

# Alum Creek

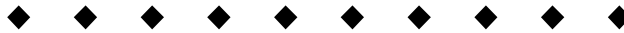


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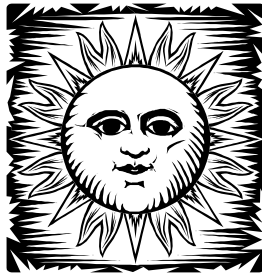
## Sheets

~ A publication of the Friends of Alum Creek and Tributaries ~



### Summer Days Meet Cool Waters on July 10th

By Barbara Logan, Education & Outreach Committee



When the temperatures soar, come cool off with FACT as we venture into Alum Creek to discover the critters that call the creek home. At Three Creeks Park on Thursday, July 10<sup>th</sup>, Naturalist Jill Snyder will lead us on a ½ mile walk to the creek where she'll show us how to catch and identify creek life.

Bring the whole family to join in and be sure to wear waterproof boots if you don't want to get your feet wet! This park also boost several miles of nature and bike trails, so come prepared to do some adventuring.

Directions: We will meet at the Three Creeks area bulletin board off Bixby Road at 6:30 PM. To get there from I-270 or I-70, take U.S. Rte. 33 east to the S. Hamilton Road exit. Turn right and go about 1 mile to Bixby Road. Turn right onto Bixby Road. The entrance is about 1 mile on the right (3860 Bixby Road).



March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting participants interview their watershed neighbors to learn what they value about Alum Creek.

### Area Residents Design Projects to Improve Alum Creek

By Heather Doherty, FACT Watershed Coordinator

Inigorated by the first truly warm day of Spring, 35 area residents and members of the Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries put their heads together on March 15<sup>th</sup> and asked "what's my greatest wish for Alum Creek?" The answers were various and sometimes daring ("I would like to canoe from the beginning of Alum Creek to the Scioto River!"), and demonstrated a sense of endless possibility.

The meeting, held at Franklin Park Conservatory, yielded nine projects concerning Alum Creek that will comprise a portion of the watershed action plan that FACT is currently working with community members to produce. The goal of the action plan is to improve the overall health of the creek, restoring some degraded portions and protecting areas that are

*(Continued on page 2)*



[www.friendsofalumcreek.org](http://www.friendsofalumcreek.org)

*The Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries are committed to finding ways to preserve and protect Alum Creek as a natural area while providing citizen access for environmentally responsible recreation, educational opportunities and citizen enjoyment at many levels.*

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*Area Residents...*, continued from page 1

currently in good shape. A draft of the document is planned to be released in December of this year.

Participants at the March 15<sup>th</sup> meeting identified five major areas of interest: education and awareness, recreation, greenspace, protection and improvement of water quality, and litter control. Examples of the projects that groups formed around these issues are listed in the box below. Work on some projects will be begin this year, with the help of those who created them and the greater watershed community.

FACT is also hosting a series of monthly meetings to formulate actions on issues that are degrading the creek's health, such as urban stormwater runoff, sewage, habitat degradation, and some land use practices along the creek and tributaries. Municipal officials, residents, scientists, and environmental organizations have been contributing to this process since January, and will continue to meet through the Fall.

Participants are considering actions such as limiting development in the creek's floodplain, upgrading failed sewage treatment systems, and creating better treatment of runoff from new developments.

**Community Action Plan Projects**

**Alum Creek Water Trail Project:** improve boating access and produce a document identifying access points, hazards, and landmarks for boaters from the water

**Tributary Naming Project:** name many of the tributaries to Alum Creek that currently lack an "official" identity

**Alum Creek Underground Railroad Project:** develop signage, literature, and a celebration of the Alum Creek's cultural heritage, including its well documented use as an underground railroad corridor

Would YOU like to help create the Alum Creek action plan or put it into action? It's never too late to get involved! Call 236-6455 or visit [www.friendsofalumcreek.org](http://www.friendsofalumcreek.org) for information, or to receive notification of meetings and the

# Spring Cleaning & Celebration Tradition Continues

By Heather Doherty



Julie Cronk shows off Mariner's Cove wetland to FACT members and area residents.

This Spring, Alum Creek saw its usual emergence of frogs and insects, migrating birds, and the ever-hardy human army descending on creek trash. While FACT organized an Earth Day cleanup along its adopted Academy Park area in Columbus, a tremendous number of people and organizations hosted cleanups around the watershed, including at Westerville's Otterbein Lake and Heritage Park and at Three Creeks Park in southeast Columbus.

A hardy thank you to the 200 volunteers who pitched in, and to the organizations that made it possible (please see a list below)!

In addition to participating in Earth Day celebrations at the Columbus Zoo and Otterbein College, FACT kicked-off a season of watershed outings at the Westerville Wetlands Walk on May 8<sup>th</sup>, pictured above. Thank you to Julie Cronk and Mark Dilley for showing off a few of Westerville's natural treasures.



*Ohio EPA, Division of Surface Water  
Capital University, Otterbein College  
Westerville Parks and Recreation Department  
Keep Columbus Beautiful  
Westerville Greenheads, Metro Parks  
Bexley – Whitehall Rotary Club  
Keep Franklin County Beautiful  
Westerville Sunrise Rotary Club  
Holtzman – Main Business Association  
Otterbein Lake Project Steering Committee  
The Kroger Company, Inc. (Main Street, Bexley)  
Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District*

## ~ River Voices ~

This edition's "River Voices" contributing writer **Linda Brownstein** joins us from Westerville.



### Otterbein Lake - a "Borrow Pit" No More

Until this year, Otterbein Lake has been hidden from view in its secluded Westerville location south of Main Street and just east of Alum Creek. The 10-acre lake, known only to a few fishermen, is about to be transformed. I am part of a group of Westerville residents working to develop the lake to be scenic, environmental, educational, and recreational.

The lake had its humble origin when dirt was "borrowed" for construction projects years ago. The pit filled up with water and lay hidden from view until last year when the new bikeway was completed.

When the Otterbein Lake Project is finished, we envision decks and low boardwalks across the lake, walking paths, picnic areas, native vegetation, and native wildlife and habitat. My personal wish is to see lots of turtles sunning on logs.

In a later phase, the group would like to add a covered bridge across Alum Creek at the low dam by Alum Creek Park for foot traffic, strollers, and wheelchair access. The design should be completed by June 6<sup>th</sup> and be implemented in phases as funds are raised.

In addition to the physical transformation of the lake, the project's other goal is to foster community spirit by having citizens drive the project, in cooperation with city officials. Lots of people and groups are participating already.

The project's steering committee currently consists of Anne Gonzales, Candy Canzoneri, Charlotte Walker, Diane Fosselman, Greg Outcalt, Nita Dean, Norma Westervelt, and myself. Feel free to join in the fun. My phone number is 614-882-6493 and my e-mail is [lindabrownstein@att.net](mailto:lindabrownstein@att.net).



By Margaret Ann Samuels & Carol Elder  
Watershed Watch Committee Co-Chairs

### Woodsvie Responds to FACT Concerns

Responsive action by the developer of Woodsvie is helping to protect Alum Creek in Southwest Bexley. Woodsvie, a new senior housing structure, is rising above Alum Creek next to Schneider Park. After FACT expressed concern about the construction's effect on the floodplain and the creek, Michael McKinney, the developer, took steps that are helping to block runoff from damaging the environment.

FACT's watershed watch committee met with the environmental consultant for Woodsvie about construction mud going into the small seasonal pool below the building. While the vernal pool may not be a wetland, it needs protection from being filled with dirt and debris. There are also other wetlands nearby in the floodplain. McKinney has donated the land on the floodplain to Bexley for an extension of the creekside park.

The city of Bexley has also worked with McKinney and with FACT to try to minimize the effects of this development on Alum Creek. Construction runoff is the major source of nonpoint pollution in our urban areas. As development continues along all areas of Alum Creek in both Delaware and Franklin counties, FACT encourages responsible construction that protects our waterways.

### Morrow Gravel asphalt plant

The Morrow Gravel Company applied for a zoning variance to build an asphalt plant near Westerville Road and I-270 North. The area, which already contains asphalt plants and concrete factories, is along Alum Creek. The zoning was approved despite FACT's opposition. FACT made contact with Morrow's representatives, who assured that they would leave a buffer along the creek and consider other environmentally sound practices.

### Genoa Township erosion control

FACT observed several soil and erosion control violations on construction sites in Genoa Township, Delaware County. The Ohio EPA was notified and sent letters to site managers calling for the inadequate protections to be rectified.

### FACT Submits Written Comments

FACT continues to weigh in with comments to agencies whose regulation affects the watershed. In the past 3 months we have made recommendations to the Ohio Department of Transportation on their proposed stormwater management process and to the Ohio EPA on a permit request by Corna Kokosing Construction Inc. to install a stormwater treatment system for a fuel facility. We also joined comments of the Ohio Environmental Council urging the US EPA not to decrease protection of wetlands, as their proposed rulemaking would do.

The Columbus Div. of Sewerage and Drainage now posts announcements of public meetings about new or replacement projects on its website: [www.dosd.org](http://www.dosd.org)

## Factoid!

**Belted Kingfishers** (*Ceryle Alcyon*) are a notable sight and sound along much of our Alum Creek. They can be up to 10-13 inches long, and have rather large heads with a long pointed beak (see picture on page 5). These predators normally fish from a quiet perch on a log or branch, only to dive in for their prey... When disturbed, they may call out with a screech as they fly away, swooping low over the water.

They nest in burrowed holes on bare vertical parts of our river's earthen banks. Due to the reservoir dam's moderation of flood volumes on the lower Alum Creek, these nest sites are relatively plentiful and protected along the river, and so the birds are free to multiply.

Kingfishers eat small fish, crayfish and frogs, all caught with beaks after a dive into waters less than two feet deep-- another reason the lower Alum Creek is a favorite habitat. It is said that each Kingfisher has a distinctive different voice pattern in its "rattle" call, which they use to recognize one another and mediate territorial disputes.

Springtime is a great time to observe their courtship, aerial combat maneuvers and nest building activities. Male and female birds of this species share the nest tending and feeding duties very well together. Check a link to their song on the FACT website!

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## Calendar of Events

**June 3-4<sup>th</sup>** **Connecting Ohio Watersheds Conference**, University Plaza Hotel, Columbus, Ohio

Conference themes include creating sustainable watershed groups and locally relevant watershed plans. This event is being organized by the Ohio State University Extension, the Water Management Association of Ohio, and many others! Call 846-7932 for information.

**June 7<sup>th</sup>** **Ohio Bio Blitz Festival**, Whetstone Park, 11:00AM – 4:00PM



This Columbus Recreation and Parks Department sponsored event focusing on the meaning of biodiversity and celebrating that to be found in Central Ohio. The festival offers hands-on activities and games for kids, live entertainment, and a grand finale featuring the results of a 24 hour biological survey of Whetstone Park. *Directions:* Take 315 north to Henderson Road, exit East. Turn right into parking lot at Whetstone High School, and follow signs south on the bike trail. The festival will take place north of the casting pond – you can't miss it!

Photo: **Belted Kingfisher**

**June 12<sup>th</sup>** **FACT Monthly Meeting**, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 – 8:30 PM

**June 27-29<sup>th</sup>** **Community Festival**, Goodale Park  
Don't miss Columbus's best summer festival. Volunteers needed for the FACT booth!

**July 10<sup>th</sup>** **Alum Creek Walk**, Three Creeks Park, 6:30 – 8:00 PM  
Metro Park Naturalist Jill Snyder will lead us an expedition into the creek! See article on page 1 for details and directions. This event is a part of FACT's bimonthly education series.

**August 14<sup>th</sup>** **FACT Monthly Meeting**, Location to be announced, 6:30 – 8:30 PM

**August 23<sup>rd</sup>** **4<sup>th</sup> Annual River Fest**, Three Creeks Park

Central Ohio celebrates its wealth of rivers with the MORPC's Franklin County Greenways Initiative and the region's many watershed groups. While FACT has hosted a River Fest four-years running, this year we'll be joining with other similar groups to bring you family fun, kids activities, and live music. Stay tuned for more details.

Call 236-6455 for details on all events, or visit [www.friendsofalumcreek.org](http://www.friendsofalumcreek.org)

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