



Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

Preserving Our Creek. For Our Future. Nature's Benefit and Society

To: Columbus, Ohio metro area news media & environmental watershed groups
From: David Roseman, Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries (FACT), Communications Chair & Board Member
Date Sent: Wednesday, October 8, 2008
Re: Lowhead dam removal underway & celebration ceremony planned - Academy Park/Wolfe Park
For Release: Immediate publication

Note: This news is especially applicable for the cities of Columbus, Bexley, Westerville, Groveport, Obetz, as well as Franklin County and those within the Alum Creek watershed.

LOWHEAD DAM REMOVAL TO IMPROVE ENVIRONMENT, SAVE LIVES: Three-Year Collaboration of Concerned Citizens, Cities and the State Pays Off Volunteers Needed for Upcoming Alum Creek Restoration Project

Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries (FACT) has started the physical removal of a lowhead dam located on the Alum Creek river between Academy Park and Wolfe Park in Columbus, Ohio. On October 6, the lowhead dam was breached by FACT's contracted engineering and environmental consulting firm Burgess & Niple, Inc. and subcontractor, The Righter Company.

FACT has scheduled an on-site outdoor ceremony to celebrate this momentous occasion for Tuesday, Oct. 14, 10:30 AM at Academy Park, 250 South Nelson Road in Columbus. The public and media are invited to attend to hear representatives from FACT, Ohio EPA and the city of Columbus speak about the important value of this project for the Alum Creek watershed and surrounding communities.

The dam has been notched to accommodate the insertion of temporary pipes along Academy Park's bank to allow continued creek water flow. A gravel ramp and causeway are being placed in the creek's channel bed -just above the dam- to allow construction equipment vehicles access for the lowhead dam's removal process. Demolition work is expected to be completed by October 24, subject to weather conditions. Environmental restoration work is then planned to continue to the north where the existing lowhead dam at Nelson Park will be removed, contingent upon a private property owner granting access.

The two lowhead dams are being removed primarily to improve the ecosystem; in addition, their elimination will prevent drowning hazards, improve safety issues, restore the stream to a more natural condition, and increase recreational access. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (Ohio EPA) conducted studies in 1996 and 2000 and found that areas of Alum Creek near Columbus and Bexley do not meet water quality specifications. Because the water current slows down behind the dams, organic material in the water settles to the river bottom and decays, resulting in sharp reductions in dissolved oxygen in the stream. These stagnant areas also produce an unnatural build-up of silt and sediment which creates muddy, murky conditions, and adverse habitats. This makes it difficult for fish and other aquatic life to thrive. Immediately below the lowhead dams, fast water currents can produce a dangerous vortex. They have even contributed to several deaths on Alum Creek. Once a person gets stuck in the undertow, it is virtually impossible to get out. These lowhead dams were built over 70 years old ago to create small ponds for recreation; the artificial structures were never designed to control floodwaters, unlike the Alum Creek Reservoir overseen by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The city of Columbus, city of Bexley, and MORPC have supported FACT's project with in-kind assistance.

As part of this final phase of the three year \$250,000 U.S. EPA Section 319* Nonpoint Source Implementation grant project administered by Ohio EPA, FACT member volunteers have been working along both sides of the Alum Creek river corridor to restore the natural greenery by removing Honeysuckle bushes and other invasive species and planting new native trees, shrubs and vegetation. **FACT needs more volunteers to help continue this work at Wolfe Park (105 Park Drive, Broad Street entrance) on October 11 from 9 AM - 1 PM.**

The mission of Friends of Alum Creek and Tributaries (FACT) is to preserve and protect the quality and beauty of the Alum Creek watershed and promote environmentally responsible recreation, educational opportunities and citizen participation at many levels. FACT is a local not-for-profit volunteer based organization serving as the environmental steward for the Alum Creek watershed within Franklin and Delaware counties.

*Section 319 of the federal Clean Water Act amendments created a national program in 1987 to control nonpoint source pollution. Nonpoint source pollution can take many forms, including runoff from fields and urban areas, as well as acidic drainage from abandoned coal mines. In addition, it includes habitat alteration resulting from ditching streams, tree removals and dams or reservoirs. Nonpoint source pollution is the leading cause of water quality impairment in the United States.

Ohio EPA administers the Section 319 grant program for U.S. EPA, distributing more than \$3 million in federal money each year to projects proposed by local governments and community organizations such as watershed groups. To be eligible, grant recipients must contribute at least 40 percent local matching funds. The local match may consist of cash or in-kind contributions or services. Grants are awarded for three-year periods for up to \$500,000. Typical projects include stream restoration, removal of lowhead dams, acid mine drainage abatement, riparian area and wetland protection and various best management practices. More information on Section 319 grants is available online at:

www.epa.stateoh.us/dsw/nps/319Program.html

For specific background information and materials (maps, design, etc.) about FACT's two lowhead dam removals and watershed restoration projects, please reference via [Lowhead Dam Removal](http://www.friendsofalumcreek.org/sitev2/lowheaddamremoval.html) or <http://www.friendsofalumcreek.org/sitev2/lowheaddamremoval.html>.

For more information about FACT, visit FACT's website www.friendsofalumcreek.org or contact Kimberly Williams, FACT Watershed Coordinator, (614) 409-0511 (kwilliams@friendsofalumcreek.org).

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Any questions related to the above PR posting, please contact:

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Thanks for your ongoing coverage in sharing this with your audience.

FACT is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) volunteer community based organization.