp director, and supervises interns and volunteers on educational projects.
Jenni Larcher	Children's Coordinator	Runs the Nature Program and provides support for children's programs.

Other support

The REEC does not have many paid staff members, and must rely on the support of unpaid staff such as interns, volunteers, summer camp leaders, and field school students.

Interns. The center has about 8 to 14 interns per year; some interns may come back for a consecutive year. The REEC can provide housing, but interns are paid and supported by NYS. They take on various projects, ranging from invasive species management to education. They are primarily supervised by the Executive Director. Interns may also be supervised by the Environmental Educator if they are interested in education projects or the Fundraising and Marketing Coordinator for related intern positions (S. Solomon, personal communication, September 10, 2017). Some available intern positions are listed on the Friends of Rogers website.

Volunteers. The REEC has approximately 200 volunteers each year. Volunteers help with events, staff the bookstore, clean exhibits, and complete other tasks. Around 20 volunteers regularly assist with events; the rest of the center's volunteers assist with daily operations (S. Solomon, personal communication, November 1, 2017). Those interested in volunteering can visit the Friends of Rogers website, view the tasks volunteers are needed for, and call a number on the top of the page for more information. Some tasks have designated hours per week and some do not. All volunteers are supervised and coordinated by the Executive Director

Other Support. The REEC also has summer camp leaders during the summer season who are supervised and coordinated by the Environmental Educator. Field school students from nearby Colgate University occasionally provide support for the center as they implement projects in education and forestry. They may be supervised by the Executive Director or the Environmental Educator, depending on the project (S. Solomon, personal communication, September 10, 2017).

Limitations

The REEC underwent a major transition in 2010, as the DEC ceased funding to the center and the Friends of Rogers took over operations. The center has grown tremendously since this transition; however, it still has some limitations in its organization structure and staffing. The REEC is an environmental education center, and yet does not currently have a full time environmental educator. This creates limitations for the educational programs and events the center can provide. For example, there are many educational resources available for children and family audiences, but the center struggles to provide programming for audiences over the age of 12 (S. Solomon, personal communication, September 10, 2017).

Other limitations relate to volunteer and intern coordination. Executive Director, Simon Solomon, must maintain the center's daily operations which involve a multitude of tasks. The center currently receives about 200 volunteers, as many as 14 interns, as well as other support. Coordinating this vast and diverse group of people may prove to be overwhelming in addition to the other responsibilities day-to-day operations requires. Though the center's current finances make this difficult, it would be in the staff's best interest to hire a volunteer coordinator. In addition, the current volunteer application system should be better organized for improved efficiency. The Friends of Rogers website lists the tasks available for volunteers, but does not imply which tasks are higher priority and in need of more people. Only providing a phone number online for applications is also limiting the efficiency of volunteer coordination.

Future directions

The REEC has fulfilled many of its objectives listed in the Strategic Plan, 2013-2018. However, the plan is viewed as a living document to adapt and develop with the REEC's growth. Indeed, the REEC has taken steps in new directions to enhance its organization structure and staffing. The REEC has opened a new position for a full time Senior Educator. This position has been posted on the Friends of Rogers website with application materials (Friends of Rogers). This new position could assist the center in overcoming some of its limitations. Having a full time educator could provide more educational opportunities for a broader range of audiences, allowing the center to better fulfill its mission in environmental education.

Summary

The REEC has overcome the tremendous hurdles that resulted from the DEC's financial withdrawal in 2010. The Friends of Rogers has staff who cover all of the center's basic needs. The center also has a large support base of volunteers, interns, and other individuals. However, as the REEC is growing and developing, it will need to hire more staff members to expand its support for the center's operations and programming. In particular, the Executive Director position involves extensive responsibilities which could be delegated to other staff if new positions are added to the REEC.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT ASSESSMENT

Introduction

The REEC was fully state funded until the end of 2010 when the NYS DEC had to close the area due to budget cuts. Friends of Rogers (FOR) was given the opportunity to continue working onsite in 2011 with a Use and Occupancy Agreement. FOR staff and volunteers are currently responsible for most of the maintenance and management of the REEC; major repairs and plowing are provided by the NYS DEC.

Current Maintenance

The NYS DEC is currently responsible for the plowing of parking areas, mowing of lawns, repairing major damage to buildings, and removing large trees from trails. FOR staff members and volunteers handle minor maintenance of the facilities. Many jobs are covered by volunteers such as carpentry, dust removal, horticulture, and minor trail maintenance. Recently there has been trail work to reroute and resurface the trails, remove invasive species, and for general work and cleaning.

Trails

Most trails are well maintained on the main property of the REEC. The signs on trails could use some updating to coordinate them with each other and to replace missing signs. Interpretive posts on the main channel loop are missing in certain areas and need to be replaced or removed so as to not confuse visitors. Overall the trails themselves are in great shape with only minor items to fix.

Natural Resources

With a variety of habitat types on the property, the REEC has a great natural resource base. The REEC has been and continues to work with local colleges and schools to remove invasive plants during volunteer days. It also has been working on the reduction of nuisance species such as the Canada goose through egg addling. The REEC has many native species and continues to work to keep down the introduction of invasive and nuisance species.

Facilities

There are many buildings on the property that visitors can use including the visitor center, outdoor classroom/pavilion, bird cabin, picnic area, and rest room facilities. Generally these buildings are kept up, but could use some airing out. The downstairs of the visitor center seemed to have some stagnant air as well as the bird cabin. All of these facilities seem to be structurally sound. The picnic area has many tables as well as barbequing areas for visitors to use during time spent at REEC. On some buildings were wasp nests that should be removed to keep visitors from being injured. The little details and comforts are what need to be taken care of in these areas, as well as a general cleaning of these buildings, to ensure there is little to no dust and fresh air.

Parking and Roads

In general, it is easy to park at the REEC as there is enough room most days for all visitors. There are two entrances into the main parking lot from the busy main road. Improved entrance

signage might help for new visitors who may not know where the center is located and could potentially attract drive-by visitors.

Visitor Management

Currently the only counts of visitors are collected through a guest book in the visitor center, and through counts of people who come to programs at the REEC. There is also no trail log at the beginning of trails to keep track of those who are using trails. There are limited guidelines posted around the area focused on deterring visitors from actions that the center does not want occurring. Visitor management in particular needs more attention in order to increase attendance and support for the center, as well as keep the center appearing as it should.

Waste Removal

Although the REEC is a carry in/carry out facility, this policy is not posted well. In addition, the presence of garbage bins on the site in conjunction with this policy may be confusing to visitors. This policy does follow the idea that the REEC wants to uphold; it just needs to be clearer to the visitor.

Staff Management

There are few paid staff at the Rogers Center. With the main staff doing most of the work that needs to be done at the center, the little small comforts that visitors appreciate are sometimes neglected (e.g., staffing of the bookstore and general care of the visitor center). All of the large and very noticeable projects are taken care of by the REEC staff, but there is a need for a detail-oriented person to make visitors more comfortable in general.

Summary

REEC continues to be an overall well maintained environment for the Sherburne community. A continuation and increase of maintenance and management will provide increased visitor use of the center. There is a great potential to bring in the local students from high schools and youth groups to help with these projects. With enhanced maintenance and management, the REEC will continue to grow in its importance for the Sherburne community.

GRANT AND FUNDRAISING SOURCES ASSESSMENT

Introduction

This chapter focuses on the grants and fundraising sources currently utilized by the REEC for expenses including programs, payroll, and maintenance costs. The REEC started as a fully-funded, state-operated education center. The Center was closed after a reduction in New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) budgets and was eventually reopened by the Friends of Rogers by signing a Use and Occupancy Agreement with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. This agreement allows the REEC to function independently of the DEC, but the REEC receives no financial support from the DEC.

Income

As a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, the REEC relies on a variety of sources of income including sponsor donations, grants, and revenue from events and programs. According to the annual budget, the REEC receives the majority of its funding from memberships and fundraising (Figure 1).

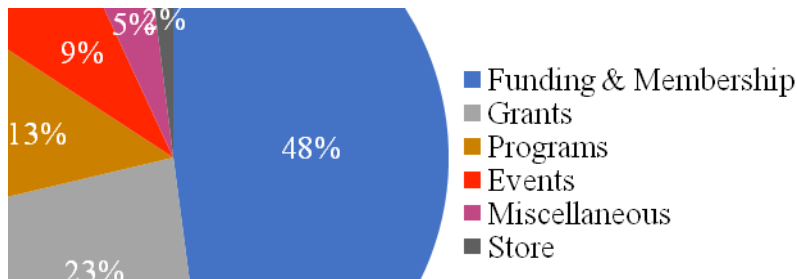


Figure 1. REEC income sources, January through December, 2017.

The REEC's total income was \$301,136.00 in 2017. The specific breakdown of this income is as follows:

Funding & Membership	\$144,250.00
Grants	\$70,494.00
Programs	\$38,700.00
Events	\$26,750.00
Miscellaneous	\$14,942.00

Store

\$6,000.00

The miscellaneous category includes income from intern monthly housing rents(\$1,500), board donation support (\$1,750), rental space for gatherings (\$2,250), and land rentals (\$9,442). The REEC currently has 52 total sponsors including 23 foundations, 9 corporations, 7 local small businesses, 4 service organizations, 3 community groups, 3 banks/financial institutions, 1 media outlet, 1 medical organization, and 1 educational institution. This breakdown can be seen below in Figure 2. The REEC has fostered significant relationships with the local community of Sherburne, as seen through the sponsorship of multiple local industries and foundations (Table 1).

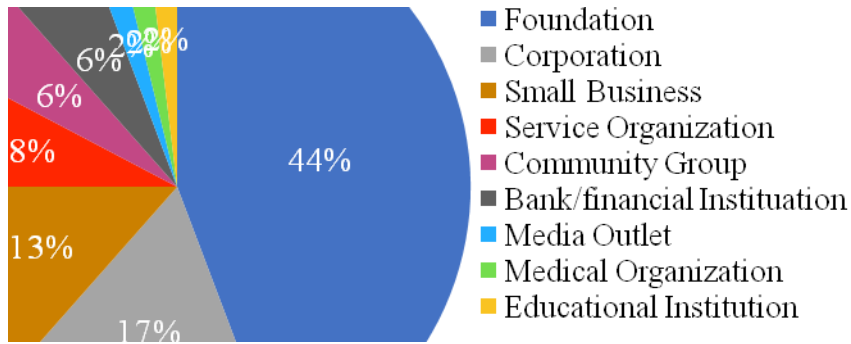


Figure 2. REEC sponsor breakdown.

Table 1.Current sponsors of REEC.

Sponsor Name	Donor Category
The Greater Norwich Foundation	Foundation
Roger Follett Foundation Inc.	Foundation
R.C. Smith Foundation	Foundation
Otis A Thompson Foundation Inc.	Foundation
Herbert H. & Mariea L. Brown Charitable Trust	Foundation
The Mid-York Foundation	Foundation
The Community Foundation For South Central New York	Foundation
Chobani	Corporation
Everett & Pearl Gilmour Foundation	Foundation
Chenango County Council Of The Arts	Service Organization
National Environmental Education Foundation	Foundation
John Ben Snow Foundation and Memorial Trust	Foundation
Howard K. Finch Memorial Fund	Foundation
DPS	Corporation
The Richard and Marian Cook Foundation	Foundation
Stewart's Shops	Foundation
Sherburne Rotary Club	Community Groups
The Colgate Inn	Small Business
Anna L. Mabey Foundation	Foundation
Forsythe Foundation	Foundation
Konosioni	Educational Institutions
TASIS	Small Business
Morrisville Garden Club	Community Groups
NYCM	Corporation
Vanguard Charitable Endowment Program	Foundation
TOMAC Foundation	Foundation
Chenango Youth Philanthropy Council	Foundation
M&T Bank	Bank/Financial Institution
The Raymond Corporation	Corporation
The Jacob and Minnie Kliman Foundation	Foundation
NBT Bank	Bank/Financial Institution
Hamilton Community Chest	Foundation
American Wildlife Conservation Foundation	Foundation
IHeart Media	Media Outlet
NYCON	Service Organization
Chenango United Way	Service Organization
Hamilton Club	Foundation
Sherburne Big M	Small Business

Table 1 (continued). Current sponsors of the REEC.

Sponsor Name	Donor Category
SFCU	Bank/Financial Institution
Golden Artist Colors, Inc.	Corporation
Gilligan's Island	Small Business
Kerry Bio-Science	Corporation
Thomas M. & Esther C. Flanagan Charitable Trust	Foundation
Log Cabin Books	Small Business
BlueOx Corporation	Corporation
Hamilton Area Gardener's Club	Community Groups
Preferred Mutual Insurance	Corporation
NYCM	Corporation
Family Dentistry	Medical Organization
Heartwood Frame	Small Business
Clyde's Little Red Barn	Small Business
Worn Again Thrift Shop	Service Organization

Expenses

Because the REEC receives no financial aid from the DEC or any other government organization, it is responsible for all expenses associated with its organization. A majority of the REEC income is put towards payroll for the two full-time and two part-time employees of the REEC. A breakdown of REEC expenses can be seen below in Figure 2.

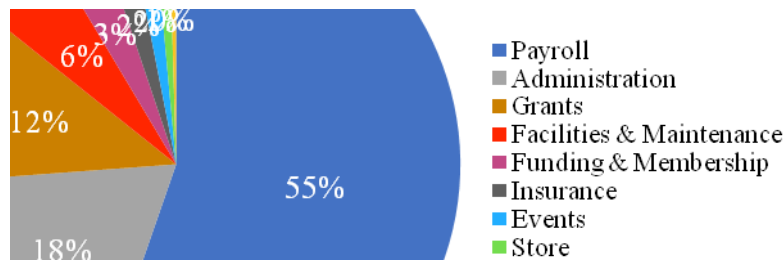


Figure 2. REEC expenses January through December 2017.

The total expenses of the REEC from January through December, 2017, were \$309,014, leaving the total net income of REEC at -\$7,878.00. Expenses from this time period are as follows:

Payroll	\$171,013.00
Administration	\$57,125.00
Grants	\$36,684.00
Facilities & Maintenance	\$17,645.00
Funding & Membership	\$10,500.00
Insurance	\$6,412.00
Events	\$5,075.00
Programs	\$1,460.00
Store	\$3,100.00

Facility and maintenance expenses include trail maintenance and facility maintenance. Comparing the expenses to the income, programs generate the most income for the least amount of monetary input. From an investment of \$1,460.00, REEC programs generated \$38,700.

Growth

Commerce Chenango named REEC the 2016 ‘Business of the Year’. The REEC’s 2013-2018 strategic plan indicates a desire to build a donor base as well as increase memberships. REEC wants to be perceived as a “business” and an ecotourism destination. REEC completed the goal of hiring a professional-level fundraiser who is responsible for seeking fundraising opportunities and applying for grants. The REEC aims to apply for grants from local, regional, and national foundations, and, by 2018, to establish a diverse and adequate funding stream to support staff and programing needs.

Summary

The REEC receives income from multiple sources, the majority of which comes from sponsor and member donations and grants. The REEC has the potential to better utilize the moneymaking capabilities of the facilities on site such as the store, facility rentals, pavilion, and programs. By securing a steady, reliable income grounded on the product being provided to the public, the REEC can create a better financial plan to sustain the annual expenses the center currently struggles to meet.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Introduction

Monitoring and evaluation are crucial components of every park management plan. Goals and objectives define what the park wants to accomplish in terms of social engagement, environmental preservation or improvement, and economic benefit. Monitoring and evaluation are the means by which park managers can determine if they are on track to meet their goals, and, if needed, make informed decisions as to what needs to be changed to meet the goal.

Current monitoring at the REEC

The REEC has several facilities on its main property including: (1) the visitor center, (2) the Bird House, (3) bathroom structures, and (4) pavilions. Staff and volunteers regularly monitor and maintain these structures. The DEC provides services only when needed for essential problems and care.

In the visitor center, two separate surveys are available for visitors to complete. On these two surveys, relevant questions are asked to inform management about: (1) the geographic area where most of their visitors reside, (2) how visitors hear about REEC, (3) how long the visitor spends at the REEC, (4) how frequently the visitor comes to the REEC, (5) what activities offered are preferred, (6) what activities not currently offered the visitor would like to see added, and (7) how the visitor's experience could be improved. The information provided by such surveys can be beneficial for improving social engagement and assisting the REEC in providing services that the community desires. It is important that surveys are continually accessible to visitors and reflected upon by management. In addition to the surveys within the visitor center, the REEC annually surveys summer camp participants by mail and less frequently uses online surveys to reach out to visitors.

Many events are held annually at the REEC. These events provide a great opportunity for continued regular monitoring that is standardized and consistent to evenly compare successes and seek areas for improvement among programs. Over the last few years tremendous effort and energy has been given to collect data on the number of visitors in attendance for each event along with a multitude of potential influencing factors such as weather, time of day, and day of the week. Many of these influential factors change between each event, and may change for the same event each year, potentially making an unbiased evaluation more difficult. However this monitoring has assisted the REEC staff in determining which events to keep and which ones to change.

Currently there is no regular monitoring that occurs at the REEC's Cush Hill and Adams Farmproperties.

Evaluation at the REEC

Evaluation begins by reviewing goals and objectives from the strategic plan. Evaluation is an action that progressively osculates with monitoring; as an event occurs, management can use evaluation to determine if the desired goal was met and possibly answer the question as to why

or why not. Surveys provide feedback that reflect what type of outreach is successful, where resources should be spent to improve outreach, and what type of programs can meet the interests of the community. Currently the staff at the REEC meet to review the strategic plan and provide the board with a benchmark report every 6-12 months. These reports outline who is responsible for what actions and measure what has been achieved.

Summary

Affective monitoring and evaluation requires a great deal of effort. To be most affective in these efforts, it is important to first reflect on the strategic plan and be conscious of SMART (Specific Measurable Attainable Relevant Time bound) indicators. Based upon these indicators, surveys and aspects of monitoring can fine-tuned to capture information that is directly relevant to measure the steps toward set goals. The REEC currently puts forth great effort to capture data on its main property and, with continued effort, can expand evaluation efforts to outlying properties, enhancing benefits to the local community and visitors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter discusses the students' recommendations for the REEC. The recommendations are listed according to the priority to which they apply.

Priority #1: *By 2023, we will continue to enhance our value as a frequent destination for families, school groups, organizations, and people of all ages, backgrounds, and abilities who are looking for excellent environmental education and outdoor experiences, and view us as an exceptional organization to be associated with.*

Update and improve accessibility to visitor center surveys. As the REEC desires to enhance their value to the community and increase frequency of visitations, it is important to understand how their visitors and the community perceive and hear about the REEC. Updated surveys can assist in capturing desired relevant information including but not limited to visitor's age, education level, distance traveled to reach REEC, number of annual visits to REEC, rating of overall experience, and suggestions. Well-placed surveys can be easily accessed by all visitors, and a nearby collection bin can make completing the survey feel like a minimal time investment. In addition, small benefits can be offered to incentivize visitors to complete surveys such as a small container of food to feed the fish when the questionnaire is completed between certain hours or on a specified day. Surveys can then be regularly compiled (sorted as needed between groups) and evaluated to better understand the community's perception of the REEC.

Strengthen the connection between the REEC and other groups. The FOR can encourage local organizations and schools to use the REEC for events and environmental education programs. Participants and students involved in those events will have opportunities learn and experience about REEC and will recommend this site to their friends and relatives. Some potential groups to consider are:

- ***School Districts.*** Develop an annual school district membership program with the Sherburne-Earlville School District and other nearby school districts that allows students to come to the REEC for field trips at no charge or "at cost" for programs that require supplies. Work with faculty and staff of the district to create a student volunteer program for the care of REEC that involves trail cleaning, invasive plant removal, and general upkeep. This can focus on high school students as many high school programs require service hours.
- ***Central New York colleges.*** SUNY Morrisville, Cazenovia College, Colgate University, SUNY Oneonta, and SUNY ESF are all relatively close to Sherburne. Continue working with these colleges to increase connections. Many of them have classes that can be a benefit to REEC with regard to trail management, invasive species removal, green construction, energy sustainability, and more. Fraternities and Sororities also frequently require service hours and fundraising, and may be willing to work with the REEC.
- ***Surrounding attractions.*** Advertising REEC events in places like the Earlville Opera House and Gallery (to attract seniors and artists) and the Wolfe Mountain Nature Center (to attract nature enthusiasts) could be beneficial for attracting new market groups.

- ***Retirement communities and facilities.*** Developing connections with retirement communities to promote programs to seniors and also find volunteers.
- ***Local government.*** The town and village of Sherburne have many great assets that could assist the growth and development of the REEC. While the REEC already has close ties with the DEC on the state level, many opportunities for collaboration and furthered local support from Sherburne’s local government could be expanded.
- ***Sherburne Local Development Corporation.*** The Sherburne Local Development undertakes projects to support local “job opportunities, health, general prosperity and economic welfare of the people of the Village” (Sherburne Area Local Development Corporation, n.d). Reaching out to this branch of the village government could help with planning, funding and implementing projects such as increasing green energy sources or implementing bike lanes between property locations.
- ***Empire State Development and OPRHP.*** While the REEC gets most of its support from the DEC, reaching out to other state level government organizations would help diversify partners and may help reduce the center’s reliance on the DEC. State government programs such as Empire State Development and the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation could help the REEC with marketing, grants, sponsorships, and state-wide recognition of their valuable natural and conservation resources.
- ***Youth groups.*** Local scout groups and other youth groups could provide important support to volunteer efforts at the REEC, especially with regard to trail maintenance and upkeep of facilities. Their volunteer service would also provide them with the community service time many youth groups require. Creating a monthly Scout-service day with the local chapter of the Boy Scouts and/or Girl Scouts of America could establish a schedule for involvement at the REEC.

Organize an REEC art contest. Art contests can attract local artists and photographers, connecting the REEC with local artists. They can highlight the beauty of nature and provide opportunities for artists to show their talents. Copies of each winners’ artwork can be sold at the gift shop (with artists’ permission) to attract new visitors interested in art as well.

Promote public transportation. The FOR can collaborate with a local bus service to establish a bus stop near the REEC. A new bus stop will allow people to have easy access to the REEC, and could be important for those without motor vehicle access.

Priority #2: *By 2023, we will enhance Roger's science-based, multidisciplinary environmental education programming to be fun, innovative, interactive, and experiential.*

Standardize the evaluation of REEC programs and events. The REEC offers a variety of programs and events throughout the calendar year that vary greatly in terms of content, attendance, and resource investment. While it is understandable that each program is unique, that does not necessarily mean that the types of data collected for each program should be unique as well. It would greatly benefit the evaluation of programs and events if they are all measured by a uniform standard, making it easier to determine which programs are “successful,” and to better understand “why.” Programs can then be categorized (e.g., large events, small events, small group programs, seasonal events, etc...) so that similar events can be compared through time. A standardized survey of events can remove bias and assist in correlating successful factors.

Create a cohesive interpretive design for all REEC interpretive efforts. The REEC is comprised of several important interpretive features, from the visitor center, to the trails, interpretive signage, programs, and brochures, all of which currently have different design elements. Each of these interpretive features should have a design that is consistent throughout the REEC. This design should incorporate existing logos, colors, and fonts. A style guide should be created to make it easy to stay consistent. All new interpretive materials should follow the style guide when they are being designed. Any existing interpretation can be retro-fitted, if possible, or replaced when funds become available.

Relate all interpretive features to the new interpretive theme. The interpretive theme proposed for the REEC is “*The REEC is a place to expand your role in the stewardship of nature, while deepening your connections between community and environment.*” All future interpretive exhibits, signs, brochures, and programs should try to communicate this theme to the public.

Enhance and update the visitor center building and exhibits.

- **Use a cohesive theme throughout the visitor center.** Exhibits in each room in the visitor center should relate to the REEC’s interpretive theme. Too much information can be difficult for guests to grasp. Decluttering rooms will allow guest to feel more comfortable and will make it easier for guests to receive a clear message. Removal of displays that do not fit the REEC (e.g., Alaskan bear and Sea turtle survival) will help solidify the important local aspects of the REEC. Subthemes related to the overall REEC interpretive theme could be developed for each exhibit room. For example, the upstairs left room could focus on why food web systems are important to people. This room has the potential to be an informal classroom. Guest could learn how to sample macroinvertebrates with a d-frame net in the stream on the facility. The macroinvertebrates collected could be taken back to the room, observed under scopes, and discussed.
- **Enhance signage on visitor center walls near entrance.** Arrows on the walls pointing in the direction of the exhibits are needed on the visitor center wall where guests enter the building. These arrows will allow people to know with a quick glance what exhibits are on the two levels of center. These arrows should be made in a way in which they can easily be changed when exhibits are rotated.

- ***Rotate exhibits.*** The REEC has a great amount of interpretive materials. Rotating materials into and out of storage would allow the REEC to highlight different exhibits, highlighting the changing seasons, wildlife migration and behavior patterns, or programs the REEC offers throughout the year. Guest can enjoy new displays while learning about the natural world that immediately surrounds them. A suggested room for storing rotating exhibits is the bottom level back room; its small size and easy access to the outside would be ideal for moving materials around.

Update the interpretive trail brochure. The interpretive trail brochures should be updated to conform to the new (proposed) style guides and should be focused on the new interpretive theme. In additions to these updates, the brochures should include the trail color and symbol (for people who are color blind or using a black-and-white trail map). Seasonal versions of the brochure can be created to highlight seasonal phenomena. This strategy will entice returning visitors to use the interpretive trail throughout the year. Missing trail posts can be indicated in the brochure; when the posts are replaced, a new entry can be added back into the brochure.

Promote REEC interpretive elements. Mention the interpretive trail on trail maps. Include trail post numbers on the general trail map would clutter up the map too much, but an aside saying where to find the interpretive trail brochures could be included on the map. Interpretive trail brochures could be prominently placed inside the Visitor Center. Other interpretive elements, such as the composting area or bat boxes, could be marked on the trail map as well. Brochure PDFs could be uploaded to the REEC website so that people downloading the trail map can find them.

Make trail symbols interpretive. The current trail symbols used on the black-and-white map are not distinctive from each other. New symbols should be used. Instead of relying on simple shapes, the symbols can be made interpretive by aligning the symbol with the main subtheme of that trail (e.g., using a flower for a trail along the wildflower meadow or a feather for the best bird watching trail).

Replace and enhance numbered posts on trails. Along the interpretive trail, the missing trail posts should be replaced. If the posts are not going to be replaced, the trail should be renumbered. When replacing the posts, using a crossbar at the bottom of the post will reduce the chance of the post being removed. Existing trail posts should be repositioned with one of these methods as well to prevent vandalism. In addition, the symbol for each trail should be added to all trail posts to help visitors who are color blind or using the black-and-white map.

Use QR codes to enhance interpretation. QR codes can be added in multiple locations within the REEC as an easy way to add additional interpretation or enhance the current materials. Adding them to trail posts would allow people who did not take a brochure to still access the information if they have a smart phone. The QR code link can be updated seasonally like the brochures and could include links to further reading as well. They can add sound or video elements to displays with easy upkeep. However, since REEC does not have consistent cell reception and not everyone has a smart phone, no interpretive elements should rely solely on QR codes.

Replace missing and old signs. There are some empty sign posts that should be removed until new signs are ready to be put up. Old signs that are faded and scratched should be removed as well; their worn look takes away from the interpretive message.

Update fish pond interpretation. The signs at the fish pond should be replaced with sturdier, more professional signs. Until new permanent signs can be purchased, the current ones should be replaced with different printed signs. The text on the existing signs is too lengthy, and is off-putting to potential readers. The use of interpretive writing techniques would make them more attractive; using the new style guide would make them match other interpretive materials at the REEC.

Add interpretation at Cush Hill and Adams Farm. Currently, there is no interpretation at these ancillary locations. Adding an interpretive trail (in a similar post and brochure format) could entice people to hike these trails. The brochures can be placed in the Visitor's Center, the trail map box, and as PDFs on the website. This enhanced interpretation will increase the visibility of these properties. The trailhead signs could also have interpretive elements added to them, including QR codes. The existence of these new interpretive elements can be advertised on the main property trail map and interpretive trail brochures.

Increase personal, roving interpretation. Currently, almost all the interpretation on site is non-personal (signs, brochures, etc.). To increase personal interpretation, without having to create or fund more programs, use roving interpreters. Have volunteers, summer interns, or staff rove trails during busy times to give mini-programs and answer questions to whoever is interested. The person could carry some of the non-fragile artifacts from the Visitor Center to entice people to visit the Visitor's Center.

Update building with taxidermy birds. The Bird Cabin building is separate from the visitor center and is home to numerous specimens of taxidermy birds. It is recommended that visitor input be obtained concerning the appearance and content of the exhibits in the Bird Cabin. Currently, the air in this exhibit space is extremely stagnant and the taxidermy specimens are in poor condition. If visitor perceptions of the cabin appear negative, repurposing this space into a meeting place for visitors and a partial storage facility is recommended. It is recommended that the space be completely refurbished. Adding tables and seats inside could create a community meeting space, providing a potential source of income to the REEC. Decorating the space with entries to an annual REEC photograph contest could provide visual interest for community members. Using part of the cabin for storage space could provide storage for taxidermy specimens, until they are used for rotating exhibits in the visitor center.

Expand promotion of the Winter Festival. Though the Rodgers center has a winter festival that gains a lot of attention from the surrounding community, it is unknown if audiences are coming from outside of the Sherburne area or not. Expanding promotion of the festival throughout Central New York could be beneficial for the REEC, causing the center to become a winter hotspot for this event. The gift shop within the Visitor Center could sell specialty items and artwork to generate an income. Seasonal educational and recreational programs could be offered

during the festival. Other revenue-generating activities should be considered such as a concession stand giving out hot food and drink, and horse drawn slide rides.

Design a bike loop that connects parks in Sherburne. Design a bike loop that connects Paddleford Park, Sherburne Town Historic Park and Museum, Rexford Park, Gaines Park, and REEC. The loop could incorporate sidewalk, for aesthetics, gardens for water



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management, that would make it more attractive and give it other beneficial uses. Figure ____ shows the location of the parks.

Figure 1. Map showing all the parks in Sherburne (Map is from Google Earth Pro).

Create a county scenic byway. To create a stronger network of parks, Chenango County could establish a scenic driving route that connects the parks, bringing more visitors to the area and benefiting businesses like restaurants and shops. Routes 12 and 80 have the potential to be developed as part of a driving route because they go past Chenango State Valley Park, the

REEC, and near many other parks and forests as well. Creating a brochure about the parks along the driving route could further assist in attracting visitors.

Promote all parks on tourism websites. By adding a list of all the parks in Chenango County on the Parks and Recreation section of the County website and on the Commerce Chenango website, parks can be promoted more effectively to the tourist. Park information should include pictures, information on the facilities, and activities within the parks. This format would provide visitors with a list of all the parks without having to go on different websites.

Priority #3: *By 2023, we will continue to advance a diverse and adequate funding stream to support our staff and programming needs.*

Monitor and assess funding streams and expenditures. With the desire to maintain and improve diversity of funding, it remains important to track funding and expenditures over time. Regular meetings held by the board and staff can evaluate where/who funding is coming from as well as discuss the opportunities to reach out to new potential donors. Equally important is the monitoring of monthly investment and spending of resources (for equipment, advertisement, staff, etc.), and both short- and long-term responses to that spending. At regular meetings both the board and staff can make adjustments to improve resource use.

Update membership incentives. Currently, the most incentives for joining the FOR are provided at the base ("aspen") level at \$35 per year. The highest "pine" level offers "exclusive naming rights for one full day of Visitor Center Operations," as well as all the other benefits from the other levels for \$500 a year. There is no clarification about what this entails, and it might not be enough of an incentive for someone to donate \$500+ annually. Below are suggestions for incentives that could be added at any membership level, preferably the higher ones, as the aspen level already has a lot to offer:

- Complimentary fish food year-round.
- Discounted prices for renting outdoor spaces.
- Name posted either in the visitor center or on brick pavers.
- Complimentary REEC branded merchandise.
- Discounts on merchandise from sponsors.
- Priority and/or discounted registration for events and programs.
- Recognition in newsletter and/or on website.
- Increased discount at gift shop/bookstore at higher membership levels.
- Discounted and/or complimentary equipment rentals.

Streamline the volunteer application process. The current volunteer application process should be simplified to make it easier to sign on as a volunteer. Some recommendations are as follows:

- Provide an email address at the top of the "Volunteer Opportunities" page, in addition to the phone number provided.
- Add a Google application form to the "Volunteer Opportunities" page for volunteers to express their interest in specific volunteer tasks. This form could be directly linked to the volunteer email address.
- Add more detail to the current "Volunteer Opportunities" page about each task. Currently, the hours listed for each task are vague and do not refer to a specific schedule. There may be more people than necessary interested in volunteering at a certain time and not enough expressing interest in a time when help is more significantly needed.
- Update the "Volunteer Opportunities" page frequently as volunteer position needs and openings fluctuate. High priority needs and times should be indicated at the top of the page or in bold.
- Provide volunteer incentives. Returning volunteers have various levels of past experience. These volunteers may not require as much training or supervision. They are more

independent, have a better understanding of their responsibilities, and are highly valuable to REEC and its community. However, because volunteers do not receive pay for their efforts, some may lose the motivation to continue returning. REEC relies heavily on volunteer support and should make these volunteers feel valued. This can be done by offering free or discounted membership for REEC, bookstore and gift shop discounts, or other perks.

- Publicly recognize volunteers who provide significant support to the center. This recognition can be announced on REEC's monthly newsletter or through an annual volunteer celebration.

Hire a volunteer/intern coordinator. The REEC currently manages about 200 volunteers for both events and other tasks at the center. The Executive Director must supervise and coordinate all of these individuals, with some support from the Environmental Educator. The Executive Director also supervises the interns, field school students from Colgate University, and Americorps members, with some help from other staff members, in addition to the many other responsibilities the Director has in relation to the center's daily operations. Delegating the management and supervision of the volunteers to a separate staff member would enable the REEC to expand its volunteer efforts, improving maintenance of the facility and expanding program options. The volunteer/intern coordinator position would be best served by a paid, part-time staff member, though a dedicated volunteer could also serve in this capacity.

Hire an event coordinator. Event and program coordination is another time consuming responsibility at the REEC. The Executive Director, Fundraising and Marketing Coordinator, Environmental Educator, and Children's Coordinator currently all play a role in event organization. However, because the REEC's current staff members already possess a heavy load of responsibilities, this role should be given to a specific professional level event coordinator. The role can be given to an intern initially until secure funding can be provided for the position.

Develop creative fundraising efforts. The REEC offers many great programs that could be turned into fundraising events. For any type of fundraising event, it is important to ensure that the REEC's natural resources are not harmed during the event, and that visitor safety is not compromised. In addition, if successful, the fundraising event should be reoccurring to generate a dependable form of income each year. Some examples include:

- A 5K run on the property. Most people expect to pay a fee when participating in a race or any kind so this fee could be a direct donation to the REEC. The REEC could partner with local businesses or the YMCA to host this kind of event. It is recommended that a limited number of participants be allowed for this type of event so that natural resources are not damaged.
- An "Adopt a Trail" program. People would pay to have their name or the name of their organization or business posted at the REEC, and, in return, would help with trail clean-up and maintenance efforts.

Create a rental system for outdoor spaces. The REEC has access to multiple unique outdoor spaces including the outdoor classroom, the picnic pavilion, and the bird cabin. These spaces could generate income if advertised and utilized effectively. For example, the outdoor classroom could be opened up to the public as a rental space for small family events. With the use of social media, events like these could advertise themselves through word of mouth and online pictures. An online request form that outlines variable prices depending on event size, time of year, and

each different space at the REEC would be beneficial for people who are looking to plan their next event.

Capitalize on sponsorship. The REEC already has a strong sponsor base and should capitalize on these relationships as much as possible. Depending on what the REEC needs, everything from the indoor exhibits to signage to the trails could be enhanced through sponsorships. In return for sponsor funds, the REEC would need to acknowledge the sponsor donations in the visitor center (perhaps through a specially-created “wall of sponsors”) or on interpretive materials.

Connect with other organizations for fundraising. Many local groups and organizations such as school clubs and Scouts have programs that require students/members to fundraise for organizations. Reaching out to these groups and creating relationships with them could raise money for the REEC while satisfying school and organization needs for those participating in these programs. This type of effort could also be used as an educational opportunity to teach kids about nonprofit organization management and the importance of fundraising.

Priority #4: *By 2023, we will continue to maintain and enhance our facilities and surrounding property to meet the environmental education goals of our visitors, enhance access for all, and improve sustainability measures.*

Monitor trail use. To monitor trail use on all trails (including those on the Adams Farm and Cush Hill properties), different methods could be considered. Infra-red trail counters provide the most accurate estimates of visitor use but are expensive and could be subject to vandalism. Trail registries placed in a kiosk at trailheads are inexpensive, but provide less accurate estimates of visitor use. Registries could request information related to the date, party size, and location of residence for the visitor, and can be used to enhance visitor safety as the REEC would know who is on the trail and when. If either of these methods is not readily attainable, adding another question to the visitor center survey may provide some indication of trail and property use by visitors at the REEC. It is especially important that trail use data be collected for the Adams Farm and Cush Hill properties since data is not currently available for these properties.

Monitor trail conditions. Trails should be checked for potential hazards on a weekly basis at a minimum. Hazards include conditions that may cause harm to visitors such as burrow holes, dead tree limbs overhanging the trail, and broken railings on boardwalks. Trails should be checked after heavy storms for dislodged branches or potential tree-fall. Timber poles should be placed along the river trails to create a barrier between the trail and the water, preventing visitors from getting too close or falling into the water.

Implement entrance signage. Constructing a new sign that denotes the entrance to the REEC would be extremely beneficial. The existing entrance sign is currently difficult to see from the road (due to a tree that obstructs the view of the entrance when approaching from the west) and utilizes DEC colors instead of colors that would more clearly distinguish the REEC property from the adjacent DEC buildings.

Improve AED and first-aid supplies. With the number and variety of visitors to the REEC, it is imperative to have an AED present on the property. The AED should be placed in the visitor center in an easy-to-access location. If needed, the first-aid supply should be improved and restocked with 4x4 and 2x2-inch gauze pads, 2- and 4-inch cling wraps, ace bandages, alcohol disinfectant wipes, antibacterial creams, band-aids, triangular bandages, Sam splints and multiple cold-packs. These basic supplies can be used to treat most traumatic injuries including scrapes, lacerations, and fractures. Portable first-aid kits should also be available for staff use, one in the visitor center and one in the trail vehicle, allowing staff to quickly provide assistance in the field when needed.

Establish the Channels Trail as a fully accessible trail. Currently, the REEC has only a very short section of trail adjacent to the visitor center that is fully accessible by those with disabilities. Given that the Channel Trail is already a fairly flat trail and that some of its sections are already fully accessible, extending the accessible features to the entire trail would be a fairly simple process with volunteer support. A fully accessible trail would be a major attraction for seniors and those with disabilities. To enhance the trail's accessibility, it is recommended that the log edging and gravel surface used on certain portions of the trail be extended throughout the

trail. Use of a geotextile below the gravel is recommended to prevent the gravel from sinking into the dirt. It is also recommended that two inches of fine gravel be placed on top of four inches of coarse gravel so that the trail surface becomes hard-packed, meeting the “firm and stable” guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act. This trail enhancement would also help improve drainage on the trail, which is a problem in a few spots.

Promote emergency awareness for Adams Farm and Cush Hill trails. The distance and disconnection of Adams Farm and Cush Hill trails from the main property makes it difficult for visitors to seek help if needed. Signage should be placed at the trailhead of each property stating: “In case of emergency, dial 911. You are on the [Adams Farm/Cush Hill] Trail at Rogers Environmental Education Center.” Due to the lack of a trail between the Adams Farm and the main property, visitors may be inclined to walk along route 80 to access this property. Signage can discourage this, or advise visitors how to do it safely. A trail connecting the two properties would eliminate this danger.

Coordinate with EMS and the 911 center. The Sherburne FD and PD should be aware of the different parcels of land at REEC and their locations to minimize their response times. In the event of an emergency during staffed hours, the trail vehicle should be used when necessary to either quickly transport EMS personnel to the injured visitor, or for a CPR/First-aid certified staff member to act as a first responder to the visitor. The REEC should coordinate with the 911 center so that designated staff members can be contacted by the dispatchers to make them aware of any emergency calls made from REEC, both during and after staffed hours.

Place safety reminders on interpretive materials. Trailhead signs, signage near the visitor center, and trail maps and brochures should encourage the use of proper equipment and safety precautions by visitors. Most importantly visitors should be warned that trail conditions vary and therefore proper footwear is advised. Additionally, visitors should be reminded about the dangers of sun exposure and dehydration.

Establish safety protocol training for summer staff. During summer programs when interns are responsible for groups of children, it is important to have a protocol in place for instances of an injured group member. If the group is distant from the visitor center, interns should be trained to handle the situation without endangering or abandoning the entire group in an effort to seek help. If two interns are assigned to each group or if a two-way radio was given to a single group leader, this would enable a group leader to request assistance while maintaining supervision of the entire group.

Updating existing structures. Building updates can be costly when looking at the grand scheme of things over the entirety of the property, but by updating and renovating the structures, the property could potentially attract new visitors. A fresh coat of paint, cleanliness, and repair of exhibits, such as fixing the door on the soils exhibit, is necessary for the REEC. There may also be associated savings that go with renovating buildings such as improvements for energy efficiency and lighting. Lighting improvements to exhibits, as well as the addition of sound features (e.g., bird calls) to exhibits, should be considered. Upgrading to LED lights should be a priority throughout the REEC. Though LEDs require a large initial investment, energy savings associated with upgrading to LED fixtures and lamps have been shown to have a payback period

of as short as two years in particular cases. LED lights substantially decrease the wattage being drawn and last for a long time, requiring fewer bulb replacements. Grants are often available to cover the costs of materials when upgrading to energy efficient fixtures. These repairs and updates will make the center feel more welcoming and safe for adults and children to explore.

Allow visitors to Adopt-a-Trail. An adopt-a-trail program would not only help visitors feel more connected with trails at the center, it could also bring in new volunteers and donations. This could be done through the website as a link, or visitors could be informed via a sign at each of trailhead.

Priority #5: *By 2023, we will have a clear and easily recognizable brand and image both internally amongst our board staff and volunteers, as well as externally among our members, donors, and broader community.*

Monitor REEC recognition internally and externally. Internal recognition of image and brand can be rather simple and low to no cost to monitor and evaluate, while external evaluation will require some investment. It will first require that the REEC is proactive in advertising and promoting its brand in a capacity that reaches desired target audiences. Surveys should reach beyond REEC members and visitors via mail, internet, or email, and should reach out to residents in Sherburne, Chenango County, Central New York, and New York State (or as far out as is desired for the specified geographic region). Evaluation of responses will aid in understanding how the public (near and far) perceive and or are aware of the REEC and the accuracy of services that the REEC provides.

Improve the presence of REEC “brand” materials in the visitor center. Information on the FOR and REEC should be easy to find in the visitor center as soon as visitors enter the building. Items should include FOR membership information, rental information for spaces and equipment, information on the visitor center and trail maps. All REEC information should clearly show the REEC logo and be consistent in design. General information about nature (e.g., copies of the *Conservationist*, information on invasive species, flora, and fauna) should also be available, but should be provided separately from the REEC-specific information, in order to maintain clear brand identification for REEC items.

Enhance the REEC’s presence on the internet. Several improvements are recommended with regard to the online presence of the REEC:

- To strengthen branding for the REEC, the FOR logo and slogan should be clearly visible on all FOR web pages, preferably at the top of each page for consistency purposes. On the FOR homepage, the logo is currently present but is difficult to find since it’s incorporated into the “50th Anniversary” only. Other pages on the website only show the logo on the FOR newsletter. The logo should also be included on other online sources of information created in the future such as QR codes used along the trails.
- Links between the REEC website and other existing websites (e.g., local and county recreation departments, Commerce Chenango County, I Love NY) should be added or enhanced where needed. Both local and county recreation departments and youth bureaus list summer activities, camps, and programming within the community, but currently the REEC’s events and programs are not included.
- An Instagram account should be created for the purpose of holding a monthly photo contest. Start a twitter account with hashtags such as #wherearewewednesday. Remain updated and active on Facebook.
- Continue to acknowledge supporters like Chobani and the DEC on the internet. A wall of donors could be created in the visitor center.

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