

10 NFL draft prospects who need to bounce back  
SPORTS, 1B

# STAR-GAZETTE

STARGAZETTE.COM | SUNDAY, JUNE 1, 2025 | ELMIRA, N.Y.

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## 'It would burn my eyes'



A former Agway fertilizer plant on Hammond Street in Big Flats is the target of a new citizen's group called Big Flats Defenders, which claimed the site was never remediated despite chemical contamination that has infiltrated water supplies.

JEFF MURRAY/ELMIRA STAR-GAZETTE

## Big Flats resident recounts living near fertilizer plant

Jeff Murray  
Elmira Star-Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK

Marge Barber, of Big Flats, was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 2010.

Serious medical issues seem to run in the family. Barber's mother was diagnosed with kidney cancer in 1993, and her stepfather was diagnosed with Lewy Body Dementia in 2009.

Only Barber doesn't believe it has anything to do with genetics or unfortunate coincidence.

Barber, 61, and other members of her family have lived in a home on Church Street in the hamlet of Big Flats for decades, just a short distance from a former Agway fertilizer plant.

When she recently learned there are new concerns about possible contamination issues at the 53 Hammond St. site, childhood

See PLANT, Page 2A



A coalition of concerned Big Flats residents and business owners claims this photo of an empty 55-gallon drum and Agway fertilizer plant site point to the likelihood of chemical contamination on the Hammond Street property.

PROVIDED BY WALTER HANG

## How state support is boosting local law enforcement agencies



Chemung County District Attorney Weeden Wetmore, at the head of the table, talks to local law enforcement officials and representatives from the state Division of Criminal Justice Services on May 27. PROVIDED BY THE NEW YORK STATE DIVISION OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES

Jeff Murray  
Elmira Star-Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK

Law enforcement can be a costly business, which is why the state Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) wants local officials to know they have a supportive partner in Albany.

Representatives from the division, including Executive Deputy Commissioner Joseph Popcorn, came to Elmira on May 27 to meet with Chemung County District Attorney Weeden Wetmore and several local law

See SUPPORT, Page 3A

## Hiking the Gorge Trail at Watkins Glen?

### What to know for the 2025 season

Jeff Smith  
Elmira Star-Gazette | USA TODAY NETWORK

Large crowds are flocking to Watkins Glen State Park to enjoy the views the Gorge has to offer.

Watkins Glen State Park's Gorge Trail, located in Schoyler County, recently won a USA TODAY 10BEST Readers' Choice Award, ranking among the 10BEST Hiking Trails for a Scenic and Casual Day Hike in the Hiking Trails for a Scenic and Casual Day Hike in the nation.

"From the Memorial Day Weekend to Columbus Day, we are extremely busy," said Paul Beebe, a Watkins Glen State Park employee. "We get more than a million people a year here."

Bill Pylpociv, a volunteer at Watkins Glen State Park, said he has never visited Watkins Glen State Park.

"People from Switzerland recently came to the park and said this is the most beautiful place that they have seen," Pylpociv said. "We are local so to look at it from someone else's perspective is neat."

Perhaps the biggest attraction is Watkins Glen's Gorge Trail, which packs 19 waterfalls into a compact 2.5-mile round trip journey where hikers traverse many stone staircases, arched bridges, and fern-draped walls.

This moderately challenging trail takes about two hours. One of the most photographed areas is Rain-waterfall for a unique perspective.

It's important to note that the Gorge Trail will be under construction beginning July 7, 2025. The trail is expected to fully re-open prior to July 4, 2026.

The Scoury Bridge will be replaced with a new, lightweight bridge that reinterprets the historic arch with a contemporary half-arch made of durable stainless steel, merging the natural park formations with state-of-the-art materials.

During construction, access to the Gorge Trail and 15 waterfalls will be accessible from the North Rim Trail, and shuttle service will remain available.

Other attractions at Watkins Glen State Park include hiking, biking, hunting, campsites and rustic cabins for overnight stays, grills, pavilions and shelter rentals, playgrounds, playing fields, showers, a swimming pool, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Food and a gift shop.

The Devil's Kettle Trail in Minnesota took the top spot in USA TODAY's 10BEST ranking, with the Trail's trail system in New York state's Hudson Valley ranking second.

The Finger Lakes area has been well represented among the 2025 USA TODAY 10BEST Readers' Choice awards.

Other area attractions recognized include the Nature & Stars planning campground, Watkins Glen International, Corning's Centerway Square, Corning's cultural scene, and the Wineglass Six.



Watkins Glen State Park's Gorge Trail, located in Schoyler County, recently won a USA TODAY 10BEST Readers' Choice Award, ranking among the 10BEST Hiking Trails for a Scenic and Casual Day Hike in the nation. PROVIDED BY BILL PYLPOCIV

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