Since 1995, tens of thousands of Cheast Fest attendees have come together each May, through every type of weather known, to raise awareness and much-needed funds for the restoration of the Cheast River. The 25th Annual Cheast Festival, held May 6-9, 1995, was hosted by Friends of the Cheast, West Virginia Rivers Coalition, and American Whitewater Affiliation - promoting that 100% of the proceeds would be used to help preservation and restoration efforts within the Cheast Watershed. Notably, at the first Cheast Fest, the River of Promise grant was signed and a coalition was created: a group of state and federal agencies, academics, industry, and environmental groups endorsed a private-public partnership which dedicated resources to address the acid mine drainage issues in the Cheast River watershed.

The newly formed Friends of the Cheast, led by Executive Director Dave Barrege, began its mission to restore, preserve, and promote the outstanding natural qualities of the Cheast watershed. Passage shared his vision of success in the first newsletter: “We envision the future Cheast Canyon to be a monumental recreation resource and a clear stream flowing with opportunities for fishing, camping, hiking, and other outdoor activities. So much of the efforts of FOC have involved organizational and information gathering activities. There is an initial basic need to work on developing the Cheast, as a resource and a project, but a lot of people care and many are willing to direct their energies towards making a positive difference.”

The response to the first Cheast Fest was unprecedented, with over 1,500 attendees. Gates opened at 4:00 PM on the first day and visitors enjoyed a night of music, great food, and a chance to learn more about the Cheast. A new feature was a NPOES permit, which is discharged back into Muddy Creek. WVDNR is dialing in this new system, working out the challenges that come with a large-scale, complex wastewater system and the implementation of new technology. Not surprisingly, significant improvements to Muddy Creek’s water chemistry were immediate. However, FOC was surprised by the new phases. The first Cheast Fest was held immediately downstream of Muddy Creek in the Cheast Canyon.

FOC didn’t stop there. And it did. FOC and the River of Promise partners kept working toward restoration, and each annual Cheast Fest came and went with more and more success. The Cheast Festival is held each Spring in late May with a “no racers participating” fast forward to the festival world of today: Cheast Massacre, Cheast Fest, Hot Days of Cheast, Cheast Fest, Cheast Fest, Cheast Fest, Cheast Art Fest, Cheast Fest, and many more.

NPOES, as was the plan, was eliminated and the Cheast wastewater was discharged to Lake Cheast. No one knew if this was a good or bad idea. What was a river that cleans itself when there was no longer a pipeline to deliver treated wastewater? Fast forward to the Festival world of today: Cheast Massacre, Cheast Fest, 2 days of non-stop live music, no permit issues, no river issues, no permit issues, no river issues, no permit issues, no river issues, no permit issues, no river issues, no permit issues, no river issues.

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Friends of the Cheast also continues to plan and execute projects to improve the Cheast Waterway. In 2018, Friends of the Cheast produced a Cheast River Watershed Report, which is a comprehensive, detailed report that identifies the key issues facing the Cheast River, its surrounding communities, and organizations who are working to protect and improve the Cheast River.

Through our Education and Outreach program, FOC introduces thousands of people to the Cheast River each year. Our Volunteer Program is also a vital component of our organization, providing opportunities for people to get involved in the Cheast River restoration and preservation efforts. This year, we’re excited to launch a new Cheast River Trail project, which will create a network of trails along the Cheast River.

Friends of the Cheast is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the Cheast River watershed. Directing the majority of its efforts to recognizing the northern part of the watershed, the Cheast River’s headwaters, which account for 70% of the total length of the Cheast River, our chapter is dedicated to protecting and preserving this precious resource for future generations. We are committed to maintaining the Cheast River water quality, preserving its natural beauty, and promoting recreational opportunities that showcase the region’s assets.

Friends of the Cheast (FOC) is a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting and promoting the Cheast River watershed. The Cheast river flows through a network of lakes and streams in the northwestern part of West Virginia, providing a unique and valuable ecosystem for the area. Our chapter is dedicated to protecting and preserving this precious resource for future generations.

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In Tucker County, the confluence of Shavers Fork and the Black Fork forms the Cheat River near Parsons. This area is also the origin of the Upper Cheat River Water Trail. The trail covers 10 miles of the river, with both canoe and kayak trails available. The river is popular for its scenic beauty and the abundance of wildlife. The trail offers a unique opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the Cheat River ecosystem.

During the summer of 2016, West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection’s (WVDEP) Division of Water Quality completed a land-reclamation plan for an abandoned coal mine. The plan included the removal of overburden, recontouring of the mine site, and surface mining from 1957 to 1961 to reclaim abandoned land. The project was completed in 2017, and the site was evaluated for the suitability of the site for future recreational use.

A recent study found that the Cheat River is home to a diverse array of fish species, including brown trout, rainbow trout, and smallmouth bass. The river is also known for its fishing opportunities, with targeting on both the river and its tributaries.

Find out more about the Cheat River and its natural beauty by visiting cheatrivertrail.org.

**Promote**

**Allegheny Trail News**

During the Fall of 2017, in partnership with the West Virginia Scenic Trail Association, Friends of the Cheat embarked on a $50,000 project to develop the northwestern most 28 miles of the Allegheny Trail (AT). West Virginia’s longest existing hiking trail, in nearby Brooke County. The project is sponsored by The West Virginia Department of Commerce and uses $16,000 in funds from the WV WV-0i-140 Contract for the project. The entire section 1 portion of the Allegheny Trail lies within the Cheat River watershed extending from the Cheat Rock Falls State Park to Section 2, where it intersects with the Allegheny River in the town of Allegheny. This trail offers a unique opportunity to explore the natural beauty of the Cheat River watershed while enjoying a hike through the Cheat River National Scenic Area.

FOC is very excited to unveil the completion of our first project improving the AT near the trailhead of Beck Run Rd. FOC, with student volunteer support from WVU’s Adventure WV program, constructed sections of this project. The project included the installation of 10 new trail signs, 2 wildlife viewing benches, and track maintenance throughout the project.

As with all of FOC’s projects, success relies on positive relationships with landowners and coordination with state and federal agencies. The project was supported by the Cheat River Watershed Partnership, West Virginia Division of Natural Resources, and the West Virginia Department of Commerce.

**Become a Member!**

Visit www.cheat.org/get-involved/membership-info/

Contact: cheatrivertrail@bawmusic.com

**What We Offer?**

- Membership benefits for Cheat River enthusiasts.
- Information and resources for Cheat River water enthusiasts.
- Memberships and donations keep the fights on.

**How Do I Give?**

- 7% tax-deductible contributions for membership.
- 15% tax-deductible donations for membership.

**Board**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Board Member</th>
<th>Position</th>
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| [A list of board members would be included here.]

A FEEL GOOD MOMENT, 25 YEARS IN THE MAKING

Due to the construction of the new T&T’s DEP treatment facility, FOC’s most recent sampling effort revealed Muddy Creek has a negative acidity and high flow rate. This 25-day study (August 23, 2021 – September 17, 2021) is a ground-breaking finding for the Friends of the Cheat community as the data show Muddy Creek is no longer a major contributor of acidity in the Cheat River Watershed. In fact, this negative loading means that Muddy Creek is currently contributing acidity loads of approximately 2979.86 lb/day, which will help offset some of the acidity loads from other AMD impacted tributaries.

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**DO YOU KNOW?**

Friends of the Cheat monitors 10 popular recreation access sites along the Cheat River for harmful bacteria, every two weeks April – August, and monthly September – March. Check to see if your favorite waterhole is on the list and our sampling results at www.cheat.org/contact.

**PERCENT OF SAMPLES COLLECTED THAT PASSED FOR GOOD TESTING IN 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holly Meadows</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blackwater Camp</td>
<td>98%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper River</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lower River</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fields Creek</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elmore</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheat River Park</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheat Dam Park</td>
<td>91%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheat Lake Lodge</td>
<td>91%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**FLUORIDING FAVORITES**

Why are some of our favorite Cheat River hangouts not making the grade? Whiletypically safe to recreate in during low flow, high flow water can reduce our safety, impact old and failing sewer infrastructure. In streams, and high flow rivers are an issue. FOC’s Citizens Monitoring Program aims to discover the sources through educating our community through education efforts in 2019.

**HOW CAN YOU HELP?**

Sponsor a bacteria sample for your favorite location above! For $10, you will help friends of the Cheat River in monitoring for harmful bacteria in our beloved recreation areas. The sponsors will have their name listed on our website and posted on our Facebook Page as our dedicated “Friend of the Cheat”. As well as receive a FOC swag bag.

For questions or more information about bacteria sampling within the Cheat River Watershed, contact FOC’s Monitoring Coordinator Madison at madison@cheat.org.