

Alum Creek Sheets

Special Edition: Restoration Celebration

By Kimberly Williams, Watershed Coordinator

In this Special Edition newsletter, Friends of Alum Creek and Tributaries (FACT) is CELEBRATING the removal of two lowhead dams from Alum Creek and the couple of miles of streambank forest restoration with native trees and shrubs. We are also RECOGNIZING our partners' accomplishments who have undertaken different projects and measures to protect and restore Alum Creek. Of course, without volunteers offering their time and partnering organizations and local governments offering expertise, FACT would not have been able to accomplish the removal of the two lowhead dams, so this newsletter is also a THANK YOU!



Moving Forward into 2009

By David Hohmann, FACT Chair

Happy 2009 from FACT. I'm pleased to greet you as the new Board Chair for this year. The Lower Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan that was adopted in 2004, is moving forward steadily in implementation by local government and other stakeholders, including FACT and its members.

The biggest feat of 2008 for FACT and the Alum Creek, was the removal of two low-head dams from the lower Alum Creek in Columbus/Bexley. Several miles of river that were considered "impaired" and not meeting clean water standards due to the impoundment of the dams, now have a chance to flow free for the first time in 80 years. Recovery of natural biodiversity and health is now possible. The sight of the free flowing waters and riffles in these sections of river will wow me for a long time. FACT accomplished this task with help of many local advisers, collaboration with city parks and a private landowner, as well as thousands of volunteer hours of labor removing honeysuckle and planting over 800 native trees and shrubs along several thousand feet of riverbank; The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency grant funds for the project were put to use effectively by FACT. The actual removal process was rather quick-- thanks to several large trackhoes operated by capable contractors from the Righter Company. Our project support, design and management by Burgess and Niple Engineers was also very effective. I'd like to offer my personal thanks to all parties involved who contributed to the success of this substantial, three year effort.

In 2009, FACT will carry forward its mission, goals and long term strategies that the board has identified and refined. We expect to measure our success in reaching the goals and report our effectiveness to members and stakeholders on a regular basis. The mission remains steady: "*working 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*". Our major goals include providing solid financial and human resource support, and tracking and documenting our progress, in: 1.) Serving as an essential partner, stakeholder and resource in watershed matters; 2.) Providing opportunities for everyone to learn about protecting and restoring the ecological integrity and enjoy the beauty of our watershed; and 3.) Continuing efforts to protect and restore the ecological integrity, stability and beauty of the Alum Creek watershed.

Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

Celebrating over 10 years since 1998

Volume IX, Issue 4
Published January 2009

Special Edition

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FACT Mission Statement

The mission of Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries (FACT) is to preserve and protect the quality and beauty of Alum Creek watershed and promote environmentally responsible recreation, educational opportunities, and citizen participation at many levels.

***Moving Forward*** (cont from page 1)

Our major activities will continue in hosting educational events, recreation (bike, picnic/hike, canoe) events, and of course the meaningful service work to clean up sensitive areas within and along the river and its tributaries. We will continue to deliver necessary messages that need to be heard in public forums on behalf of the creek and its health, for the good of our community and all its natural and human inhabitants.

FACT exists as a necessary and holistic collaboration between all community members focusing on our urban river as the critical link that brings us all together and links us to our environment. Alum Creek is as close as your drinking water, and the curbs of your street. We all depend on these invisible connections to the creek for many services and qualities for life and health here in this place we call home. On behalf of FACT, I invite and challenge each of you in 2009 to find ways to deepen your involvement, understanding, commitment, and support for this valuable work-- and share it with others who care. **Thank you!**



OSU students plant native trees at Wolfe Park

Schneider Park in Bexley

By Melissa Queen Darby, Environmental Scientist at EMH&T. Edited by Kim Williams

Using funds obtained through two Clean Ohio Fund grants, the City of Bexley worked to restore the Alum Creek Greenway in the winter of 2007 and put the final touches in the spring of 2008. The project focused on the riparian corridor and adjacent areas along the east bank of Alum Creek between East Main Street and Livingston Avenue, including Schneider Park. At the same time, the Clean Ohio Fund project provided half of the in kind match necessary for FACT's OEPA 319 Implementation grant which was used for the removal of the two lowhead dams at Wolfe Academy and Nelson Parks in 2008.

With guidance from Capital University faculty, FACT and local community members, EMH&T provided restoration plans while Brookside Lawn Services performed all of the restoration activities. Nearly 3.5 acres of invasive Amur honeysuckle and other non-native species were removed from the riparian understory using cut-stump methods and then new native trees were installed to promote the eventual reestablishment of a native understory along the creek and provide wildlife habitat and foraging opportunities. Other improvements associated with the Bexley Alum Creek Greenway project include the stabilization of an existing outfall to the creek, and installation of a nature path that meets ADA requirements. The path ends at a low-profile deck that overlooks a small existing wetland in Schneider Park. Since the project was undertaken in the winter, there was a follow up seeding of grass in Spring 2008 near the path and the areas impacted by construction vehicles. Overall, the path, deck and native plant restoration will provide additional educational and recreational opportunities within the park, which in turn will promote appreciation of the intrinsic value of Alum Creek.

What's the Plan in Genoa Township?

By Joe Clase, AICP, Assistant Administrator / Development & Zoning Director for Genoa Township Dev. & Zoning Dept.

On December 10, 2008, the Genoa Township Board of Trustees adopted an update to the Genoa Township Comprehensive Plan. It was noted that "as development occurs it is imperative to understand Genoa Township's existing natural resources and conserve their function and beauty."

The plan recommends limiting the impacts of housing density by promoting conservation subdivisions where smaller lot sizes are met with an equivalent amount of open space to be permanently preserved. The plan also recommends protecting critical resources and removing them from the development equation by requiring a net developable acreage calculation. This limits the yield for a developer who purchases a site with extensive critical resources (i.e. steep slopes, wetlands, floodplain, etc.) when a comparable site without these resources could yield more development potential.

Additionally, Genoa Township is planning to mail floodplain protection information directly to the owners of such lands. A similar mailing is also planned for getting farmland preservation information into the hands of owners of the limited

(Continued on next page 3).

**Plan** (cont. from page 2)

remaining agricultural lands. In order to study, investigate, plan, advise, report and recommend action regarding tree preservation in the Township, the Board of Trustees may be considering the establishment of a new advisory board in the near future.

A township government's ability to conserve resources is mostly limited by the actions that property owner's take. For this reason, the Trustees are planning to empower property owners to make the best choice with our limited resources. To view a copy of the 2008 Genoa Township Comprehensive Plan, please visit www.genoatwp.com or contact the Genoa Township Development & Zoning Department at 614-899-0725.

Boyer Nature Preserve and Otterbein Lake

By Mark Dilley, Wetland Biologist and founder of MAD Scientist LLC

MAD Scientist LLC assists Westerville Parks and Recreation and the Otterbein Lake Committee with the management of Boyer Nature Preserve and the Otterbein Lake Project. Thus, what follows is an account by Mark Dilley, founder of MAD Scientist LLC, on the different tasks that have been accomplished in 2008.

Boyer Nature Preserve, operated by Westerville Parks and Recreation, is located on the east side of Westerville. Within the preserve is a 0.75 acre forested wetland that was created to compensate or mitigate for the loss of a wetland. This mitigation wetland in its third year of development consists of several vernal pools, though which a perennial streams runs, flowing eventually into Alum Creek. FACT members were instrumental in the creation of this vernal pool site, through encouragement of local mitigation and participation in volunteer work days, during which they removed invasive honeysuckle and planted native species.

Also within this preserve is Boyer Pond, a shallow "kettle lake," which lies downstream of the wetland mitigation area. The mixed-age deciduous forest that surrounds these water features within the 11-acre nature preserve acts as valuable buffer and wildlife habitat. Ongoing invasive species management is critical to allowing the developing wetlands to develop a diverse plant community and high-quality wildlife habitat. In 2008, volunteers continued invasive honeysuckle removal from approximately 1.5 acres of upland areas buffering the vernal pools. Invasive cattail control was also implemented as part of the enhancement of Boyer Pond, further reducing the stand of encroaching cattail on the east side of the pond.

Otterbein Lake, located immediately south of Alum Creek Park in Westerville, has continued to undergo enhancements in 2008 through plantings and invasive species removal, thus improving the quality of this natural area. Once a borrow pit, this 8-acre lake has been re-contoured to give the shoreline a more natural appearance. Since then, measures have been taken to establish a native wetland and upland plant community to improve water quality and enhance wildlife value.

In 2008, volunteers from the community, including FACT members and students of Otterbein College, worked hard to get approximately 0.5 acre of shoreline planted with a diverse assemblage of native shrubs and wetland plants. Additionally, volunteers removed invasive honeysuckle from approximately 1.25 acre of upland area surrounding the shoreline. During these efforts, volunteers planted over 700 herbaceous plants and shrubs, including spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), pussy willow (*Salix discolor*), button-bush (*Cephalanthus occidentalis*), blue flag (*Iris versicolor*), lizard's-tail (*Saururus cernuus*), dark-green bulrush (*Scirpus atrovirens*), bur-reed (*Sparganium eurycarpum*), and water-willow (*Justicia americana*). Additionally, they installed a prairie garden with an educational sign, situated near the overlook to Otterbein Lake.



Volunteers plant native wetland plants at Otterbein Lake.



Lowhead Dam Removal at Wolfe-Academy Parks and Nelson Parks

The past couple of years, FACT has endeavored to remove two lowhead dams at Wolfe-Academy Parks and Nelson Parks. The removal of both lowhead dams took less than a month, however the number of steps that needed to be taken spanned four years, starting with the application and approval of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency 319 Non Point Source Implementation grant in 2005. Overall the cost of the lowhead dam removal was \$243,200. Below is a timeline describing the major milestones. For more narrative description please see FACT newsletter Volume IX issues 1-3 posted on our website:

TIMELINE

- 2006**
- Convened Lowhead Dam Technical Advisory Committee to guide FACT
 - After reviewing proposals Advisory Committee recommends Burgess and Niple (B&N) environmental consulting and engineering design firm as contractor.

- 2007**
- Sign contract with B&N
 - Informed general public of different possibilities to free Alum Creek of the lowhead dams
 - B&N and Ohio Environmental Protection Agency conducted biological and habitat surveys to document existing conditions

- 2008**
- Surveys to determine property boundary, other physical structures, stream-bed channel profile are completed in spring.
 - Received U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide 27 permit in July.
 - Held second public information in August where B&N proposed complete removal of lowhead dams with boulders placed along stream bank and within the stream channel.
 - Obtained approval and access agreement from Columbus Recreation and Parks Dept.
 - Board approved final design plans for both removals with caveat that an access agreement from private property owner remained.
 - Breached Wolfe-Academy Park lowhead dam October 6th and the lowhead dam was removed within two weeks.
 - Obtained access agreement from private property owner.
 - Nelson Park lowhead dam was breached November 11th and was removed within two weeks.



Top: Wolfe-Academy Park lowhead dam



Middle: Breach of Wolfe-Park lowhead dam occurs October 6th. Pool of water is drained behind lowhead dam using a pipe at both ends of lowhead dam.



Bottom: One pipe and portion of gravel road used to cross to the far side of the dam. The excavators then work their way back across and remove the lowhead dam as they return to the starting point.



FOR MORE INFORMATION
PLEASE VISIT OUR WEB-
SITE AT

www.friendsofalumcreek.org



Above: Nelson Park lowhead dam
Right: Breach of Nelson Park Lowhead dam on November 11th
Left: Righter Company excavators work in tandem breaking up the Nelson Park lowhead dam which consisted of cobble and boulder mortared together. This work occurred after the pool behind the lowhead dam was lowered in the same fashion as the Wolfe-Park Academy dam.



Left: Wolfe-Academy Park lowhead dam is gone **Right:** Nelson Park lowhead dam has been removed. Total time spent on the actual removal is approximately one month.



Lower Alum Creek Watershed Forum

By Kimberly Williams, FACT Watershed Coordinator

The Lower Alum Creek Watershed Forum was held at the Westerville Community Center on December 10th. The purpose of the forum was to update the Lower Alum Creek Watershed Action Plan, which was created by local residents, government officials, scientists, business professionals to address the water quality issues of Alum Creek.

Mark Dilley, Wetland Scientist from MAD Scientist LLC provided updates on the ongoing effort to restore and improve the wildlife habitat at Boyer Nature Preserve and Otterbein Lake (See page 3 for more details). FACT Watershed Coordinator, Kim Williams, talked about how FACT, as the "*Little Engine that Could*" removed two low-head dams and restored nearly 5,000 lineal feet of stream bank forest by removing invasive honeysuckle and planting native trees and shrubs (See Page 4,5 and 6). Successes and concerns of the different organizations present were also shared. The meeting concluded with a brief discussion of the different opportunities or future projects in 2009 that could be undertaken. To read the meeting notes please visit

www.friendsofalumcreek.org.

Restoring Alum Creek Corridor

By Kimberly Williams, FACT Watershed Coordinator

This fall FACT and our partners undertook several native planting projects along Alum Creek between Wolfe Park and Nelson Park. This project was part of the Ohio Env. Protection 319 Implementation grant. The goal was to remove invasive honeysuckle and replace with native trees and shrubs. Wherever possible, the corridor was also widened. By restoring the corridor with native plants, a more diversified habitat will be provided. Widening the corridor will help address erosion and urban runoff, since the roots of trees and shrubs are more substantial than turf grass and can provide more infiltration of storm water. The total number of native trees and shrubs (saplings and live stakes) planted was 327 and the cost of the project paid for by OEPA 319 grant and the Little Garden Club of Columbus grant was nearly \$3800.00. The project has been covered in depth under the Service Committee Report in Volume IX, Issue 3.

Tree and Shrub	Number
Sycamore	20
Red Maple	20
River Birch	15
Redbud	10
Ninebark	20
Flowering Dogwood	12
Arrowwood	27
Viburnum	
Red Osier	3
Dogwood	
Sandbar Willow	50
Purpleosier Willow	50
Elderberry	100
TOTAL	327

THANK YOU PARTNERS AND VOLUNTEERS!

The removal of two lowhead dams and the restoration of stream bank forest has taken approximately four years. In order to complete this project we needed several partners and volunteers to provide expertise, assistance with the implementation of the project as well as providing in kind match so we could meet our obligations for the OEPA 319 Implementation grant. We sincerely thank the following for their assistance and support:

Columbus Recreation and Parks, City of Bexley, Ohio State University Extension, Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, Ohio Dept. of Natural Resources Division of Soil and Water Conservation, Franklin County Metro Parks, Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District, Little Garden Club of Columbus, St. Charles Preparatory, Capital University, Ohio Dominican University, Otterbein College, US Army Corps of Engineers, Trinity Lutheran Seminary, Ernst and Young, John Glen Civic Leadership Council and Bexley Public Schools.

We thank the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency for awarding us the grant. Also, thank you to Burgess and Niple and The Righter Company for their steadfast guidance and implementation of the dam removal project. Last but not least, the volunteers and FACT members who came out in the hot and bitter cold weather to dig holes for plants, remove invasive honeysuckle bushes and pick up garbage. **Thank you!**



Susan Quintenz (L) and Kitty Morton Epler (R) are FACT members and have provided support via grant help and donation for honeysuckle removal and native plant reforestation efforts.



Friends of Alum Creek & Tributaries

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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. Please make checks payable to **FACT**, return with this completed form to: FACT, 2820 Watkins Rd., Columbus, Ohio 43207.

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This product or publication was financed in part or totally 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. The contents and views, including any opinions, findings or conclusions or recommendation, contained in this publication are those of the authors and have not been subject to any U.S. EPA or Ohio EPA peer or administrative review and may not necessarily reflect the views of either Agency, and no official endorsement should be inferred.



Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative

By Stephanie Suter, Habitat Conservationist from Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District



In October 2007, the Central Ohio Rain Garden Initiative (CORGI) was formed as a collaborative effort of local organizations, local government representatives, watershed groups, and consulting firms to promote the benefits of rain gardens for community beautification and clean water. FACT participates in CORGI.

Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District was awarded nearly \$50,000 from the OEPA's Ohio Environmental Education Fund (OEEF) on behalf of CORGI. The grant will provide funding for a website, brochures, educational materials and workshops, installing 15-20 rain gardens in a chosen neighborhood, monitoring of storm water runoff before and after installation, and evaluation. Four neighborhoods were pre-selected to participate as target areas based on TMDLs and only having 1-2 outfalls for monitoring purposes. One neighborhood will be chosen for the project, likely based on the willingness and participation of both the residents and the municipality. The pre-selected neighborhoods are in Alum Creek, Olentangy, and Scioto River Watersheds. The chosen neighborhood will be decided in 2009, with installations starting April 2010. The pilot project is based off of successes from the Burnsville, Minnesota project that found a 90% reduction in storm water runoff from the installation of rain gardens at a neighborhood level. The entire grant project will begin in late November 2008 after the money is received, and it will last for 30 months. The CORGI website is under construction, but please visit <http://www.franklinswcd.org/> for contact information.



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