

Alum Creek

Volume VII, Issue II
June-August 2006



FACT Sheets

A quarterly publication
of the Friends of Alum
Creek and Tributaries

We've Been Busy!

As summer continues in full swing, the busy season for FACT continues. FACT is continuing its mission of preserving and protecting the Alum Creek Watershed while providing educational and recreational opportunities. FACT has also seen some organizational changes with the departure of its Watershed Coordinator, Heather Doherty. As the FACT Board of Directors proceeds in interviewing candidates to find a new watershed coordinator, volunteers, including board members, are working to meet the organization's goals. FACT would like to thank all of the volunteers for their valuable contributions.

FACT Continues to Clean up

FACT has had a busy spring and early summer reaching out to the community and working in problem areas of our watershed. We've done six cleanups already, and made a tangible difference in the natural quality of our creek areas.

Great American Cleanup. On March 3 we kicked off the season with an effort part of this national campaign through Keep Columbus Beautiful with help from ten volunteers (thanks, OSU students!!) who gathered 13 big bags of trash from our adopted area along Nelson Road and Academy Park.

Academy Park. A large group of 40 people returned to our adopted area on April 8th and really did a lot. 45 big bags of trash were gathered from along Nelson Road, the creek and in Academy Park. We recycled 7 bags of bottles and cans. 20 other oversize items including a tire were also removed for proper disposal. On April 21, 2006 a solo effort garnered three more bags of trash, a TV and a recovered stolen purse from the creek bank along Nelson Road.

Ohio River Sweep 2006. A pre-float on June 12 and a main float on June 17th from the reservoir dam at Lewis Center Road, to Westerville's Main Street (4-5 miles of river) brought 23 people out in canoes (thanks, Columbus Outdoor Pursuits!) to celebrate the Alum Creek's role within the greater Ohio River watershed. Free T-shirts were shared and our cleanup haul included 8 tires, 11 big bags of trash, and 26 oversize items (chairs, silt fence and pipe...).



Alum Creek, south of Lewis Center Road, below the Alum Creek Reservoir. Photo courtesy of Carol Ray.

Ohio River Sweep 2006: Argyle-Woodland Run Tributary. A group of 18 high school student volunteers and adults pitched in for a cleanup on June 15th in a heavily polluted urban tributary stretch. Twenty-five large bags of trash were gathered and removed, together with thirty-five oversize items (such as a tire, three bowling balls, a bicycle, pipes, and a swing set) and two hundred pounds of scrap steel items were collected and sent to be recycled.

In addition to the above cleanups, volunteers were active on Earth Day at Boyer Nature Preserve in

***"FACT Continues Cleanup,"** continued on page 3*

Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

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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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FACT Continues Cleanup, *continued from page 1*

Westerville (a headwater stream area) removing invasive honeysuckle and planting tree and shrub seedlings around an enhanced vernal pool wetland area being created there by member Mark Dilley.

FACT is very grateful for the hard work and dedicated efforts of our many volunteers. It is clear that we are making an effective difference for positive change in our local environment by these collective actions! We welcome other ideas and suggestions for future projects. For more information, contact River Corridor Committee chairperson David Hohmann at 614-728-3885.

Cocktails for Conservation

by Carol Elder

The second annual Cocktails for Conservation fundraiser was held on May 4 (almost Cinco de Mayo) at the Old Bag of Nails Pub in Bexley right on our own Alum Creek. Who could ask for a better location, as their patio overlooks the creek?

In fact, the 50 or so attendees enjoyed not only the location, but eating deep fried pickles and the Old Bag of Nails Pub's famous fried fish. Attendees enjoyed the fabulous weather, good conversation, and great music provided by Mid-State Wire.



Heather Doherty, Dan Binder and Sarah Binder enjoy the Second Annual Cocktails for Conservation fundraiser.

Dorothy Pritchard, Bexley Service Director, spoke briefly to the crowd of some of the environmental initiatives that Bexley is involved with and how they partner with FACT. David Hohmann, FACT vice chair,

also said a few words about what FACT is currently involved in, including a planned lowhead dam removal in Bexley.

FACT would like to thank the Old Bag of Nails Pub in Bexley for hosting the event and providing free appetizers and also would like to thank Mid-State Wire for donating their time to entertain us. The event netted more than \$1,500 for FACT. We hope to see you next year!

Otterbein Lake Project

by Brian Wilke

There's another great project happening in the Alum Creek Watershed in Westerville. It's Otterbein Lake and it's located along the bike path just south of Main Street (across the bridge from Alum Creek Park North, near Otterbein College).



Lake Otterbein. Photo courtesy of the Otterbein Lake Project

The lake itself has been there for many years, but looks like it will be much more resourceful (and beautiful) in the near future.

The project was approved in 2003, native plants were planted around the lake in 2005, and this year the level of the lake is slowly being lowered so engineering drawings can be made and bids taken. The project is to include a pier, low boardwalks, and stone overlook to provide educational and recreational opportunities.

For more information on the Otterbein Lake project, visit www.otterbeinlake.org or call 614-882-6493.

Wetlands Walk

by Carol Elder

On May 20, swamp lovers participated in the FACT wetlands walk at Three Creeks Park. The air was clean, the sun was bright, and the birds were singing (Carol Elder spotted a meadowlark). Tanya, the park ranger, did a great job of letting everyone get wet and muddy while looking for macro invertebrates. Macro invertebrate is a fancy word for small water dwelling bug-like creatures which are a good indicator of the health of a body of water. With nets in hand and boots on feet, participants saw tadpoles, mayfly larvae, and lots of other wiggly things. If you missed this event, but would like to learn more about wetlands and their critters, watch the FACT calendar for future wetland walks. And, if you have never been to Three Creeks Park, you should check it out. There are miles of trails, many wetlands, and three great creeks converging together at the same point.

Three Creeks Park features five areas, each with a separate entrance and connected to one another through the Alum Creek Greenways Trail. For more information on this 1,050-acre park, see:

www.metroparks.net/ParksThreeCreeks.aspx.

Factoid

“Lowhead Dam-ology”

Q. What did the fish say when it swam into the concrete wall?

A. “Dam!”

Lowhead dams are one of the mysterious and frustrating features of our local rivers. These are artificial structures of stone, timber or other material, which are less than 15 feet in height and extending across the channel. Ohio’s rivers are dotted with these structures, and the results are usually not good.

A normal unobstructed river naturally meanders on its bed course within a floodplain, with the passage of time. But each artificial lowhead dam turns the river into a stagnant small lake in the “impounded” area which may stretch for a mile or more upstream. The water passing over a dam can pose lethal safety hazards. Several lowhead dams are known to exist in Alum Creek.

Why were they installed? Sometimes it’s obvious-- Westerville’s dam provides the city’s water intake; another small dam on our creek has a utility pipe crossing under it. But at least two significant lowhead dams — 4 to 6 feet tall each, one near the north end of Nelson Park, and one just

north of the footbridge between Academy Park and Wolfe Park — aren’t believed to have any useful purpose now. The stagnant water behind them is not suitable for most fish and other diverse life that a healthy river normally can support.

Ohio DNR’s website lists over 45 such obsolete dams removed from our creeks and rivers. FACT is pleased to expect some great changes for the better soon here, as we move ahead with a project (supported by an Ohio EPA grant) to remove these two lowhead dams in the central urban part of our watershed sometime in 2007. You can look for more updates on this project soon from FACT.



Lowhead Dam in Alum Creek Park, Westerville. Photo courtesy of Michael Piteo.

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:	Name(s) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Senior \$10	Organization/Business _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Individual/Family \$15-50	Address _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Organization \$50-200	Phone _____ Email* _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Business Sponsor \$100-500	
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** 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!

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.

Events around the Watershed

Alum Creek Multi-Use Trail Update. A half-mile section of paved path near Strawberry Farms opened on June 1 to create a seven-mile trail from Westerville to Easton for walkers, runners and cyclists. The new section of the Alum Creek Trail connects Casto Park to Strawberry Farms Park and goes under I-270, state Route 161 and Morse Road so that trail users can avoid having to cross traffic. The completion of this section brings the trail to 13 of the planned 22 miles. The completion goal of the 22-mile trail is by the end of 2008. The 22-mile section is a part of the 450 mile Ohio to Erie Trail and stands to be the longest paved trail in the United States.

The Sounds of Summer Concert Series continues in Alum Creek Park in Westerville. Various free concerts are scheduled throughout July and August at the Alum Creek Park Amphitheatre. For the schedule or for more information, see www.visitwesterville.org/calendar.html .

Westerville **Art in the Park** is August 13, 2006 at Alum Creek Park North. After perusing art, wander over to Inniswood Metro Gardens for the 7:00 p.m. **Garden Walk**.

Sharon Woods Metropark is hosting a **Clean-up along Spring Creek** (tributary to Alum Creek) on Sunday, August 20 at 3 PM.



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

August (dates to be determined)

Tire roundup activities in the creek bed areas near East Main Street and Morse Road. Contact David Hohmann, River Corridor Chairperson, at 614-306-5884.

FACT Bike Ride and Picnic/BBQ (date to be determined)

The event will be held in the Westerville area on the Alum Creek Greenway Trail in August or September. Please check the [FACT Web site](#) for information on this upcoming event.

August 26, 2006

Three Creeks Fest (Alum, Blacklick, Big Walnut creeks) Cleanup from 10-noon; Festival from noon-3: exhibits, canoeing, crafts, animals. At Confluence area of Three Creeks Metro Park, 3860 Bixby Road, Groveport. For more information, see the [MetroParks Web site](#).

Members interested in other possible boat, bike or cleanup activities related to Alum Creek which may be scheduled on shorter notice, should contact David Hohmann, River Corridor Chairperson, for information at 614-306-5884.



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