

Alum Creek

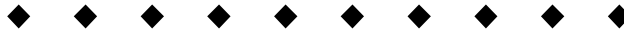


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Sheets

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FACT's Fall a Time of Plenty

By Heather Doherty, FACT Watershed Coordinator



Canoeing at Alum Creek River Fest 2002

FACT volunteers experienced no shortage of opportunities to reach out to watershed communities this Fall, attending *six events* in two months. Pictured above is the Alum Creek River Fest 2002, which featured a canoe float, representatives and information from many local environmental groups, kids activities, and biologists ready to talk about wildlife freshly netted from Alum Creek and on display.

FACT was also in attendance at the Bexley Block Party, Bexley Natural Foods Coop Festival, Columbus Recreation & Parks Department's Fall Harvest Jamboree, Simply Living Conference, and hosted a National Make a Difference Day Cleanup (see page 3). New FACT memberships and contacts were the reward, as well as a much deserved winter event hibernation!

Action Planning to Kick Off on January 15th

By Heather Doherty, FACT Watershed Coordinator

After a year of preparation, the clock is winding down on FACT's biggest initiative ever to protect and preserve Alum Creek. We've been talking about it for months, but on January 15th the words will spring to life as people from around the watershed gather at the Wolfe Park Shelter House with the unifying purpose of improving the Alum Creek's general health and water quality.

Watershed residents, city engineers and parks planners, EPA biologists, township trustees, and business owners alike will define strategies to address the many reasons why parts of Alum Creek are not meeting the clean water standards created by the Ohio EPA, as well as protect those parts that are currently meeting standards.

While this meeting will kick off action planning, groups of stakeholders will form to focus on specific issues and continue to meet to work out the details of the plan. Any one may attend this meeting, although another meeting specifically for watershed residents will be held on March 15th at the Franklin Park Conservatory.

To register for either session or to volunteer, please call 236-6455. To learn more about action planning, please visit FACT's website at:

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.

Board Members

Carol Elder, Chair
David Hohmann, Ohio EPA, Vice-Chair
Margaret Ann Samuels, Co-Treasurer
Jan Tague, Co-Treasurer
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Jeff Cox, Columbus Div. Of Sewers & Drains
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Vince Mazeika, OEPA Div. Of Surface Water
Jerry Wager, ODNR Soil & Water Conserv.
Carol Elder, Friends of Alum Creek
Dan Lorek, Bexley Development Department
Keith Dimoff, Ohio Environmental Council

Staff

Heather Doherty, FACT Watershed Coordinator

Contact Us

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Visit us at our Capital University office, Room 218 in the Kerns Religious Life Center

Generous support is provided by our many members and partnering organizations, as well as the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency and the Columbus Recreation Council.

Six – Year Grant Awarded from Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources

By Margaret Ann Samuels, FACT Co-Treasurer

FACT received confirmation in September that we were awarded a watershed coordinator grant from the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA). The two agencies in partnership have a program to fund watershed coordinators around the state. FACT was one of six award recipients in 2002.

The grant is to provide full funding for FACT's watershed coordinator in its first year, and can only be used for that person's salary and benefits. Payments are to begin in Dec. 2003, after the Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan is completed, and continue for 6 years, in declining amounts, with a total of up to \$192,000.

It will be up to FACT to obtain sufficient income to supplement the ODNR/OEPA grant money to pay our coordinator after the grant's first year. But the grant assures we can pay our coordinator after the current EPA grant, that supports creating the Action Plan, runs out one year from now!

FACT appreciates the support from ODNR and OEPA to enable FACT, and our coordinator Heather Doherty, to continue efforts to improve Alum Creek and its watershed.

FACT Board Members Renew Commitments for 2003

By Heather Doherty

FACT held it's annual meeting on November 14th to elect new officers for 2003. Congratulations to Carol Elder, David Hohmann, Joel Rosenfield, and Margaret Ann Samuels, who all retained their positions from the previous year as president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, respectively. Jan Tague, new member in 2002 and resident of Bexley, will also assist as co-treasurer and serve on FACT's Steering Committee.

In 2002 this group managed the fullest schedule of any FACT board to date, with significant additions in responsibilities including grant funds, new projects, and a staff person. FACT owes much of its recent successes their extraordinary ongoing commitment.



Metro Park naturalist Allison Shaw gives FACT a show at Sharon Woods during July's meeting.

Your Alum Creek Education Series Gets Personal

By Heather Doherty

If you haven't already heard, FACT has been delivering a bimonthly education series for the last year with programs ranging from outdoor adventures along Alum Creek to delving into ecology through spectacular stream photography. This winter we've choreographed a three part series that will bring you up close to the real issues affecting the Alum Creek and its surrounding communities.

How does it measure up to what the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) considers healthy? Is it safe for your family to fish or swim? What are the ways we can all help improve its condition? Expert speakers will address questions such as these this winter.

During Part I of the series held on November 14th, the OEPA helped us understand how a shift within the watershed from forest and agriculture to urban and suburban land uses has had severe effects on Alum Creek. Speakers from the Ohio State University and Ohio Department of Natural Resources will continue to enlighten us on Jan 9th and March 13th when they address how urban run-off pollution and low head (small) dams affect Alum Creek, respectively. Please see our calendar on page 5 for details.

Besides bringing you knowledgeable speakers and a chance to get to know others who share your love for Alum Creek, this series will shed light on the topics that are being addressed in the upcoming action plan. Learn where problems are coming from and what we as a community can do to affect them - a lot more than you might think!

Alum Creek Shines On-Line

By Heather Doherty

Although FACT's website is still an infant in website years, the hard work of volunteer webmaster Luanne Hendricks is paying off. Where can you see pictures of FACT's cleanup last May, read about stream ecology, and view a map of a city-wide multi-purpose trail network? You guessed it, and it doesn't stop there.

The newest features include a section on action planning, literature on stream ecology and pollution sources, and a lively photo gallery of FACT adventures. Don't forget our "anchor" features - a constantly updated calendar of events and FACT publications, including press releases and newsletters.



Main – Livingston Trail Segment Opens

By Heather Doherty

The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD) hosted a ribbon cutting ceremony in October to celebrate another addition to the Alum Creek Multi-Purpose Trail. This segment's northern end begins at Main Street across from Kroger's on the west side of Alum Creek, and follows the creek south to Livingston Avenue. Eight of the planned twenty-five miles of trail are now completed, and work continues on the preparing the remaining sections.



- What's New -

**Development at Watkins Road
and Alum Creek Drive**

By Carol Elder, Watershed Watch Co-Chair

The Columbus/Franklin County Affordable Housing Trust has submitted a zoning request to increase the density of housing allowed on an affordable housing development planned on the north east corner of Watkins Road and Alum Creek Drive along Alum Creek. FACT and Columbus Recreation and Parks Department (CRPD) are opposing the rezoning for several reasons.

First, the parcels are planned right to the top of the creek bank rather than leaving a 50 foot buffer from the top of the bank as CRPD has requested. Second, the Creeks Metro Park and its bike path are on the opposite side of the creek. CRPD had plans to erect a bridge at this point and install a loop path on the buffer zone in the proposed development to provide park access to the population on that side of the creek.

The zoning was approved by the Columbus Development Commission with the provision that the developer work out a solution with CRPD. FACT will continue to watch this development, which will likely be put before Columbus City Council on December 4th.

- Updates -

Bank deterioration in Bexley: The section of stream bank pictured in the September issue of *Alum Creek FACT Sheets* has made significant gains. The City of Bexley has graded and grassed the site and removed debris that had tumbled over the top of the bank, witnessed by FACT canoers in August.

ODOT Wetlands filling (401) permit: FACT is still watching this project, which will fill a very small amount of wetlands at the I-270 and Route 161 interchange, and affect Spring Run, a tributary to Alum Creek that flows under Route 161. Often these activities are allowed by law with mitigation of environmental impacts. FACT has requested that mitigation occur within the watershed instead of several counties away, as is often the case.

Factoid!

A heavy old safe weighing over 100 pounds was pulled out of Alum Creek near Academy Park by several female student volunteers on October 26th, Make a Difference Day. A 12-foot "No Parking" sign on a heavy post with a concrete anchor was also pulled out of the creek area by a group of other female students. WOW, ladies! [Guys, we know you got the huge doghouse out of the creek in 2001, the one that almost sank our boat with the 300 lb. load capacity.] Who needs a workout room to stay in shape at this rate?

**River Corridor Wraps Up a
Successful Year**

By D. Hohmann, River Corridor Committee Chair

From the River Corridor cleanup files: This year five FACT cleanups pulled in 270 volunteers who tackled 261 bags of trash, 20 tires and 20 other large items, plus filled a 20-yard roll-off box with other trash from parks and tributaries along the creek corridor. From Earth Day to River Pride Day to Labor Day to Make a Difference Day, we were there and it shows!

The Westerville Rotary, Capital University, Ohio Dominican University, local Boy Scouts, Bexley High School Environmental Club, Holtzman-Main Business Association, Main Street Kroger, and numerous dedicated FACT volunteers worked together on these efforts. We had fun too, with cookouts and contests.

Many FACT cleanups receive behind-the-scenes support from a City of Columbus program called Keep Columbus Beautiful (KCB). FACT has just formalized its adoption through KCB of an area along Alum Creek by Nelson Road, and signs advertising this commitment to do at least 3 cleanups a year there will go up soon. Hopefully more people reading those signs will learn of FACT, join our cause, and think twice before littering!

The national organization Keep America Beautiful has just selected KCB as the number one program in the country in the Beautification and Community Improvement category, and 2nd place in the Litter Prevention Category.

Calendar of Events

Details on all events can be found at www.friendsofalumcreek.org or by calling 236-6455.

- December 12th** **FACT meeting, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 –8:30 pm**
- January 1st** **Happy New Year!**
- January 9th** **Your Alum Creek Series Part II, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 - 8:30pm**
- Timothy Lawrence of OSU’s Ohio Non-point source Education for Municipal Officials (Ohio NEMO) will present FACT with how an urban landscape generates and funnels pollution into our rivers and its effect on Alum Creek and public health. He’ll also talk about what types of things we can do as individuals and as a group to help keep this from happening. Please call or check our website for meeting room location at ODU and directions.
- January 15th** **Alum Creek Action Planning Technical Session, Wolfe Park Shelter House, 1:00 – 4:30pm**
- This meeting will be the kick-off event for Alum Creek action planning, bringing together people to discuss the technical issues of restoring the water quality of Alum Creek. The meeting will begin with a presentation on the status of Alum Creek, followed by group sessions on specific impairment issues. Anyone with interest is welcome to attend! RSVP required, please call 236-6455.
- February 13th** **FACT meeting, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 –8:30 pm**
- March 13th** **Your Alum Creek Series Part III, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 – 8:30pm**
- Jim Morrison of the Ohio Department of Natural Resources will discuss small (or low-head) dams on Alum Creek and how they are negatively affecting creek life. Learn what’s been done on other rivers to help reverse these conditions.
- March 15th** **Alum Creek Action Planning Community Session, Franklin Park Conservatory , 10am – 4pm**
- A broad spectrum of community members will meet to discuss both strategies to strengthen Alum Creek as a local amenity and the communities that surround it. RSVP required, please call 236-6455. Attendance is open to all interested parties!

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