

II. PLAN DEVELOPMENT

A. The Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

The Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries (FACT) were formed in 1998 as a result of a regional planning agency initiative to create a greenways plan for Alum Creek (see Section I). The organization's mission is to improve and protect the ecological health of Alum Creek and its use as a resource by local communities. FACT is a non-profit organization and comprised of members from the local watershed community, including residents, local governments, businesses, and clubs. A Board of Directors governs the organization; please see Appendix 1 for a summary of the organization's structure and bylaws.

Recognizing poor water quality conditions in some portions of the creek and vulnerability to further degradation in others, FACT applied for funds from the Ohio EPA Division of Surface Water 319 grant program in 2000. This grant program originated from section 319 of the Clean Water Act, which targets nonpoint source pollution. Using these funds, FACT hired a staff person in 2001 to continue the group's public outreach efforts and coordinate the creation of a watershed action plan for Alum Creek.

FACT formed the **Alum Creek Action Plan Steering Committee** in 2002 to guide the planning process, with the goal of promoting diverse and effective stakeholder involvement.

Representatives from FACT, local resource agencies, governments, environmental groups, and universities comprised the committee, which met monthly throughout 2002 and periodically thereafter. This committee will continue to play a vital role in evaluating and updating the plan as it is implemented.

The steering committee developed the planning process with two major components to encourage broad community participation. The "technical" track focused on water quality solutions and stakeholders who would be more directly involved in policy implementation. The "community" track focused on the values and vision of community members for their neighborhoods as they relate to Alum Creek. Please see Appendix 2 to view a list of action planning participants.

Technical Planning Track

The first meeting of the technical track was held on January 15th, 2003, and was attended by sixty people. Participation remained strong throughout 2003, with between 20 and 40 people attending monthly sessions. A wide array of community members were invited to participate, from representatives of various city departments to land owners to interested watershed residents. Special attention was paid to recruiting individuals and organizations with the skills, knowledge, and decision-making authority that would be needed to implement specific portions the plan.

The decision-making process selected for this effort was a "structured decision-making" approach. Participants in multi-stakeholder planning efforts often experience frustration with the

quality of recommendations that result from more common consensus-based planning processes. These tend to promote management alternatives that are familiar and uncontroversial and that may or may not effectively address water quality impairments. Ohio State University Extension became involved at the beginning of the planning process to help participants critically analyze the problem, and generate and evaluate a broad range of management alternatives using both technical data and stakeholder values.

Prior to stakeholder meetings, a small group comprised of representatives from FACT, state agencies, and the Ohio EPA Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) development team met to develop focus areas for the plan that would fit well with TMDL outcomes and provide a viable structure for stakeholder participation (see Section I for more information on the TMDL). Through examining known causes and sources of impairment and likely TMDL parameters, the group outlined four action planning work groups. These groups met concurrently during monthly stakeholder meetings to focus on various impairment issues:

- Land Use: zoning, regulations, comprehensive community plans
- Stormwater & Construction: stormwater runoff quantity and quality, during and after construction.
- Hydromodification & Habitat: hydromodification (dams, levees, channelizations), riparian preservation, and recreation.
- Organic Enrichment & Human Health: nutrient and organic enrichment, pathogens, and toxic pollutants.

Community Planning Track

The action plan steering committee also created a second planning component to facilitate participation from a wider range of community members. Water quality was an obvious focus of the action plan, but the committee realized that residents at large would have greater interest in participating if they were given the opportunity to relate to the watershed on their own terms. A community planning track with a focus on what residents valued about living near Alum Creek was created to compliment the technical track. Ohio State University Extension again provided assistance, this time employing an approach termed “Appreciative Inquiry.”¹

Appreciate inquiry was seen as a way of creating change in the Alum Creek watershed communities by having members of that community take an in-depth look at what is working and how they could support and expand what was working toward the creation of an ideal future. There are four phases of an Appreciative Inquiry Process:

¹ Appreciative Inquiry began in the field of organizational development with the work of David Cooperrider in the early 1980’s when he discovered that the members of an organization are more energized and motivated to change when they focus on what is working in the organization than when they focus on what is wrong or needs fixing. This basic principle - that members of an organization can create a more desirable future by focusing on the positive and creative forces that give life to the organization - has more recently been applied to larger groups, including whole communities, to address vital aspects of community life, including economic development, health and safety, and the environment.

- Discover
- Dream
- Design
- Deliver

An Appreciative Inquiry typically begins with the selection of an area of community life that participants wish to improve. Once the topic area has been selected, a core group of community members are led through a process of **discovery** to explore what they appreciate and value most about their community in relation to the topic area. During the discovery phase, the core group will often interview residents and encourage them to share stories about moments when things worked well, when they felt most excited, inspired, and successful. These stories become the basis for the next phase: dreaming.

During the **dreaming** phase, participants in the inquiry are encouraged to envision what is possible for the community in relation to the topic area. This vision for the future must be grounded in reality, but because participants have been focusing on those moments when the community was at it's best, they naturally look beyond what they may have believed possible before the inquiry began.

Once a shared vision of the desired state is created, a larger cross-section of the community is invited to participate in **designing** projects that will lead to the creation of the ideal. Rather than starting from scratch, these projects are meant to build on existing efforts in the community through new linkages, additional support, broader delivery of services, or some other expansion of what is already working.

Finally, participants in the process commit to **deliver** on the projects they have created to move the community toward the shared vision for the future. Appreciative Inquiry is not a linear process with a beginning and an end, so even after projects are completed, the process of creation continues with the continual inquiry into what is working and the creation of new and innovative ways to move toward the desired future.

The appreciative inquiry process for the Alum Creek action plan began with FACT volunteers conducting interviews with over 100 watershed residents to learn what they appreciated about living near Alum Creek. Responses were used to help structure a community meeting at Franklin Park Conservatory on March 15th, 2003. The Alum Creek watershed is unique in encompassing a very diverse population; about forty residents representing neighborhoods throughout the watershed attended.

Participants interviewed each other to again build a sense of what they valued about living near Alum Creek, what was working in their neighborhoods, and their vision for building on that foundation. One theme that emerged was the value of abundant greenspace along Alum Creek, which creates a rare haven for relaxation, mental rejuvenation, and quietness. Greenspace and opportunities for recreation were also viewed as assets in terms of building a sense of community and neighborhood pride. Many people were concerned about recent losses of greenspace and the decline in abundance of wildlife.

Based on the interviews and exercises at the meeting, five areas of interest were established:

- Education and awareness
- Greenspace
- Water quality
- Recreation
- Litter control

Workshop attendees then developed projects relating to each theme. Eight projects were developed in total, and are listed at the end of Section IV. These projects are a tremendous starting point for building public outreach campaigns because they are based entirely on the values of watershed residents. Some goals and projects, such as reducing litter, fit easily into the technical action planning section. Implementation of other projects, such as naming tributaries, will be pursued as opportunities are found to work within watershed communities with local partners.

Public comment

Comment on this action plan was solicited while the plan was still in draft form by both technical and community planning participants. Both groups were contacted with opportunities to comment in November and December 2003, and the community planning group was also invited to a public meeting on January 8th, 2004. This meeting provided an opportunity for FACT members, community planning participants, and the general public to hear a presentation on the plan, receive copies, and submit written comments. The meeting and completion of the draft was publicized on the FACT website, through press releases to local papers, at libraries, and to targeted civic associations in the watershed.

B. Outline of Plan Content

The first two sections of this plan (including the current section) are dedicated to describing the watershed and planning process. Section III includes a comprehensive resource inventory that describes the physical and social conditions of the watershed. It also contains an assessment of water quality, including causes and sources of water quality impairment. Section IV consists of water quality goals, recommended actions, and implementation strategies. This section is structured by stream segments (two 14-digit HUC subwatersheds and six tributary streams), which will allow actions to be targeted to critical stream reaches. Section V describes how the plan will be evaluated and revised.

C. Endorsement & Adoption

Several levels of commitment from local stakeholders are possible, including formal and informal commitments, the existence of an interested party that will pursue an action, or no commitment but willingness of at least one party to continue research. At the time this document was printed, all levels of commitment were present in the plan and described where possible. Endorsement of the plan by local partners is described in Section IV through statements of

commitment found at the head of every action table. After the plan has been fully endorsed by the Ohio EPA and Ohio DNR, FACT will seek resolutions of support from active stakeholders, including the following:

City of Columbus	Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District
City of Bexley	Delaware Soil & Water Conservation District
City of Westerville	Franklin County Metro Parks
Franklin County	Sierra Club, Central Ohio Chapter
Delaware County	Audubon, Columbus Chapter
Orange Township, Delaware County	Ohio Environmental Council
Genoa Township, Delaware County	Columbus Outdoor Pursuits
Northeast Area Commission, Columbus	Delaware Friends of the Trail
North Central Area Com., Columbus	St. Mary's of the Springs
Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission	

D. Information & Education

Education and information needs were identified by planning committees for nearly every major issue being addressed in the plan, from home sewage treatment to the value of natural greenways. These needs are integrated with and targeted towards the implementation of actions throughout Section IV. Please see Appendix 3 for a list of all education actions. Coordination with Phase I and Phase II communities regarding Nonpoint Source (NPS) pollution education will be a major focus of educational efforts by FACT. The FACT education and outreach committee will provide a platform for implementation of some education programs.

Projects generated during community action planning will also be used as a starting point for education and outreach efforts. While they tend to be less directly oriented towards water quality, they have a large potential for creating public support in the interest of watershed protection because they address community values identified by residents.

Publicity of the completion of the plan and its goals was undertaken in the first half of 2004 through print media and a special event to recognize stakeholders and celebrate the plan's completion. Seeking endorsement of the plan from political jurisdictions and other stakeholders will also present an opportunity to publicize the plan.

E. Implementation

After the planning phase is completed, action plan participants will continue to be invited to collaborate with FACT as implementation partners. The level of involvement will depend on the stakeholder and plan priorities, but all participants will be invited to quarterly action plan meetings. The meetings will promote active involvement in implementation by providing stakeholders with an opportunity to share progress, new opportunities, challenges, and a basis for the plan to remain a "living document." Any individuals or organizations that wish to join the

planning or implementation effort may do so by contacting the Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries at (614) 409-0511 or visiting FACT online at www.friendsofalumcreek.org.

F. Funding Strategy for Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

The long-term viability of FACT as an organization is an important factor in the successful implementation of the watershed action plan. With the completion of the initial draft of the plan in early 2004, the organization was able to dedicate more attention to organizational development and building its capacity for fundraising. Several important steps were made in that year, including expanding the board of directors to create a more formal fundraising committee and the creation and implementation of a diverse fundraising plan with items such as expanded membership recruitment, special events, and foundation grants. Please see Appendix 4 to view FACT's 2005 Fundraising Plan.

FACT will continue to seek grants from the Ohio EPA and Ohio DNR as a major source of revenue. In May 2004, FACT applied for an Ohio EPA Section 319 Implementation Grant, which will likely be received in late 2005. FACT also utilizes an Ohio DNR Watershed Coordinator grant to fund FACT's single staff position at a declining rate over six years (from 2003 to 2009). The declining percentage of the position funded by the grant is meant to encourage grant recipients to establish local funding sources. FACT will create annual fundraising plans to continue to meet this and other budgetary needs. Expanded membership from individuals, business, and political jurisdictions within the watershed will continue to be a major focus of the plan, as will special events and foundation grants.