

Alum Creek



Sheets

Volume 3, Issue III

September 2002

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



Your Alum Creek, Your Plan

by Heather Doherty, FACT Watershed Coordinator

As Fall creeps slowly towards us with the promise of relief from hot weather, FACT and steering committee members continue to bring action planning closer to Alum Creek. Along with collecting broad amounts of information that will help us determine what might be causing some of the creek's problems, we'll also be surveying watershed residents to learn what activities might mutually benefit people and the creek.

If you're drawing a blank, think of shade. We thirst for it in the summer and so does Alum Creek. That's because shade keeps aquatic animals cool too. If bank vegetation is removed, oxygen in the water decreases as temperatures go up. The creek wildlife subsequently suffers and can even die if oxygen is too low. Not to mention that a river ecosystem isn't complete unless it has the land-side habitat that rivers in Ohio have evolved with over millennia. Trees on banks build habitat for fish with their roots, as well as for great blue herons with their limbs.

Building more shade is just one example of how the action planning initiative can benefit all of us. But a plan cannot exist without creators: YOUR participation is needed! Mark your calendars and join us on **March 15th** for a day at the Franklin Park Conservatory. This will be a primary foundation laying meeting, open to all community members.

Another group of people will be coming together earlier in January to discuss the more

technical issues facing the creek. These may include topics such as how to reduce excessive sediment and fecal bacteria in the river, or mitigate the negative effects of low-head dams. The general public is welcome to attend, along with scientists, municipal officials, regulatory agencies (such as the Ohio EPA), and others.

Continued on Page 3

Alum Creek River Fest 2002!

September 22nd, 4-7pm
Alum Creek Park, Westerville



It's time again to kick back and enjoy a warm Fall day on your favorite creek. Come help in celebrate! See page 3 for **ACTIVITIES** and the Calendar on Page 5 for directions. Volunteers are needed, call 236-6455.



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, Treasurer
Joel Rosenfield, Coca-Cola Syrup, Secretary

Action Plan Steering Committee

Frances Beasley, Franklin County Greenways
Michael Hoggarth, Otterbein College
Stephen McClary, Columbus Planning Div.
Jeff Cox, Columbus Div. Of Sewers & Drains
Dick Lorenz, Westerville Div. Of Water
Joe Bonnell, OSU Extension
Vince Mazeika, OEPA Div. Of Surface Water
Jerry Wager, ODNR Soil & Water Conserv.
Carol Elder, FACT
Dan Lorek, Bexley Development Department
Keith Dimoff, Ohio Environmental Council

Staff

Heather Doherty, Watershed Coordinator

Contact Us

Phone: 614-236-6455
Email: Doherty@friendsofalumcreek.org
On the Web: www.friendsofalumcreek.org

Visit our office at Capital University, 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.

Bexley SW Planning Nears Completion

by David Hohmann

The series of public meetings for the Southwest Bexley Master Planning is concluding as a final version of the plan makes its way to Bexley city council for adoption this fall. Redevelopment of some land along Main Street will be enabled by the probable creation of a nonprofit development corporation by Bexley, Capital U. and Trinity Seminary.

The Alum Creek corridor will be respected and protected with public greenspace/park and natural buffer space along the creek, as envisioned in this generalized plan. Other development parallel to the creek corridor may occur over time, as land uses evolve with Capital U. in the north end and possible mix of other housing and/or commercial office redevelopment in the far southwest part of this district.

A copy of the plan should be available electronically through the city of Bexley's web site, www.bexley.org. David Hohmann has represented FACT in the process while this plan was being developed.



The gazebo and greenway at Schneider Park along Alum Creek in Bexley. FACT is currently represented in a process to determine how to use and/or redevelop this space, as well as the rest of the Southwest quadrant of Bexley. Photo by David Hohmann

Alum Creek Receives First Sign of Many in Franklin County

"Your Alum Creek..." continued from Page 1

If you've ever been frustrated by your inability to name that lovely central Ohio stream you pass by on your way to work or play, help has arrived. The Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission's Franklin County Greenways Program has brokered a deal with local municipalities and the County Engineer's office to place creek signage at 126 stream crossing throughout Franklin County over the next 6 months. Alum Creek was the first to receive a sign during a dedication ceremony on August 19th at the Williams Road crossing (Madison Mills Park in the Three Creeks Metro Park area).

At least two attempts to establish creek signage in the past have failed. But this time the stars were aligned and Alum Creek, Big Walnut Creek, Blacklick Creek, Rocky Fork Creek, Big and Little Darby Creeks and the Olentangy and Scioto Rivers will benefit.

The number of rivers and corresponding breadth of jurisdictions in Franklin County no doubt were factors in delaying the project due to complicated logistics. But the diverse partnerships needed to pull it off are now in place: the City of Columbus's sign shop made the signs and distributed them to jurisdictions like Franklin County, Worthington, Westerville, Gahanna, Reynoldsburg, and Groveport, who will then install them at stream crossings. The Franklin County Engineer's Office has also been overseeing the project, with the Columbus Public Utilities Department and Metro Parks providing funding.

Signage may be our most basic tool for increasing awareness of the value of our rivers. If a creek has no name to the public, it probably has a lesser chance of holding value. It is our hope that as people begin to know and connect creeks with their neighborhood's identity, support for river protection will grow.

The sign dedication ceremony and publicity are an important step towards achieving these goals. For more information call Franklin County Greenways, 233-4124. Thank you to Greenways personnel Andrea Gorzitze and Frances Beasley for making it a reality and for their continual support of watershed protection. To learn more about other local watershed and greenways projects, visit www.morpc.org

On the forefront

The Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries aren't the first to work with community members to improve their local river, but there truly aren't many far ahead of us. This is partially because the approach in which regulatory agencies support community planning to resolve pervasive water issues is relatively new.

There are approximately 35 watershed projects (at least partially) funded by large state grant programs currently operating in Ohio, including this one. A majority are less than 3 years in age, and are or will be striving to create action plans. Surprisingly, not one stands complete at this publication's print date. I hope you will share our pride in blazing the trail for river improvement projects like this one in the future!

Please visit FACT's website to learn more, or call Heather at 236-6455.

www.friendsofalumcreek.org



"River Fest..." continued from page 1

River Fest Activities

The event will again take place in conjunction with the **Westerville Symphony's** Paper Plate Pops concert at the park's amphitheater, beginning at 4pm.

Canoeing – Don't take our word for it, discover this hidden treasure for yourself! Space is limited, RSVP for this trip is required in advance. Call Heather at 236-6455 or David at 728-3885.

Kids Activities – Local conservation organizations will provide interactive games, plus an opportunity for you to learn about *local environmental issues*, including those facing Alum Creek.

Wildlife Expedition – Ohio EPA and Otterbein College scientists will lead us to the water's edge in search of the life it supports. All ages are welcome.

Food – FACT will set up a small concessions stand. Grab a bite before listening to the concert.

Special thanks to the City of Westerville for their generous support!

River Watch

FACT's River Watch committee follows actions in the watershed that have the potential to affect the water quality of Alum Creek and its tributaries. Every quarter we will do our best to update you on past items of interest, plus alert you to new happenings and ways you can help. To learn more about any of these items please contact Margaret Ann Samuels at masesq34@aol.com, or Carol Elder at carolelder@yahoo.com.

New Items

The Ohio Department of Transportation will be continuing its work on I-270 at the Rte 161 interchange, which will affect Big Walnut Creek and Alum Creek. Activities in the Alum Creek watershed will include widening the Rte 161 bridge over Alum Creek and extending the box culvert on Alum Creek tributary Spring Run. ODOT has reapplied to the Ohio EPA for a **401 permit** for these and Big Walnut activities. FACT will be submitting comments by August 30, 2002.

FACT members reported **stream bank dumping and questionable effluent** coming from a pipe discharging on the stream bank to the OEPA after spotting the two events on a canoe float on July 12th. The report resulted in a letter to the City of Bexley regarding bank dumping from its nursery, and to DeMonye's Greenhouse for the same. The stormwater effluent is still being investigated.



Debris dumped from Bexley's nursery on the banks of Alum Creek. Photo by David Hohmann.

Updates

Old Nazarene wetland – FACT's call to the Army Corps of Engineers regarding possible illegal wetlands filling activities led to a site visit from a Corps staff member. A very small wetlands area had been filled without obtaining a permit, but

Factoid!

It's summer, it's hot, and it's SO dry. It hasn't rained for weeks. You visit your favorite park along Alum Creek and to your amazement the creek is still full of water. Maybe not brimming, but not the bone-dry low you would expect.

Some creeks in the area maintain higher summer water levels because they receive water from underground (or groundwater). As it rains, some water is stored by seeping through top soil into layers of rock. Some types of rock material hold water better than others. Gravel and limestone, for instance, can hold a lot of water and sometimes release it to rivers, supplementing water levels during periods of low rainfall.

But not so for Alum Creek! Its shale bedrock does little to supply groundwater during dry periods. Why then the consistent flow? It's the result of the Alum Creek Dam, which creates the 10 ½ mile long Alum Creek Lake Reservoir in Delaware County. Before its completion in 1974, on some dry summer and fall days flow levels were less than one cubic foot per second (cfs)! (Imagine holding a tub of water that was one foot in length on each side).

Now the lowest allowable amount of water that the Army Corp of Engineers can release from the reservoir, even under drought conditions, is 5 cfs. Not enough to go tubing exactly, but more than we could have expected in the 1950's.

since it was less than 1/10 of an acre in size and would have automatically qualified for a permit, the owners were not in violation. However, Corps staff did confirm that additional wetlands are present on the site, and informed the site owner that a permit will be necessary for any additional filling. The owner, Columbus Urban Growth, claimed no prior knowledge of wetlands protection regulations, despite regular involvement in the development industry.

Diesel spill flushed into Alum Creek

The Columbus Division of Fire merely received a Notice of Violation from the OEPA for mishandling a response to a diesel spill that resulted in the material being flushed into Alum Creek. FACT was, however, successful in prompting Suburban News Publications to place an article about the incident in the August 14th edition of the Northland News. Look for the article in newsstands or on FACT's website.

Calendar of Events

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

Volunteers Needed for events marked with an astrik (). Call 645-6455 to lend an hour or two.*

Sunday Sept 1 **Bexley Block Party***, 12-7pm, Jeffrey Park, Bexley
A lively event that holds something for everyone – music, games, an ICE CREAM EATING CONTEST, you get the picture. Say hello to FACT volunteers at our display near the tennis courts. Call 258-5755

Thursday Sept 12 **The Alum Creek by Trail**, 6:30- 8pm, Three Creeks Metro Park
Join us for a continuation of FACT's *Exploring our River* series with Columbus Recreation & Parks Greenways Planner Brad Westall. Brad will present current plans and schedule for the 20-some mile multi-purpose trail that is currently in the works in the Alum Creek corridor, plus inform us on the regional trail system that this trail will be a part of (Go to Lake Erie! The Ohio River! All by stepping out of your door and onto a bike...). After the talk, take your family on a bike tour of this already completed 7 mile stretch of paved trail that loosely follows Alum Creek. Or if you prefer, explore the park by foot on nature trails.

Directions: This event will take place at the shelter house at the main entrance to Three Creeks, along Bixby Road. Take I-270 to Route 33 south, towards Lancaster. Take the next exit off of Route 33, for Hamilton Road (Route 317). Follow Hamilton Road south a short distance to Bixby Road. Turn right on Bixby. The entrance to the park will be marked on the right. Follow the short drive into the park, and meet at the shelter house to the left side of the parking lot.

Saturday Sept 21 **Addressing Phases II in Local Watershed Planning Initiatives**, 10 –3pm
Olentangy Environmental Control Center, 10333 Olentangy River Road. Rain water in urban or suburban areas unfortunately picks up many pollutants as it drains off of streets and lawns (such as gasoline, fertilizers, and pet waste), and is deposited into our streams by municipal stormwater collection systems. Attend this Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District (FWSCD) workshop to learn how you can help influence OEPA permits (NPDES Phase I & II) that municipalities must obtain to help minimize the impacts of stormwater and nonpoint source pollution. Call 801-9450 for information and to RSVP. Lunch will be provided, small donations accepted.

Sunday Sept 22 **Alum Creek River Fest***, 4 –7pm, Alum Creek Park, Westerville
See article page 4. *Directions:* Take I-270 to the Cleveland Ave exit. Follow Cleveland Ave north to Main Street. Take a right on Main Street, cross over the Alum Creek bridge, and the park entrance will be immediately on your right. Activities will be near the rear of the park, which backs up to Otterbein College.

Sunday Sept 29 **Bexley Natural Market Street Fair***, 1-6pm, 508 North Cassady Ave., Bexley
Celebrating 25 years with music, games, crafts, food, speakers, & more (including FACT's display). Call 252-3951

Fri/Sat Oct 4-5 **Awakening the Will to Act**, A conference on sustainability by Simply Living.
FACT members will be attending the conference as well as bringing a display. Call 261-3663

Saturday Oct 5 **Fall Harvest Jamboree! at Smith Farms*** (Three Creeks Metro Park) 12-5pm, Watkins Road. Sample apple cider, go on a hay ride, play games and keep a look out for the FACT table. Call 645-3332

Thursday Nov 14 **FACT monthly meeting at Ohio Dominican College, 6:30pm**

Thursday Dec 12 **FACT monthly meeting at Ohio Dominican College, 6:30pm**

*Mark your calendars for the **Saturday, March 15th** Alum Creek Action Plan Community Meeting! (see page 1)*

Get Involved with the Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries!

FACT is an organization built on the dedicated work of volunteers. Realizing how valuable volunteers' time is, we do our best to match projects with particular interests, time limitations, and skill development needs. There are many more options than we can list here, but to give you some ideas we've listed some of our immediate needs. Call Heather at 236-6455 to find out more.

- ✓ **Graphic Designer** – Whether you know a lot or a little about graphic designing, FACT needs your assistance in projects as various as designing flyers and newsletters to creating GIS maps. If you are not a designer but have contacts in a local firm or college, please pass it on! Formal training not necessary.
- ✓ **Researcher** – See article Page 1. Help FACT gather and compile data for an Alum Creek Inventory and for the FACT website. Potential topics cover a wide range, from geology to local history. Chances are that you have knowledge that can be put to use helping us write a section, or researching skills to collect needed information. Volunteers are welcome to work on small sections.
- ✓ **Label Sticker!** – Looking for a way to help that doesn't require thought at the end of the day? Help with clerical work such as preparing periodic mailings.
- ✓ **Special Events Assistant** – Do the behind-the-scenes work that make our events a success, such as publicity, donation solicitation, equipment hauling, and volunteer recruitment. See the Calendar on page 5 for September event needs!



This publication was financed in part 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.

FACT Membership

Your contribution is tax deductible and enables FACT to pursue its mission of stewardship and citizen enjoyment of Alum Creek. FACT is a chapter of the Columbus Recreation Council with 501(c)(3) status under terms of the IRS. Make checks payable to FACT, and return to 787 Montrose Ave, Columbus, Ohio 43209.

Choose a Membership Category: Name(s) _____
() Student \$5
() Individual \$15 Organization/Business _____
() Family \$25
() Organization \$50 Address _____
() Business \$100
() Riparian Manager \$200 + Phone _____ Email _____

NOTE: Please help FACT save resources by providing your email address, and preference for email or hard copy correspondence (circle one).



787 Montrose Avenue
Columbus, Ohio 43209

