

Alum Creek



FACT Sheets

Volume VII, Issue III
September/
December 2006

A quarterly publication
of the Friends of Alum
Creek and Tributaries

A letter from the new Watershed Coordinator

By *Kimberly L. Williams*

Dear FACT Members:

I am new to Columbus, Ohio, and, therefore, new to Alum Creek, as well. To familiarize myself with Alum Creek's features and moods, I decided to walk the Three Rivers Park multi-use trail whenever possible. My walks have become a daily and necessary ritual for me. Looking at the water is calming, and feeling the brisk wind is refreshing.

However, during my walks I see evidence that Alum Creek's health is being challenged. For example, after one storm event, I saw sediment-laden water travel from a new development into a ditch leading directly to Alum Creek. Despite the muddied waters, I later saw the shadow of a large turtle float to the surface to perhaps catch some air. Suspended sediment can be very harmful to aquatic life. However, after seeing the turtle, I took heart that Alum Creek is still providing sustenance for its inhabitants.

Before I came here, I had recently completed a Master's of Science in Sustainable Systems (MS3). The MS3 program revolves around finding and practicing solution that reconcile our need to both consume and preserve nature. For example, one of my classes involved choosing a site for residential development and then planning the best location for the house, garage, etc., that would minimize the impact on the local environment.

I haven't spent my entire life in school. In between and during my educational pursuits, I had a variety of jobs. For example, I worked as a field biologist for The Nature Conservancy, where I had the joy of being scorched by the noontday Texas sun and

stung by a thousand fire ants. (I perhaps exaggerate on the thousand). Regaling you with my different experiences as a naturalist, field botanist, graduate research assistant, nature tourism planner, utility forester, wetland mitigation intern and flood zone determination technician would be too much. I may have bored you with that list already. What is most important is that each experience taught me something new about nature.

As Watershed Coordinator/Executive Director of Friends of Alum Creek and Tributaries, I will use



Kimberly Williams,
FACT Watershed Coordinator

my skills and knowledge to help FACT achieve its mission of protecting and restoring Alum Creek, as well as educating the public of the creek's value.

Despite my varied background, I already know that this position is stretching me in new directions. I will look to the FACT Board, as well as to you, the members of FACT, for help and guidance. I am pleased and honored to join you in your efforts to restore and protect Alum Creek and her tributaries.

Sincerely,
Kimberly L. Williams

Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

2820 Watkins Road, Columbus, Ohio 43207

(614) 409-0511

www.friendsofalumcreek.org • kwilliams@friendsofalumcreek.org

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Mission: FACT is 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.

Watershed Protection Partners

\$1000 or more: City of Westerville and the City of Bexley.

\$250 - \$999: Mrs. William K. Westwater.

Supporting Members (\$100 - \$249): Acorn Farms Inc.; Anderson Concrete; Coca Cola North America; Paige & Michael Crane; Elizabeth B. Crane; Del-Co Water Company; Dipietro Tyre; Jeff & Leslie Fowler; Gretchen Hummel; Jeremy King & Susan Studer; Bill & Lisa Lonergan; Mira Cit Development Corp.; Morrow Gravel Co.; National Groundwater Association; Plaza Properties; Maggie Somple; Lisa Westwater; Rick Wilson & Melinda Harris.

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Watershed Watch

By *Kimberly L. Williams*

Office/Hotel Development Threatens Wetlands and Headwater Streams

The developer, NP Limited, is seeking two 401/404 permits as required under the Clean Water Act from the Ohio EPA and US Army Corps of Engineers to fill in wetlands and streams on two properties north of Polaris Parkway. The following is a brief description of the two proposed developments:

- Near Antares Avenue, NP Limited's proposed office/retail development will fill 0.27 acres of Category II wetlands and 1,112 linear feet of intermittent stream (Public Notice 200600079).
- The second development is an office/hotel development known as Colonial Meadows. This development will fill 0.11 acres of Category I wetlands and 1,457 linear feet of ephemeral, intermittent and perennial streams (Public Notice 200600072). These proposed actions will take place near Interstate 71 north of Gemini Place.

Combined, the proposed developments will impact 2,569 linear feet of headwater stream and 0.38 acres of Category I and II wetlands. Mitigation for both of the developments will primarily occur on a separate parcel of land that is east of Worthington Rd, south of Polaris Parkway and borders Alum Creek. The mitigation parcel is owned by NP Limited. Overall, the mitigation will involve placing 2,569 linear feet of stream in deed restrictions and constructing approximately 0.75 acres of Category II wetlands on the mitigation property.

Both Antares Avenue and Colonial Meadows developments concern FACT, due to the essential flood control, filtration and habitat functions provided by wetlands and headwater streams. From the conceptual designs, the amount of impervious surface area in the form of parking lots and buildings nearly envelops the two parcels of land. This increase in impervious surface will add to the impacts from other developments. For example, 200 linear feet of stream will be culverted for the Polaris Neighborhood Center 3 and 4 projects. Although these events are happening in separate areas, it is occurring within the Alum

Creek watershed. In other words, the excess sediment and increased water flow eventually finds its way to Alum Creek. Whether the cumulative impact resulting from filling in wetlands and headwater streams for the office/hotel and retail developments can be offset by the proposed mitigation is questionable.



Alum Creek

In addition, the parcel to be used for mitigation purposes is currently used for agriculture. Depending on the type of tilling practices used, soil erosion could be a problem for this site. Thus, the addition of wetlands and the protection of vegetation buffer along the stream may help address the current impact resulting from any non-sustainable agricultural practices. In essence, it appears that one set of issues will be addressed while another set of issues created.

These issues will be further analyzed and investigated in preparation for the January 4th public hearing. At this time, comments will be heard on the Antares Avenue development (Public Notice 200600079) at 6:30 pm at the Westerville Community Center in Maple Room C on January 4, 2007.

Factoid

By the Numbers: Part One

By David Hohmann

Using numbers to describe Alum Creek may seem a bit “dry.” But they give us valuable context to understand some of the challenges in FACT’s efforts to protect the Alum Creek.

People and governmental entities that impact Alum Creek in their daily decision making:

- Number of FACT members: 2006, 2005, 2004, 2001 = 160, 148, 104, 45*
- Number of residents in 2000 census = 257,300 people (300,000*)
- Number of counties with land drained by our river = 2 (3)
- Number of cities, municipalities, townships = 7 (16*)
- Number of Columbus urban planning districts within our area = 11

Key features of Alum Creek:

- Drainage basin area = 77 square miles (199)
- Main-stem of the river channel length = 27 miles (55.8)

- Elevation of river Headwaters vs. Confluence = 1120 vs. 715 feet above mean sea level

Negative environmental impacts:

- Amount of total area consisting of impervious urban surfaces = 34% (20*)
- River miles fully attaining Clean Water Act standards = 9 miles (37.8)
- Main-stem riparian land within protected areas = 50 % (25*)

Direct link between us and Alum Creek:

Annual average drinking water withdrawn from Alum Creek = 1540 million gallons (9547)

The numbers in parentheses above refer to the entire (i.e., both upper above the State Park Reservoir dam, and lower) Alum Creek watershed. All other numbers refer to the Lower Alum Creek area traditionally covered by FACT that begins starting just below the State Park reservoir. Our “river of numbers” viewpoint “spills over” into next issue’s FACTOID when we will look at the problem of sewage overflow entering Alum Creek.

Source: The Lower Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan (FACT, 2005).

*best estimate

Help Support the Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries – Become a Member!

Your contribution is tax deductible and enables FACT to pursue its mission of stewardship and citizen enjoyment of Alum Creek. Make checks payable to FACT, and return to 787 Montrose Avenue, Columbus, Ohio 43209.

Choose a Membership Category:

- () Student/Senior \$10
- () Individual/Family \$15-50
- () Organization \$50-200
- () Business Sponsor \$100-500
- () River Steward \$500-900
- () Watershed Protection Partner \$1000+

Name(s) _____

Organization/Business _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email* _____

**Please provide your email address to help FACT save resources.*

() **Supporting Member! \$100+**

Anyone can become a supporting member with a donation of \$100 or more

Thank You!

River Voices

By **Brian Wilke**

Brian Wilke has served on the FACT Board of Directors for one year. His hard work helped ensure the success of the 2006 Empty Bowl and Bike Ride events. He joins us as this edition's River Voices author.

Living near Alum Creek and realizing the importance of a vibrant watershed in the community got me involved in FACT. For me, Alum Creek is an important escape from daily stress and also lets me connect with nature, which is often difficult to do in a suburban or metropolitan area. Even though the watershed goes through highly populated areas, nature is still attracted to it. It is a necessity for life after all.

A high priority for me has been to make some time to get outside, and along Alum Creek is a great, convenient place that's got a lot to offer. There's always something to see and hear. There's always something to lift your spirits...a huge tree, a unique bird, the hooting of an owl.

It's hard to find the time, but when I finally do get out for a bike ride, or a walk, or to cast a line into the creek, I quickly realize it was well worth putting off whatever else I could (or should) have been doing. I've begun to realize that getting outside is what CANNOT be put off. I need the calming effect and to connect with nature, if only for a short time.

Our lives are very busy...working, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and more. I don't think we realize the impact that stress has on our lives. As I drive around town, I see the stressed-out mind set. A lot of folks are in a hurry and drive quite carelessly (to put it nicely). We could all use more down time, and the Alum Creek corridor is a great place to experience it.

In a metropolitan area, such as where we live, we need all the green space we can get. This is why I think Alum Creek and the people working to preserve it are so very important.

In my first year working closely with FACT Members and Board, I am truly inspired by the knowledge and the dedication of so many folks. I'm thankful for the Alum Creek corridor and ALL the Friends of Alum Creek.

See ya out there.



Alum Creek sparkles south of Morse Road. Photo courtesy of Carol Elder

OEPA Notice: This publication was financed through a grant from the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the United States Environmental Protection Agency, under the provisions of Section 319(h) of the Clean Water Act. The contents and views, including any opinions, findings, or conclusions or recommendations, contained in this publication are those of the authors and have not been subject to any U.S. EPA or Ohio EPA peer or administrative review and may not necessarily reflect the view of either Agency, and no official endorsement should be inferred.



Please check the [FACT Web site](#) for the most up-to-date detail on upcoming events.

Antares Avenue Development Public Hearing. January 4, 2007, 6:30 p.m., Westerville Community Center, Maple Room C.

FACT Meeting. January 11, 2007, 6:30 p.m., Ohio Dominican University Neighborhood Center (ODU), 1229 Sunbury Road. Parking available in the large lot just north of the center.

Thank You

To the Winebrenner Family for hosting the Third Annual Empty Bowl Benefit for a second year. Great food and entertainment was enjoyed by all who attended.



Volunteer Opportunities

FACT accomplishes its goals through volunteer power. Our immediate needs are listed below. Call Watershed Coordinator Kimberly L. Williams at (614) 409-0511 for more information or to learn about other opportunities.

Editor: Look over letters, etc., to find spelling and grammatical errors.

Bargain Shopper: Shop for requested items (usually office products) and try to find bargains.

Mailing: Help to prepare newsletters, membership letters, etc. May be asked to go to the post office.

Newsletter Editor: Put articles together using an Adobe InDesign template and manage print vendor.



787 Montrose Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43209