

FALL 2013

Olentangy River Water Trail to Make a Splash This Fall

By Alice Waldhauer

This fall, the 8.6 mile Olentangy River Water Trail opens canoe and kayak access points to the public, providing another outdoor recreational opportunity for Columbus residents that may have been overlooked in the past. The Water Trail begins at Broad Meadows Blvd. just below the pedestrian bridge and runs to a take-out point near downtown Columbus. FLOW anticipates that the Water Trail will encourage residents to venture out on the river and become more engaged in watershed and water quality issues after direct experiences with our water resource. Water Trails are cost effective to develop and maintain compared to bike paths and hiking trails since the trail (the river) already exists. Land-based trails require maintenance such as periodic resurfacing of asphalt or limestone, and care for bridges and right-of-ways.



Photos of people courtesy of Michael Bain, HERO USA; canoe launch photo by Robert Fletcher.

The City of Columbus has been working to complete improvements at four canoe/kayak launch sites and several boat portage trails to guide boaters around hazards posed by lowhead dams. Four canoe launch points have been improved; at the Broad Meadows Blvd. pedestrian bridge, Northmoor Park, Tuttle Park, and at the Lower Olentangy Boat Launch at the west end of Nationwide Blvd. Each boat launch includes refurbished kiosks stocked with Olentangy River Water Trail brochures, and gravel paths designed to provide better footing for boaters to launch or take out.

The Water Trail is broken down into three sections. Section A, from Broad Meadows Blvd. to Northmoor Park, features the most naturalized setting and no lowhead dams for a river experience that doesn't include portage. Section B, from Northmoor Park to the OSU Wetlands runs past Union Cemetery, but lowhead dams at North Broadway, Union Cemetery, and Dodridge St. will require boaters to carry canoes around these hazards. These lowhead dams were marked with warning signs several years ago. Section C, from Tuttle Park to downtown Columbus, runs past a more urban environment, but

provides great views of Ohio Stadium and the Columbus skyline. Removal of the 5th Avenue Dam means boaters can travel from Tuttle Park to downtown without a portage around any dam site.

Another unique feature of the Olentangy River Water Trail is the paddle/pedal option. Boaters can stage a bike at the end point of their boating adventure, eliminating the need for two vehicles. Launch sites at Broad Meadows Blvd, Northmoor Park, and Tuttle Park have easy access to the Olentangy Greenways Trail.

Other than lowhead dams, hazards along the Water Trail include sewer discharge points that might be active during wet weather, and ongoing construction associated with the Olentangy River Reconstruction Project along the Ohio State campus shoreline. Boaters should follow standard safety precautions for canoeing and kayaking, like wearing life jackets, being aware of entanglement hazards and high water risks.

Creation of the Olentangy River Water Trail fulfills a goal of FLOW's 2005 Watershed Action Plan.



Sustainable Stormwater Management Comes to Weinland Park

Olentangy Urban Rainscapes Project by Laura Fay

Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW) and Integrity Sustainable Planning and Design have completed a pilot green stormwater management project at five new Weinland Park homes near the intersection of 8th and Hamlet.

These new homes, developed by Wagenbrenner Development and constructed by Rockford Homes, are equipped with water-conservation features such as low flow faucets, showerheads, and toilets. These interior water-conserving appliances will save the homeowners on their water bills and lighten their environmental footprint.

Outdoors, these homes feature street trees, bioswales along the tree lawn and rain gardens in the front yards. Two rain barrels have been furnished to each home to harvest rain water from the roof for watering landscape plantings. These features were designed to lighten the residents' stormwater footprint by infiltrating stormwater that runs off of the roof before it rushes into storm sewers on the way to the Olentangy River. The project illustrates multiple techniques to attractively redevelop residential lots in urban neighborhoods that are good for homeowners, the community and the environment.

The Ohio EPA Environmental Education Fund and the Neighborhood Stabilization Project helped to fund this pilot project. Weinland Park project participants include artist Malcolm J, residents Monica Desenberg, Evelyn Van Til, Woody Drake, and the homeowners at 1414 and 1418 Hamlet Street. Other project partners are M.A.D. Scientist and Associates, Diversified Data, and Oakland Design Associates.

FLOW Calendar of Events

FLOW has lots of activities to help water quality in the Olentangy Watershed throughout the year. Check our calendar at www.olentangywatershed.org for updates on upcoming events.

Olentangy River Restoration Continues

Olentangy River restoration activities following the Fifth Avenue Dam Removal continue as workers move northward along the campus shoreline toward the Lane Avenue bridge, and contractors are busy preparing the riverbanks for planting. Although rainy weather and high water in June and July prevented workers from making as much progress as they had hoped, more favorable weather later in the summer allowed them to make much better progress.

The current appearance of muddy banks might not seem like much of an improvement, but the work was needed for construction of features such as riffles, pools and wetlands which will be followed by planting of grasses, shrubs and trees. To the casual observer, the banks along campus look like piles of fill dirt, but there are control structures there too. In five locations where riffles are being constructed, the riverbed is



High water earlier this year challenged progress on the river restoration project.

armored with carefully placed stone to provide elevation control, creating areas of faster water velocities that provide habitat and help oxygenate water as it flows past the riffle. Riffles are only one of a variety of structures being constructed to control the direction and velocity of the water within the Olentangy River.

Over a mile of Olentangy shoreline will be revegetated using a technique called "live-branch layering," where a series of live branches are inserted through the coir erosion-control blankets into the underlying mud, with the goal of quickly reestablishing vegetation as the branches take root and grow. Over 17,000 live branches will grow through erosion-control blankets and intertwine with other nearby vegetation to help hold the riverbanks together. Plans call for nearly 6,000 linear feet of live-branch layering throughout the project area. Planting is complete in the riparian corridor in the southern portion of the project near 5th



Avenue, but Canada geese found the cover-crop seeds of rye and oats irresistible. Workers used several techniques to discourage the birds, and reseeded areas several times to try to stay ahead of the voracious birds.

The goal of the City's project team is to complete the earthwork along the Fifth Avenue dam pool by the end of 2013, and complete plantings throughout the project by mid-2014, when the orange construction fencing will be removed. This milestone will mark the beginning of a 5-year monitoring period to evaluate how the ecological system is functioning, and how well the new habitat is supporting aquatic and riparian life. It will take many years for trees planted along the river to reach maturity and provide benefits like shady cover for the river and its many wildlife inhabitants.

Erosion control blankets on the Olentangy riverbanks are being prepared for planting.



Thanks to Our Watershed Partners

■ Many thanks to our watershed partners, Shannon Tolliver, Jeff Miller and John Wheeler at **White Castle** for helping FLOW plant a butterfly garden on June 22 and supporting a September 7 honeysuckle removal project. Both projects are located at their headquarters on Goodale Blvd.

■ In July, FLOW partnered with **Anheuser Busch and River Network** for a River Clean Up at **Riverlodge Apartments** on Broad Meadows Blvd. Thanks to **Showe Realty** and community volunteers and staff from the A-B Columbus Brewery for a great turnout to help clean up litter and remove invasive purple loosestrife from a wetland there. This was the third summer that Anheuser Busch and FLOW teamed up for a successful river clean up.

■ Thanks to Jim Roberts of **Watershed Organic Lawn Care** for donating storage space and a canoe to FLOW for our upcoming riffle.

■ Thanks to **Patagonia** and the **Outdoor Source** for their generous donation to FLOW.

■ Thanks to folks that donate to FLOW through the **Kroger Community Rewards** program. For customers that

register their store loyalty card, Kroger donates a percentage of eligible purchases with no cost to the shopper. If you would like to sign up, visit www.krogercommunityrewards.com and look for FLOW under NPO Number 84562.

■ Much gratitude for the 100+ community volunteers and students, staff and faculty from **The Ohio State University** that turned out to help gather litter and debris from the Olentangy river on August 24. FLOW sponsored the Tuttle Park clean up with the Central Ohio chapter of the **Sierra Club**, **Columbus Recreation and Parks** and the **Department of Public Utilities**. FLOW also got help from the Bridgestone Community Clean Up Support program when the company agreed to pick up and recycle more than 370 tires that have been removed from the Olentangy River.



■ Thanks to **Whole Foods** for naming FLOW as a Nickels for Non-Profits recipient between July and September, and for providing volunteers and refreshments for an invasive honeysuckle removal event hosted by the **OSU Wetlands** on September 14. Volunteers removed over 2 acres of invasive honeysuckle from the forested wetland there.

■ Thanks to everyone that donated to FLOW via workplace giving programs through **Earthshare of Ohio**. Many employees of federal, state, municipal and county agencies designated FLOW as their charity of choice. FLOW also received workplace donations from employees of **Ashland, Inc., JP Morgan Chase, Cardinal Health, and Battelle**.

■ Thanks to OSU students that turned out in force during recent community service events. Student groups including **Green Engineering Scholars, Humanitarian Engineering Scholars, Free the Planet, Ecological Engineering Society, Womens Synchronized Swim Team, and the Alpha Phi Omega Fraternity** have been a tremendous help on service projects throughout the watershed.

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Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed is a non-profit organization dedicated to keeping the Olentangy River clean and safe for all to enjoy through public education, volunteer activities, and coordination with local decision makers. FLOW is registered with the IRS as a tax-exempt, nonprofit charitable organization under Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code. Donations are tax-deductible.

Because FLOW is a small organization, we rely heavily on volunteer participation to create positive change in our watershed.

Please contact us for more information about how you can volunteer. We have a wide variety of opportunities to fit your schedule that will match your skills and interests.



Worthington Canoe Access Invites Paddlers to the Olentangy

Last year, FLOW sponsored a project with the OSU chapter of the Engineers Without Borders Local Project Committee to design and install canoe access improvements at the Olentangy Parklands along Wilson Bridge Road in Worthington. Although this stretch of the River is not part of the new Olentangy River Water Trail, the improvements are welcomed by paddlers that use this section of the River for recreation. Students designed steps to improve the dirt path leading to the water's edge, providing better footing for paddlers to launch their canoes and kayaks.

The Engineers Without Borders Local Project Committee completed their design in January 2013, and worked with the City of Worthington and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) for approval of their plan. ODNR was pleased enough with their design that they assisted the project team by providing materials to construct the steps. Students constructed the steps they designed over a few weekends in the spring of 2013.

