

Alum Creek

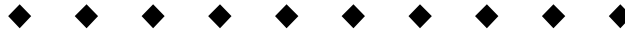


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June – August 2004

Sheets

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



Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan Approved by Ohio EPA

FACT now eligible for \$500K in grant funds

The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) & Ohio Department of Natural Resources are funding the creation of many watershed action plans across the state. The two agencies conduct thorough plan reviews and grant their official “endorsement” to those meeting stringent criteria. In April, the Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan became one of only ten in the state to achieve this benchmark.

Plan endorsement is the key step in gaining eligibility for Ohio EPA “section 319” grant funds. FACT gladly took advantage of the opportunity in mid-May by applying for *half a million dollars!* If FACT is selected as a grant recipient, funds (and major action plan projects) will begin by mid-2005; see page 2 for a list of priority projects.

With the action plan as a spring board, this grant application represents FACT’s biggest initiative ever, and to pull it off we had to demonstrate local support for the project. FACT would like recognize all of the community members that made this easy to do through involvement with creating the plan, volunteering, and financial support – thank you!

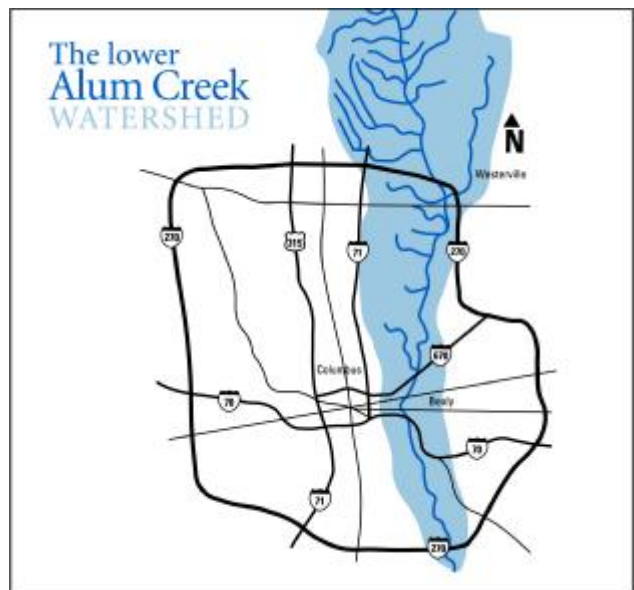
Though we’re very proud of these achievements, they are only the beginning. For the remainder of 2004, FACT will be seeking additional funding sources, putting finishing touches on the action plan, printing an executive summary, and best of all, celebrating! Look for event announcements this fall, and please join us. FACT has also already begun putting some action plan projects on the ground. Please call 409-0511 to learn how you can volunteer!

Watershed:

More than a vocabulary word

Recognizing that it’s sometimes good to get back to basics, FACT would like to share our new watershed map (below). A watershed is simply an area of land that drains to a particular body of water, also known as a drainage basin. The area shown in blue below drains to Alum Creek when it rains, and hence represents the Alum Creek watershed. Pollution can also drain to Alum Creek from anywhere in this area, which is why it’s an essential concept to FACT.

The watershed covers 100 square miles, and includes portions of southern Delaware County, Westerville, Columbus, Bexley, Minerva Park, and Franklin County. The creek ends as it flows into Big Walnut Creek at Three Creeks Park in southeast Columbus.





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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Top 5 Action Plan Projects

Although the Alum Creek watershed action plan intends to cover a lot of ground, here's a snapshot of priority issues, chosen because of their high likelihood of preserving or restoring Alum Creek.

- 1. Lowhead dam removal** – some small dams on Alum Creek have severely impaired the stream's health, and FACT has applied for grant funds to remove two of them.
- 2. Preservation & stewardship of creek-side land** – this is the most powerful tool we have to protect the ecological, aesthetic, and recreational value of the creek, especially as development encroaches on creek banks.
- 3. Education on pollution issues** – urban runoff pollution is also severely affecting Alum Creek, and building awareness is the first of many steps that residents can take to reduce pollution.
- 4. Spring Run restoration** - this tributary stream runs through Inniswood Metro Garden and presents tremendous possibilities for restoration, especially with the help of the City of Westerville.
- 5. Collaboration with watershed partners** – it should go without saying that FACT prioritizes all opportunities to work with local partners to make positive change for our communities.

Thousands of Trees Cut Down Due to Ash Borer Beetle

The Emerald Ash Borer Beetle is originally from Asia, but hopped a ride to the United States sometime in the late 1990's. Now it is infesting ash trees, which commonly grow in wet areas along rivers, at an alarming rate. The beetle was found along Alum Creek south of Morse Road earlier this year, which prompted the United States Department of Agriculture to "quarantine" the beetle by removing all ash trees within a half mile radius of where the beetle was initially discovered.

FACT volunteers joined the Columbus Recreation & Parks Department on May 15th to replant over 100 trees along Alum Creek to prevent bank erosion, although over 16,000 trees were removed in all. Call 409-0511 for more information or to volunteer.

FACT Membership Grows Over 100 Strong!

FACT is pleased to announce that last month, membership surpassed 100 for the first time ever! This is a 50% increase over 2003, and the year isn't over yet. To celebrate, we've invited our 100th member to write this issue's River Voices column (on this page). We'd like to extend our sincere thanks to all members, and especially to our Supporting Members! See page 6 for a list of members, which appears in every newsletter edition.

Membership is important for a number of reasons: it provides much needed funding for FACT's basic needs, helps us make connections to watershed residents, and demonstrates to elected officials that their residents care about these issues. If you aren't a member now, **it's never too late** – fill out and mail the form on page 6 to make a difference for Alum Creek.

Spring Events Hit Home



Biologist Mark Dille shows off his catch from Spring Run.

This year's Spring events were close to home for many watershed residents, especially for those living near tributary stream Spring Run. Residents got an up-close look at the stream during FACT's education & outing series event in May at Inniswood Metro Gardens (pictured above), where FACT and the City of Westerville unveiled a joint campaign to restore the stream.

A "Triple-header" Earth Day cleanup was also close to home for many, taking place in three locations thanks to many project partners (including the City of Westerville & Westerville Rotary Club). See the FACT event calendar on page 5 to check out what's up next – a cool creek walk on July 8th!

~ River Voices ~



River Voices contributing writer Joe Bonnell joins us as FACT's 100th member for 2004! Joe also provides assistance to FACT as the coordinator of the Ohio Watershed Network, through OSU Extension. Learn more on the web at ohiowatersheds.osu.edu



What a great honor to be the 100th member of FACT! I think it's a sign of how much the group has grown in the past couple of years that their 100th member lives outside the watershed. I'm sure the vast majority of the other 99 members are residents of the watershed, but you certainly don't have to live in the Alum Creek watershed to appreciate its value or to want to be a part of the great work of FACT.

I became involved in the Alum Creek Watershed when Heather Doherty asked for assistance from OSU Extension to facilitate a planning process that would truly engage the communities in identifying and addressing the major impairments and threats to the health of the river. Through that planning process, I got to know many of the people who fight every day to keep the Alum Creek from going the way of so many urban rivers - lined with rip rap and concrete or, worse yet, buried in culverts and storm sewers.

The commitment and dedication of all the participants in the planning process, regardless of their background - public officials, water management professionals, concerned citizens, park managers, professors and students - was an inspiration and gave me hope that positive change was a real possibility.

I was so inspired, I decided to join the ranks of those who have made a commitment to supporting the mission and goals of the Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries. Even though I live outside the watershed, I know that the benefits of groups like FACT reach far beyond watershed boundaries - a healthier Alum Creek is a healthier Ohio.

Watershed Watch



By Margaret Ann Samuels and Carol Elder

Watershed watch is a catch-all phrase for monitoring of various activities with the potential for negative impact on Alum Creek or tributary streams. Current developments include:

McCammom Estates (Delaware County) – MI Homes plans to build 177 homes on a 100 acre tract in a vulnerable area that includes 3 ravines with tributaries that flow to Alum Creek. The Orange Township Board of Trustees approved the plans with a check dam across one of the ravines, which FACT recommended against.

Bexley Tree Nursery property (Bexley) – City Council approved a preliminary plan to place 36 condominiums on the City's 5.5 acre tree nursery site along Alum Creek at the north edge of Bexley. The city agreed to sell the property for development, declining a rival bid to turn the area into a park. FACT sent written recommendations as well as expressing concerns about stream protection at council and committee meetings. We will continue to be involved as the project's details evolve.

Villages at Stone Cliff (Columbus) – FACT provided the Northeast Area Commission with information to support a vote not to approve a proposed Dominion Homes development between Alum Creek and Sunbury Road behind Mount Herman Baptist Church. Plans would require filling of the Alum Creek floodplain and wetlands. FACT asked the US Army Corps of Engineers to hold a hearing regarding the wetland fill, and will provide comments to city council.

Polaris Village (Orange Township)– FACT filed comments in May with Ohio EPA, asking for a hearing on a Dominion Homes application to fill a tributary stream south of Powell Road.

Businesses to build at Morse and Sunbury Roads (Columbus) – Alum Creek borders this intersection with very vulnerable, steep banks. **HH Gregg** plans to build a store on the northwest corner of Morse and Sunbury Roads. Plans would require filling-in the low property, but with FACT's encouragement, they will be donating an easement to Columbus

Recreation and Parks for preservation. Northland Community Council's Development Committee granted conditional support. **Car Max** had originally applied to build on that site, but was not approved. They are now proposing to build across the street on the northeast corner of Sunbury and Morse.

Minerva Park Golf Course – Dominion Homes is proposing to purchase the golf course and build 357 houses. It is a beautiful parcel with a lake, mature trees, and tributary stream Kilbourne Run.

Get involved with FACT's watershed watch committee by calling 409-0511.



Factoid!

Let's Think about the Mink!

By David Hohmann

Mink are members of the weasel family that are native to Ohio and like to live along streams and rivers (see photo on next page). Males can weigh up to 3 pounds and grow up to 21 inches long. These predators may occupy and roam over areas up to 50 acres or more. Mink have a reputation of being voracious - they may prey on animals as large as a rabbit or even a chicken, although fish are a primary source of food.

They make their homes in other animals' abandoned dens or burrows near the water's edge, such as those made by muskrats or even groundhogs. Somewhat elusive to spot in the wild, they are most active at night. Minks don't hibernate in the winter, and can swim up to 50 feet underwater. Ohio DNR staff informed us that while mink are "not exactly rare, they would not be highly common" in our urban watershed. However, **minks are often sighted along Alum Creek** at Three Creeks Park in southeast Columbus!

Mink are good indicators of aquatic ecosystem health because they are high-level predators on the food chain. When mercury, PCBs, and/or pesticides build up in smaller and larger fish, the mink who eat them will suffer the effects (just as human fishermen may). Deterioration of streams from runoff pollution also would affect the mink by limiting the mink's food source.

Calendar of Events

June 10th **FACT monthly meeting**, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 – 8:30 PM
Open to the public! Meetings are held at the ODU Neighborhood Center, 1229 Sunbury Road. Park in the large lot just north of the center.

July 8th *FACT Outing and Speaker Series*, Lewis Center Road (Delaware County), 6:30 – 8:00 PM
CREEK ADVENTEUR! – Join FACT and the Delaware Soil & Water Conservation District for an adventeur in Alum Creek! Learn about river ecology and wildlife and try your hand at netting fish and insects. If you'd like to cool off your feet and wade in with us, please bring shoes that you can wear in the water. Meet at the parking lot in the recreation area below the Alum Creek Lake Reservoir dam, located on Lewis Center Road between Bale Kenyon Road and Africa Road. Please RSVP by calling 409-0511.

Aug 7th **RIVER FEST** - Three Creeks Park, Bixby Road, 10:00AM – 4:00PM



Join the Franklin County Greenways Initiative, FACT, and other central Ohio watershed groups in a day of river celebration! It's free, fun, and educational. Attractions will include nature walks, canoe trips (weather permitting, first come first serve), educational displays, music, a river cleanup (from 10-12), and games. Call Andrea at 233-4124 for more information.

*PHOTO: A Mink in its natural habitat, on a river!
Learn more about mink in the FACToid! on page 4.*

Aug 12th **FACT monthly meeting**, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 – 8:30 PM
Open to the public! Meetings are held at the ODU Neighborhood Center, 1229 Sunbury Road.

Sept 13th *FACT Outing and Speaker Series*, Location To Be Announced, 6:30 – 8:00 PM
Citizen Erosion Control Network – Mud washing off of construction sites is a major threat to the health of Alum Creek. Sediment can smother the stream bottom and destroy prime habitat for fish and insects. Join us to learn about what you can do as a watershed resident to help monitor erosion controls. Stay tuned for event details, or RSVP now at 409-0511 and we'll contact you with event updates.



THANK YOU TO SPRING EVENT SPONSORS!

Earth Day Cleanup Business Sponsors: Pizza Hut, Aldi, Subway, Hostess Outlet, Great Harvest Bread Company
FACT Raffle Donors: Luanne Hendricks / Inniswood Metro Garden; Watershed Organic Lawn Care

Call 409-0511 for details on all events, or visit www.friendsofalumcreek.org

Thank You to all FACT MEMBERS!

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 Lawrence Samuels Family
 Joseph Daubenmire Family
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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.**

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Thank You!



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