

SUMMER 2014

Adopt Your Pond for a Cleaner Olentangy River

FLOW is launching a new Adopt-a-Pond initiative to educate landowners on the benefits of vegetative buffers and habitat improvements near ponds. FLOW identified hundreds of ponds in the Lower Olentangy watershed that could be converted from biologically sterile basins into water-quality assets to help protect our river. The initiative received help under a grant from the Vancouver-based cosmetics company LUSH, with shops at Easton and Polaris Malls. The LUSH Charity Pot Program uses the proceeds from a line of specialty Charity Pot moisturizers to fund efforts by grassroots organizations like FLOW to achieve their goals.

Adopt-a-Pond efforts will focus on outreach to pond landowners to help them make simple changes to improve the biology and water quality of local ponds:

- Eliminate the use of fertilizer and pesticides near their ponds. Excess fertilizer nutrients can cause algae growth, harming stream life.
- Stop mowing to the edge of the pond to create a vegetative buffer. Buffers help hold soil in place and clean runoff water before it reaches their pond.

- Plant trees and native plants to encourage wildlife. Native plants prosper in central Ohio soils and provide food and shelter for birds and butterflies.

This summer, FLOW will contact pond owners about the ecologic and economic savings of adopting their pond. On-site evaluations will be conducted for selected ponds, and FLOW will propose strategies to improve habitat. Our goal is to reach 100 pond owners, create 15 site-specific pond strategies, and use native plants to improve environmental function. Detention ponds are routinely required as part of development projects to reduce the effects of stormwater runoff on nearby waterways, but the ponds could provide superior environmental benefits by incorporating vegetative buffers that reduce sediments loads in streams and habitat for wildlife.

If your homeowner association or commercial business park is interested in learning more about the Adopt-a-Pond initiative, please contact the FLOW office for more information.



This pond in the Olentangy Meadows development is mowed to the edge and lacks deep-rooted vegetation. This situation encourages erosion that deposits nutrients and sediment in waterways and can harm stream life. Simple improvements could boost the water-quality benefits and enhance aesthetic qualities.



This pond near Windsong Way includes a vegetated buffer to trap nutrients and hold soil in place, reducing erosion and sediment build up in the pond. Vegetation also helps keep water temperatures cool.

Donate 5% to FLOW every time you shop at Kroger – renew your Plus card now!

By registering your Kroger Plus card, you can help FLOW receive a donation of 5% of qualified purchases under the Kroger Community Rewards Program at no cost to shoppers. Use your registered Kroger Plus card when shopping for each purchase to count. Kroger requires that all participants renew each year beginning May 1. Visit our website at www.olentangywatershed.org for the link and instructions.





Big Spring Tree Planting at Ohio School for the Deaf

On Saturday April 26, FLOW and partners hosted our Annual Big Spring Tree Planting at the Ohio School for the Deaf on Morse Road, on land adjacent to Bill Moose Run. Over 225 community volunteers turned out to plant more than 1,600 upland trees and installed deer guards on about 250 trees. Volunteers included Battelle staff members and their families and friends, FLOW, Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District, OSU, JP Morgan Chase, Half Price Books, NBBJ, Anheuser Busch Columbus Brewery, CISV, The Limited, along with individual volunteers and FLOW members that signed up through the Green Columbus Earth Day 2014 website.

Despite a light rain early on the morning of the tree planting, volunteer turnout was the best we have seen in recent years, and before long the trees were planted in their new home. Thanks to all of the volunteers that came out to help, and to event sponsors like Green Columbus that

provided trees, Battelle staff that contribute to FLOW throughout the year and provided refreshments and lunch for volunteers. The Tool Library loaned us shovels and Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District provided logistical support for the event as well as the planting site on a three-acre portion of their conservation easement at the School for the Deaf.



FLOW saw lots of old friends that morning as well as a number of new friends. We couldn't do it without you!

Fifth Avenue Dam Removal – A New Beginning

The Fifth Avenue dam removal and river restoration are nearing completion. The banks of the river were rebuilt, wetlands constructed, and more than 4,000 trees, 17,000 live stakes, and about 1,000 shrubs have been planted between Lane and Fifth Avenues. The banks are covered with erosion control blankets, and dotted with newly planted saplings. Workers faced many challenges in implementing the project, including high water during the wet summer of 2013, hungry beavers eating willow stakes, a bitter cold winter in 2014, and hundreds of Canada Geese gobbling up seeds.

River enthusiasts can finally see the greening of the riverbanks. Vegetation is the first step in stabilizing riverbanks and providing food and shelter for wildlife to reconnect the links of the food chain. For five years, researchers will monitor water quality, invertebrate communities and fish populations along the river. Workers will also keep an eye on vegetation along the river to make sure that invasive species like honeysuckle, purple loosestrife and other culprits are kept in check.

Several goals were established for the dam removal project, and some of them may take years before they are realized. Before the dam was breached, this reach of the Olentangy exhibited the worst water quality in the watershed; an impaired

waterway with elevated bacteria counts, low fish and macro-invertebrate scores and a lack of diverse river features like riffles, glides and pools.



Construction Supervisor Marion Berry of Evans Landscaping pulls a tire from the restored area of the Olentangy River.

The dam removal should help habitat scores climb from poor to good, and water chemistry scores shift from non-attainment to attainment as sediment, bacteria and excess nutrients are processed by wetland areas or flushed downstream instead of being trapped by the lowhead dam. Steadier water temperatures associated with a free-flowing river should help moderate fluctuations in dissolved-oxygen levels. Low dissolved oxygen levels can lead to fish kills. As vegetation matures, trees will provide shade for the river, which will help moderate water temperatures too.

The change from dam pool to flowing river makes the river more hospitable to wildlife. Dam removal allows fish, freshwater mussels and other aquatic species to migrate up and down the river, connecting this free-flowing portion of the Olentangy to the Scioto River for the first time in nearly 80 years. Now our river and its naturalized setting are protected with a permanent conservation easement and it will flow unimpeded from the Dodridge Street dam all the way to the confluence with the Scioto in downtown Columbus.

FLOW calendar of events

More events are posted on FLOW's web calendar at www.olentangywatershed.org. For more information, call the FLOW office at (614) 267-3386 or email us at info@olentangywatershed.org.

Stream Clean Up at Glen Echo Park Sat. July 19 – 9am to noon

FLOW and Anheuser Busch are teaming up with River Network for a Stream Clean Up at Glen Echo Park. Volunteers are needed to help pick up litter, weed the butterfly garden and help with registration and picnic logistics. We'll meet at the parking area at Calumet Christian School (2774 Calumet St, Columbus, OH 43202). Please RSVP to (614) 267-3386 or send us a message at info@olentangywatershed.org so we know how many will join us for the picnic!

Stream Quality Monitoring Training at High Banks Metro Park

Aug. 4 & 6 – 6:30 pm

Join Ohio Department of Natural Resources staff to learn about stream quality monitoring and macro-invertebrates on Monday, August 4 and Wed., August 6 at 6:30pm. Meet at the Stream Side Classroom parking area.

Paddle in the City – Second Saturday Canoe Floats on the Olentangy Water Trail – July 12, Aug. 9, Sept. 13

FLOW is partnering with HERO USA to bring paddle sports to the Olentangy Trail on July 12, August 9, and September 13. Space is limited, so reserve your spot in a canoe or kayak at www.HEROUSA.org. This series of canoe/kayak floats were made possible in part by a generous donation from outdoor outfitter REI and their new store at Easton.

Olentangy River Clean Up – Sat., Oct. 11 – 9am to noon

Join FLOW and the Insurance Industry Charitable Fund for a river cleanup Sat., Oct. 11, 9am to noon. Parking will be available at Battelle's warehouse parking area on the south side of W. 5th Ave on the east side of the Olentangy River (694 W. 5th Ave). Check FLOW's website calendar for updates at www.olentangywatershed.org.

HONEYSUCKLE ROUND UPS

Join neighborhood groups and Columbus Recreation and Parks Department to remove invasive honeysuckle shrubs from area parks. Karl will be there with his chain-saw crew and chipper truck, and volunteers are needed to help haul branches to the chipper. Please wear long pants and closed toe shoes. Tools will be provided, but bring work gloves if you have them. For more information on these Saturday morning events, contact Karl Hoessle at 645-2863.

All events are 9:30am to 1:30pm – rain or shine.

- July 12** Harrison Park
995 Harrison Park Pl., Columbus, OH 43201
- July 19** Beechwold Park – corner of W Beechwold Blvd. and Rustic Bridge Rd.
- July 26** Anheuser Busch Sports Park
4990 Olentangy River Rd. Columbus, OH 43214
- Aug. 2** Glen Echo Park
510 Cliffside Dr., Columbus OH 43202
- Aug. 23** Whetstone Park
3923 N High St., Columbus OH 43214
- Sept. 13** Island View Park
389 Westview Ave., Columbus, OH 43214
- Sept. 20** Kenney Park – behind LA Fitness at Graceland Shopping Center
- Sept. 27** Clinton Como Park
301 W Pacemont Rd., Columbus OH 43202
- Oct. 4** Whetstone Park
3923 N High St., Columbus OH 43214

New Butterfly Gardens at Worthington Hills and Clinton Como Park

June planting dates helped bring butterfly gardens to life in two local parks. Funded by grants from the Columbus Chapter of the Little Garden Club and Monarch Watch, the gardens were planted in cooperation with Columbus Recreation and Parks and Columbus Metro Parks, with help from the Worthington Hills Garden Club and FLOW volunteers. Butterflies and other pollinators have experienced steep population declines in recent years, and it is hoped that these gardens will help provide habitat.



Butterfly garden volunteers helped bring beauty and pollinator habitat to two area parks.

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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.



Urban Rainscapes!

By Laura Fay

There is nothing easy in retrofitting an urban environment, especially to mimic the natural hydrologic cycle by increasing infiltration, evapo-transpiration and reducing runoff from impervious surfaces. In recent months, FLOW was educated about issues that might come to bear for urban restoration under our Olentangy Urban Rainscapes (OUR) project.

- Renters cannot apply for a rain barrel without the approval of the landowner. Columbus offers free rain barrels to some people that participate in the Low Income Water and Sewer Discount Program, but you still need access to a drill and about \$20 in supplies to set up your barrel.
- Each community has different ordinances about downspout disconnection and rain barrels. One community in our watershed requires that rain barrels match the house color.
- Some communities don't permit piping water under sidewalks that could be used to connect front yard rain gardens to tree lawns. This results in lost opportunities for infiltration.
- Cutting curbs, to allow street water to flow into tree lawns, was not allowed for our Weinland Park project. Another lost opportunity to reduce stormwater overflows.
- City planners want to increase density in the University District area to provide more student and faculty housing. With the increased density of people comes the increase in need for roads, sidewalks, parking spaces and potentially the loss of trees and green space.
- Columbus does not have any incentives for residential property owners to include green infrastructure like rain gardens or trees. Only the truly inspired will proceed.

In spite of everything we were lucky to work with Wagenbrenner Development, a developer who understands the need to do things differently. We had other great partners in Sandy Frey and Susan Weber at Integrity Sustainable Planning & Design. Franklin Soil & Water Conservation District helped the project by providing equipment to monitor the amount of water being infiltrated in the newly installed rain gardens. MAD Scientist and Associates collected and analyzed the rain-garden monitoring data, and Wendy Naumann assessed neighborhood feedback. Oakland Park Nursery installed the rain gardens and Weinland Park neighbor Monica Desenberg diligently watered to keep everything alive through the late summer drought. Thanks also to City Forester Joe Sulak for planting beautiful, healthy street trees. Finally, we picked a great part of our watershed to work in – Weinland Park. The residents there understand the need and benefits of infiltrating stormwater and water harvesting. And it was all made possible through the Ohio EPA Environmental Education Fund.



Five front yard rain gardens and five tree lawn rain gardens at Hamlet and 8th street in May of 2014, nine months after installation.