

Alum Creek

VOLUME VI, ISSUE IV



DECEMBER 2005 -
FEBRUARY 2006

Fact Sheets

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

2005 Year-in-Review

A message from the Watershed Coordinator:

With the last of the year, the Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries are undertaking a first by breaking from our usual newsletter format to present a year-in-review of the organization's accomplishments. We're proud of them and hope you are too!

FACT is embarking on many other "firsts," as we (for instance) take new steps to ensure that the organization is sustainable over time, and begin our first true on-the-ground restoration projects.

As winter leads us naturally towards introspection, we want you to know where your support has taken us and what lies ahead. Thank you to all the FACT volunteers and contributors who have made our recent successes possible! Despite these achievements, much remains to be done as we continue to work to preserve this valuable urban natural resource.

If you'd like additional pictures to accompany your reading, please visit FACT online for a "**Year-in-Review Slideshow**" at www.friendsofalumcreek.org.

Happy Holidays!

Heather Doherty



Boaters at the "Bring Your Own Boat Float" in July prepare to cross under Morse Road and outrun a summer storm.

What's Inside: turn the page to read the year's summary of FACT programs...

~ Building A Strong Organization ~ Action Planning ~ Education ~

~ Recreation ~ Stewardship ~ Watershed Watch ~ Wetland & Riparian Conservation ~

Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

2820 Watkins Road, Columbus, Ohio 43207 ~ (614) 409-0511 ~ doherty@friendsofalumcreek.org

www.friendsofalumcreek.org

Board of Directors:

Barbara Logan, Chair
David Hohmann, Vice-Chair, River Corridor Committee
James Lunde, Treasurer, Fundraising Committee
Carol Elder, Secretary
Joe Bonnell, Education Committee
Margaret Ann Samuels, Watershed Watch Committee
Brian Wilke, At-large
Leslie Fowler, At-large
Roberta Cook, At-large



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.

Staff: Heather Doherty, Watershed Coordinator

FACT Members (0 - \$99)

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Dan Jax	Malcolm Jeffrey	Taletha Davis Jones	Colleen Kasson	Susan Kamps
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Gary Klase	Paul & Janet Konicek	Terry Lahm	Phyllis & Gordon Lemert	Ryan Light
Peggy Lobb	Barbara Logan	Marilyn Logue	Dick & Maureen Lorenz	Jim Lunde
William Manierre	Patricia Marida	Sherrill Massey	Sarah & Rick Meizlish	Paul Miller
Bill Morgan	Joannie Neal	Mike O'Neill	Steve, Deb, & Claire Parsons	Matthew & Suzann Perlik
Craig & Diane Peterson	Audra Phillips	Carol Ray & Thomas Piteo	Saira Virgee Preist	Penny Prince
Dorothy Pritchard	Ruth Quinn	Susan Quintenz	Mary Susan Rath	Tyler Reece
Elaine Reed	Cheryl Roberto	Brad & Claudia Ross	Sylvia & LaMar Roose	David & Sandy Roseman
Larry Ruben	Eric Saas	Margaret Ann Samuels	Jack Shaner	Alison Shaw
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Jim Welsh	Amy Westwater	Rick Wilson & Melinda Harris	Cathy Wicks	Brian & Anne Wilke
Bill Williams	Peter Wilms		Terry Winebrenner	Mark & Jill Young

Supporting Members

(\$100 - \$249)

Acorn Farms, Inc.	Bill & Phadia Adams	Anderson Concrete	Bexley Natural Market	The Brickman Group
Barbara Chuko	Coca Cola North America	Beth Crane	Paige Crane	Delco Water Company
E.E. Steele Partnership	Jeff & Leslie Fowler	Gretchen Hummel	Jeremy & Susan Studer King	Bill & Lisa Lonergan
Morrow Gravel Company	National Groundwater Assoc.	Old Bag of Nails Pub	Plaza Properties	St. Mary of the Springs
Jeanne Schmitt	Julia Schmitt	Pete & Lynn Sullivan	Westerville Sunrise Rotary Club	Lisa Westwater

(\$250 - \$999)

Dipietro Tyre Center Shirle Westwater

Watershed Protection Partners (\$1000 or more)

City of Bexley Jared R. Nodelman Foundation City of Westerville

Building a Strong Organization

In the passionate pursuit of protecting Alum Creek, it is tempting to work in standard overdrive gear on creek issues dawn 'til dusk. But just as people must sleep and eat, so must organizations take care to prevent exhaustion. This means investing in leadership and financial stability to ensure our organization is strong into the future.

Developing New Leadership

FACT would like to welcome our 2006 Board of Directors (below), including three new members! The number of volunteers working with FACT, whether on committees, service events or mailings has also continued to grow. Truly, we couldn't do it without you!

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Joe Bonnell, Education Committee
Margaret Ann Samuels, Watershed Watch Committee
Brian Wilke, At-large
Leslie Fowler, At-large
Roberta Cook, At-large

Achieving Financial Stability

FACT is very proud to report that over the last three years, our fundraising program has continued to grow in leaps and bounds. Membership climbed to 170 in 2005, doubling in just two years!

Combined with a number of new strategies, such as special events like "Cocktails for Conservation" held in May and selling art work, FACT raised \$13,000 in 2005. While we'll continue to seek grants for specific projects, these in-house efforts are critical to keeping the lights on.

This will be especially true as staffing costs continue to increase as a six-year grant from Ohio DNR that supports the Watershed Coordinator position declines. In our upcoming third year of the grant, we must supply \$10,000 towards salary, up from \$3,500 in 2005.

Watershed Action Planning

FACT's development of the Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan was based on a simple question: what's happening with our creek and what can we do about it? The time line below outlines the path FACT took to involve diverse local stakeholders, assess the creek's health, and develop voluntary actions to address problems and opportunities:

Action Plan Timeline

2002 - Began coordinating project
2003 - Held stakeholder meetings & conducted research
2004 - Received final "endorsement" from Ohio EPA and applied for implementation funding
2005 - Printed and disbursed plan

Priorities highlighted in the plan include river restoration, creek-side land conservation, and construction sediment runoff reduction.

After passing the rigorous Ohio EPA endorsement process, FACT applied for an additional state grant to begin implementing action plan projects. FACT anticipates receiving the grant in early 2006, which will primarily fund river restoration through selective lowhead dam removal.

FACT is also currently seeking endorsement from local partners such as the City of Westerville, who passed a resolution of support for the plan in September. FACT will continue to seek such endorsements and work with planning partners to put action strategies in motion.



FACT'ers looks for insects seined from the bed of Alum Creek at the Strawberry Farms Creek Walk. photo by Mike Elder

Education

Education of many audiences on a wide array of topics continues to be central to FACT's mission. In 2005, this included:

- ? publishing our quarterly *FACT Sheets* newsletter
- ? hosting six bimonthly education and outing series events, pictured above (because indoor meetings are not enough!)
- ? hosting special events such as Three Creeks Fest, held at Three Creeks Park in August, and tabling community events and festivals

This year, FACT also began work with the local communities to officially name Argyle-Woodland Run with the help of the Franklin County Greenways Program. The official application to geographic naming boards is currently being reviewed.

Recreation & Riparian Conservation

Much of the value that Alum Creek presents for recreation, including boating, fishing, nature trails, and cycling, depends on our ability to conserve this “greenway” corridor in its natural state. This goal is also key to protecting the stream’s ecological health, scenic value, and ability to provide flood control. As an all-in-one strategy it can’t be beat!

Riparian Research

With the help of Franklin County Greenways (a program of the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission), FACT has created a GIS database of the best remaining natural lands along Alum Creek. We’ve looked for areas with features such as woodlands, floodplain, wetlands, and steep (vulnerable) slopes.

FACT employed an intern from Otterbein College (Amanda Houston) in 2004 and 2005 to help create the database, and another intern this fall from OSU (Dan Shustack) to help rank database entries. Next steps include contacting land owners directly or through the soon-to-come Back Yard Conservation Program to encourage good stewardship and conservation.

Alum Creek Greenway Trail

FACT continues to support the creation of Alum Creek Greenway Trail. The trail is planned to extend from Westerville to southeastern Columbus (Three Creeks Park), passing the Easton shopping center and Bexley on its way. Several portions are now open, and the entire trail is expected to be completed by 2008.

This year, FACT supported the applications of the City of Bexley and City of Columbus to the Clean Ohio Grant Fund for riparian conservation and restoration totaling \$800,000. This state issue bond fund was created by Governor Taft, who visited Cooper Park along Alum Creek this fall in celebration of the program. Stay tuned for more news as these projects unfold.

Canoeing

FACT hosted a “Bring Your Own Boat” canoe float, pictured on the page 1, in July. We are convinced that providing opportunities to see the river from this perspective is both fun AND extremely effective at

demonstrating the value and beauty of Alum Creek. Despite logistical challenges and the time intensive nature of organizing trips, our goal is to provide canoes for at least one trip in 2006.



Boyer Park Nature Preserve Wetlands. photo by Mike Elder

Wetlands

Wetlands provide a number of valuable “ecosystem services,” such as filtering pollutants, providing wildlife habitat, and storing flood water during and after heavy precipitation. All of these services are also beneficial to waterways, which are often interconnected with wetlands. But some studies theorize that over 90% of the states wetlands have been destroyed to make room for farms and urban development.

In the interest of preserving what’s remaining, FACT has been working with volunteers and municipalities to inventory where wetlands remain. You might be surprised how many, like the Boyer Park Nature Preserve (pictured above), are tucked away in neighborhoods. Research continues while we also pursue preserving these wetlands – please see below.

Watershed Watch

“Watershed Watch” refers to FACT’s monitoring of activities with potential to harm the creek. In 2005, FACT monitoring and / or took action on 28 projects!

Watch Projects in 2005:

- ? 4 stream fill projects (401 permits)
- ? 6 wetland fill projects (401 permits)
- ? 7 construction erosion control sites
- ? 4 new development zoning & planning reviews
- ? 7 large scale policy issues

Many FACT volunteers participated in wetlands and stream fill “401” permit hearings FACT requested from the Ohio EPA for projects like the one pictured below, in which the Germain Motor Company sought to pave over a stream near Easton to build a new dealership.



Once a wooded ravine, on its way to becoming a Germain Motor Company dealership. photo by Carol Elder

FACT also requested a hearing for the Heron Pointe Condominiums project, where sadly, condo owners were left holding the tab for bank stabilization that was needed after developers built too close to a stream. Bank erosion had brought the stream within feet of the building – an example of why policy to protect streams, and people, is needed.

Although current regulations can not prevent stream and wetland fill projects, FACT’s participation did yield results. For instance, in addition to standard mitigation, the Germain Motor Company was also required to make extensive upgrades to the stormwater treatment system at Easton to handle runoff from their development.

FACT is also proud to have participated in the creation of policy, often by invitation of municipal partners. For instance, FACT took part in the development of the City of Columbus’s Wet Weather Management Plan that lays out 40-years of work revamping sewer systems to reduce pollution into our waterways.

And although not by invitation, FACT helped defeat “the Bulldozer Amendment,” a state budget bill rider that would have significantly weakened laws protecting streams and wetlands.

Local Wetland Mitigation Success!

After years in the making, 2005 has seen our first local wetland mitigation projects! Instead of compensating for the loss of Alum Creek watershed wetlands at “wetland banks” several counties away, FACT has worked with developers and municipalities to keep such mitigation in the watershed, reducing the net loss of these resources.

The first project got underway at Boyer Park Nature Preserve in Westerville on a cold December Saturday when a dozen or so FACT volunteers helped remove invasive honeysuckle shrubs in advance of creating small vernal (or seasonal) wetlands. The work is a result of an agreement with a permit applicant – Columbus Fair Auto Auction – to mitigate locally, and the City of Westerville, who agreed to accept mitigation at the park.

Other projects on the way include wetlands creation and enhancement at College Knolls in Westerville, provided as mitigation from Performance Site Management, and wetlands enhancement at Somerset Park in Columbus, provided as mitigation from Plaza Properties. In addition, FACT applied to the Columbus Foundation in mid-December for funds to work in advance on wetlands restoration – news of the results will come in February.

Stewardship

FACT’s numbers for the year on creek cleanups are nothing less than spectacular:

- ? 13 cleanups with 168 volunteers
- ? 232 bags of trash (30 of these recycled)
- ? 132 tires (*many at Morse Road, pictured below*)
- ? 130 oversized items, such as the ubiquitous shopping cart, and, a kitchen sink

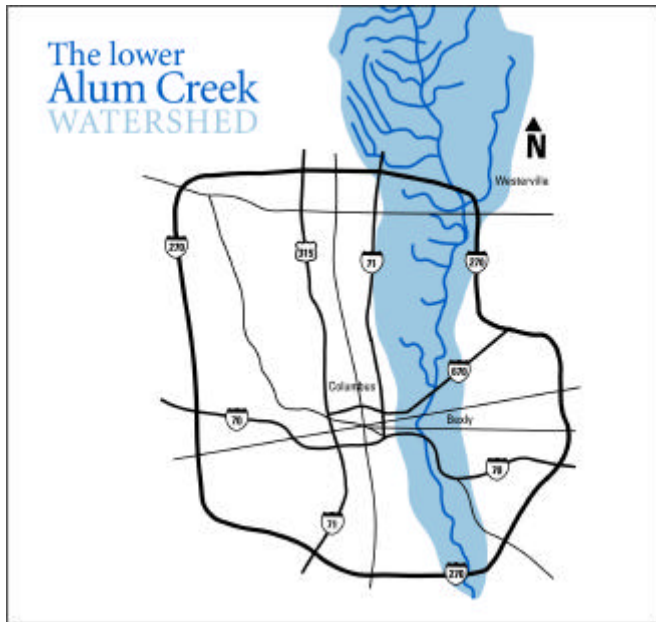
In the last four years, FACT has conducted 32 cleanups with 774 volunteers! FACT firmly believes that involving residents in removing garbage creates momentum, pride, and a sense of accomplishment that’s hard to beat. Thank you to all of the hardworking volunteers who’ve made it happen!



Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

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Upcoming Events

January 12th - **FACT monthly meeting**
Ohio Dominican University Neighborhood Center (ODU),
6:30 PM. 1229 Sunbury Road. Park in the large lot just
north of the center. Everyone invited!

February 9th - **FACT monthly meeting**
(same as above)

March 9th - **FACT monthly meeting**, ODU, 6:30 PM
(same as above)

The shaded area of the map to the left represents the Alum Creek Watershed, or the area of land that drains to Alum Creek. Do you live in the Alum Creek watershed? Call FACT for help to find out!

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) _____

() Student/Senior \$10 Organization/Business _____

() Individual/Family \$15-50 Address _____

() Organization \$50-200 Phone _____ Email* _____

() Business Sponsor \$100-500

() River Steward \$500-900

() Watershed Protection Partner \$1000+

** 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!



787 Montrose Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43209