



Get the Dirt: Why mud matters for Alum Creek

Muddy Waters a Problem for Streams

Mud. It's a major component of the planet we live on. Aside from cleaning, to most of us it seems like a relatively harmless substance. So why is FACT talking about it? Too much of just about anything can be harmful, and that is certainly true of mud and rivers.

Under normal circumstances, rivers do carry sediment, or small particles of dirt, mud, silt, and sand, down stream with the flow of water. But too much sediment can cause serious problems. Sediment settles on the stream bottom and smothers the habitat of fish and insects that dwell there. Many aquatic species prefer a stream bottom with coarse rocks or pebbles, but once these spaces are filled with sediment, sensitive species of aquatic life cannot survive.

Sediment can also cause problems for people through degrading the aesthetic quality of streams, changing flow patterns that can result in bank erosion, and making the treatment of drinking water more difficult. In addition, nutrients and toxic chemicals attach to sediment particles and are carried into waterways with the muddy runoff.

Excessive amounts of sediment are entering Alum Creek from mud washing off of constructions sites during storms. If it seems unlikely that erosion from these sites could be a source of much damage, consider that according to building permit data from 1992 to 2002, 30% of lower Alum Creek watershed within Delaware County was under construction. When this fact is combined with estimates that construction sites produce 1,000 to 2,000 times greater sediment runoff than forest lands, the magnitude of the issue begins to emerge.

In 1999, the Ohio EPA conducted studies of Alum Creek and found that sediment is indeed a major pollutant. Alum Creek study sites in Westerville and Columbus that were previously considered to be in good health were downgraded to marginal health status. Sediment was cited as a major culprit, having impacted aquatic insect populations (see page 5 for more on insects).

Laws Passed to Prevent Muddy Runoff

Laws to prevent muddy runoff were established in a section of the Clean Water Act that addresses "stormwater," or the precipitation that is conveyed from city streets to streams by underground storm sewers (without treatment). The law requires towns and cities to take steps to limit pollutants that can be delivered along with stormwater.

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Emergency management and erosion control crews from a construction site and into tributary stream Allkire Run.



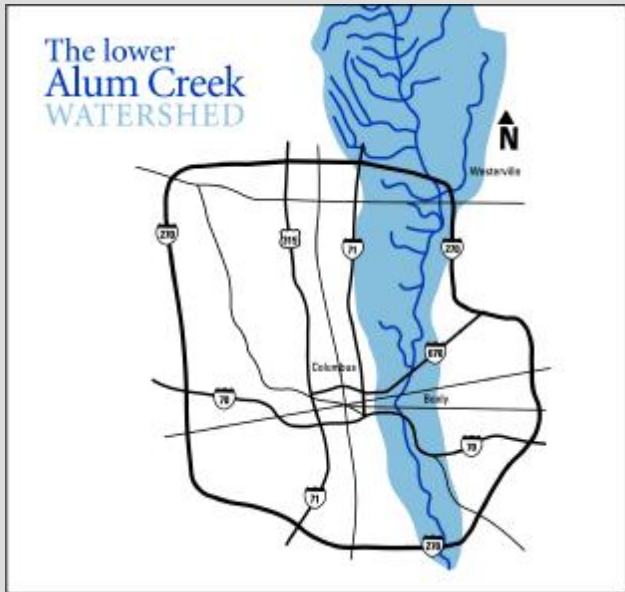
The Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

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.

Steering Committee:

Carol Elder, Chair; David Hohmann, Vice-Chair
Margaret Ann Samuels, Co-Treasurer
Jan Tague, Co-Treasurer; Barbara Logan, Secretary
Harold Highland, River Corridor Committee Chair
James Lunde, Fundraising Committee Chair

Staff: Heather Doherty, Watershed Coordinator



Contact Us: 2820 Watkins Road, Columbus, Ohio 43207 * (614) 409-0511 * doherty@friendsofalumcreek.org
On the Web at www.friendsofalumcreek.org

Monthly Meetings are held on 2nd Thursdays at 6:30 PM. During even months meetings take place at the Ohio Dominion University Neighborhood Center, 1229 Sunbury Rd. Don't miss FACT's exciting **Education & Outing Series** events scheduled during odd months - please confirm locations on the event calendar (pg. 6).

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- | | | | |
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... "MUD," continued from page 1

One of these steps is requiring contractors to define how they will use techniques called "Best Management Practices," or BMP's, to control runoff from construction sites. These include techniques such as installing fencing around the site or covering storm sewer drains with mesh netting to trap sediment particles. Municipal officials must conduct inspections to ensure that the BMP's are being maintained.

While this law has applied to larger municipalities such as the City of Columbus for ten years, a second phase was recently established for smaller jurisdictions and covers the entire lower Alum Creek watershed. These programs will benefit the watershed, although adequate BMP maintenance and inspections will likely continue to be an issue. That's where you come in!

Construction Mud Monitoring Workshop for Citizens on September 9th!

This workshop will kick off a FACT campaign to prevent sediment pollution in Alum Creek through establishing a citizen's monitoring network. Making sure that laws are followed on construction sites is a big job, due to the rapid pace of development and the continual maintenance needs of most erosion control BMP's. Citizens can learn more about how the laws work, what to look for on a construction site, and how to report a site with poorly performing erosion controls.

The event will take place at the Orange Township Community Room (located next to the pool) at 7560 Goodling Blvd. Can't make it? You can still get involved by calling FACT to receive a free citizen's guide to erosion control, or by calling 409-0511 for more information.

Directions: Follow Route 23 north from I-270, and turn left (west) onto Goodling Blvd. at the first traffic light north of Orange Road.

Join FACT to Clean Up Adopted Area on October 2nd

Volunteers will be picking up garbage in FACT's adopted area (along Alum Creek south of Broad Street) for the third time this year starting at 9AM on October 2nd. Meet at Academy Park on Nelson Road – call 409-0511 for more information or to RSVP.

Congratulations to over 40 volunteers who helped out at the River Fest cleanup at Three Creeks Park in August! They picked up over 2 dozen tires, not to mention several

truck loads of other debris from a very small section of the creek. Thank you also to students from around Columbus who joined FACT and Berwick area residents to cleanup Bliss Run. This Alum Creek tributary stream flows southwest from Livingston Avenue, through the "twin lakes" and into Alum Creek north of Route 104.



High school students from around Columbus develop leadership skills while cleaning up Bliss Run.

RSVP Now for the "Empty Bowl Affair" on September 18th

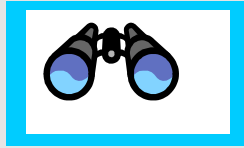
Enjoy a special night of food and celebration at the Westerville Inn to benefit FACT! Dine on delicious soups, bread, and salad, while enjoying a bonfire, music, door prizes, and the release of the Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan Executive Summary. Please visit the FACT website at www.friendsofalumcreek.org for an RSVP form, or call 409-0511.



Thank you to our generous event sponsors!

The Westerville Inn * Nicole's Café * Flowers by Doris
College and Grove Bed & Breakfast * Raisin Rack
Great Harvest Bread Company * Giant Eagle
Westerville Sunrise Rotary Club * Heavenly Cup
Polaris Grill * Olive Garden

Watershed Watch



By Carol Elder

Watershed watch is a catch-all phrase for the monitoring of activities that could potentially harm Alum Creek or tributary streams. The next meeting of the Watershed Watch Committee will be held on September 21st. Please call 409-0511 for more details, and read the “wetlands” article (below) to learn about a committee project. Projects that are currently being monitoring are summarized below.

Dominion Homes Plans Two Projects to Fill Wetlands and Streams

Village at Polaris Green, Columbus (south of Powell Road near I-71): Plans include destroying 500 feet of an ephemeral tributary stream to build 71 homes. To do so, Dominion Homes (Dominion) must apply for a 401 permit from Ohio EPA. FACT submitted comments and is currently negotiating mitigation of the impacts with Dominion. However, if FACT and Dominion are unable to reach an agreement, the issue may be set for a hearing - stay tuned!

Village at Stone Cliff, Columbus (2283 Sunbury Road, north of Mock Road): Dominion has proposed a 228 home residential development next to Alum Creek that would require filling the floodplain and 1.76 acres of wetlands. Despite FACT’s opposition to the floodplain fill, Columbus City Council has approved rezoning of the parcel. Dominion has filed for a 401 permit from the Ohio EPA to fill the wetlands, and FACT is requesting mitigation of the impacts at Boyer Nature Preserve in Westerville. FACT is currently negotiating the details, although if an agreement is not reached, the issue may be set for a hearing.

HHGregg, Columbus (northwest corner of Morse & Sunbury Roads): HHGregg plans to build a new store that will require large amounts of floodplain fill, but with FACT’s encouragement, they will be donating an easement along Alum Creek for preservation. The company may also create new wetlands in the preserve to compensate for filling existing wetlands on site.

Columbus Fair Auto Auction, Columbus (New World Drive & Alum Creek Drive): This company has proposed to destroy 2.68 acres of wetland to expand its business. The project will require a 401 permit from the Ohio EPA, and the company has proposed to mitigate the wetland impacts by purchasing credits at a wetland bank

in Marion County. FACT will work to negotiate local mitigation.

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. FACT sent written recommendations as well as expressing concerns about stream protection at council and committee meetings, and will continue to be involved as the project’s details evolve.

Minerva Park Golf Course: Dominion Homes is proposing to purchase the golf course and build 357 houses. The parcel contains a lake, mature trees, and tributary stream Kilbourne Run. FACT will be contacting officials to discuss ways to maintain the quality of the area and streams flowing through the site.



FACT Researches Wetlands With Hopes for Preservation

The “Watershed Watch” column on this page provides plenty of evidence that wetlands are becoming a rare commodity in the Alum Creek watershed. This is due to the practice of filling them to make way for new development.

Although anyone may fill a wetland after receiving what’s known as a “401 permit” from the Ohio EPA, the permitting process gives citizens the right to receive notice that it’s happening. It also has given FACT an opportunity to work for the best possible compensation for the loss. This compensation is referred to as mitigation, and is required by the 401 permit.

However, mitigation often takes place in “wetland banks,” where developers may purchase credits. FACT (and many others) has concerns with this scenario. For instance, the type and size of wetlands being created are not replacing the biodiversity and function of the many small wetlands that are being lost. Also, the wetland banks are often located several counties away and do little to compensate for impacts to the Alum Creek watershed.

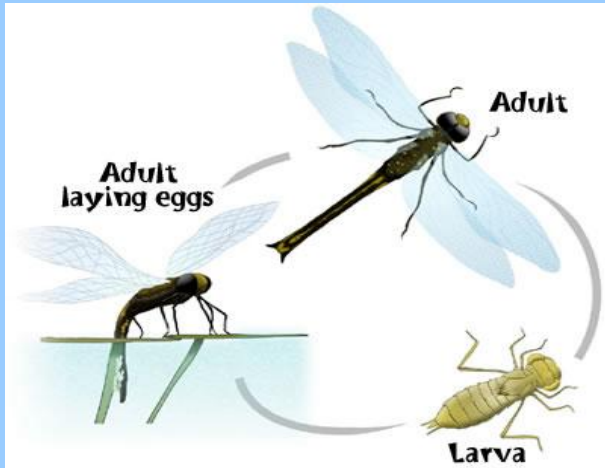
In response, members of the watershed watch committee are researching existing wetlands in the watershed with maps and site visits. This may help FACT prevent their destruction, or offer them as local mitigation opportunities if a wetland is being filled elsewhere in the watershed.

Factoid!

The next time you visit Alum Creek, you'd be surprised by what you could find by kicking up a few stones... an entire

Underwater World of Insects

With more than 1,200 species, aquatic insects are the largest group of Ohio stream wildlife. Most grow up under water as larvae (see below) but fly away as adults. Some skate on the surface, some crawl on the bottom. Some eat plants, some are predators, and many are eaten by other species of wildlife.* Whatever the case, there's no doubt that aquatic insects, also referred to as "macroinvertebrates," are essential to stream food webs.



The Lifecycle of a Dragonfly

(Image: www.amonline.net.au/.../freshwater/dragonfly.htm)

But where they live also makes them very vulnerable to pollutants such as sediment. Mud washing off of agricultural fields or construction sites can land on the stream bottom and smother the insects.

Some sections of Alum Creek have relatively few species of insects because of **sediment pollution**. And fewer insects also means fewer fish that depend on the insects for food. Because of the sensitivity of some aquatic insects, the Ohio EPA uses their presence (or lack thereof) to rate the health of streams in Ohio.

Some insects that live at least a part of their lives underwater and are indicators of good water quality include mayflies, stoneflies, dragonflies, and caddisflies.

* Adopted from "A Guide to Ohio Streams," edited by Randall Sanders, published by the Ohio Chapter of American Fisheries Society Columbus, OH, 2000.

~ River Voices ~

Jim Lunde, pictured here with daughter Olivia, joins us as this edition's River Voices author and FACT's newest Board Member! Jim will also be heading up the FACT fundraising committee.



The first canoe trip of the year is always special. This year it was the Alum Creek river clean-up in March. It was my first clean-up and it turned out to be one of my most rewarding canoe trips. After numerous lazy trips down the Kokosing, Big Darby, Todd's Fork, Little Miami, and the Mohican River, this trip was special for a number of reasons. Tops among them was the reward of helping to beautify a green space in my neighborhood and meeting new friends who shared similar interests in protecting the beauty of our rivers.

That day, March 13, was typical for Ohio; cold, overcast, and windy. But as I like to say, there is no bad weather, just bad clothing. Dressed in Gore-Tex® and neoprene, I was ready to stay out all day. I was pleasantly surprised by the turnout as I arrived with my canoe buddy and FACT Member Mike O'Neill. It was great to see so many people giving up their Saturday morning to venture out in the cold and pick-up trash. These are my kind of people.

We left Mike's vehicle at Academy Park and headed upstream in my truck with the canoe. We unloaded the canoe and I discovered to my dismay that I forgot the paddles. Gee, what could be my excuse for that! Good thing I don't live far away.

Finally we are under way. The river was much cleaner than I imagined and I thought to myself how lucky I was to have such a precious waterway in my neighborhood. Nonetheless we filled my 17 foot canoe to capacity with bags of refuse. All kinds of trash were in the river. Bottles, cans, tires, and most striking was the number of plastic shopping bags. It really made me appreciate people who use re-usable tote bags when they shop.

Finally we arrived at the take-out spot. David Hohmann greeted us and helped us unload our haul. We amassed the bags in a pile and David took a picture of Mike and me standing next to it. A warm sense of accomplishment came over me.

Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries Events Calendar

Please Call FACT at (614) 409-0511 for more information on all events.

- September 9 **FACT Outing and Speaker Series: Construction Mud Monitoring Workshop for Citizens**
7560 Goodling Blvd, Orange Township, 6:30 – 8:00 PM. Learn how you can help reduce one of Alum Creek’s leading sources of pollution. More information inside!
- September 11 **Westerville Household Hazardous Waste Drop-off Day.** Call the Westerville Department of Public Service for more information at 901-6740.
- September 18 **Empty Bowl Affair**, Westerville, 6:00 – 10:00 PM. RSVP now for a night of food and celebration to benefit FACT! More information inside.
- October 2 **Alum Creek Cleanup at Academy Park**, Nelson Road, 9:00 – 11:00 AM. Meet at Academy Park on Nelson Road between Broad Street and Main Street. Please wear sturdy shoes.
- October 8-9 **Delaware Tire and Pharmaceutical Drop-Off Day.** Call the Health District at (740) 203-2082.
- October 14 **FACT monthly meeting**, Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 – 8:30 PM. ODU Neighborhood Center, 1229 Sunbury Road. Park in the large lot north of the center. Open to the public!
- November 11 **FACT Outing and Speaker Series: the Ohio Environmental Council Presents “Green Teams”**
Ohio Dominican University, 6:30 – 8:30 PM. Learn how to work with your legislators for the environmental policy that you want!

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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<input type="checkbox"/> Student/Senior \$10		
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