

FLOW

Explore. Discover.
Understand. Act.

Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed

Photo courtesy of George C. Anderson Photography

E X P L O R E • D I S C O V E R • U N D E R S T A N D • A C T

FALL 2017

20 Years of Progress

FLOW has now had twenty years of organizing, planning, planting, measuring and otherwise looking after the quality and safety of the Olentangy River.

You can see the results all around. Some of the important accomplishments:

- Completing the Watershed Action Plan - only meant to be a five year plan, but still used today as a roadmap for the future. This entailed many meetings that got the community involved and connected with the river.
- Improving water quality as a result of four dam removals.
- Getting the Lower Olentangy Water Trail approved, which gives paddlers access points to the river and encourages enjoyment of the river and the natural areas around it.
- Planting trees and native wildflowers all over the watershed, to provide habitat, reduce polluting runoff, and offer outdoor enjoyment for all.

It started in 1997 when Amanda Davey, just finishing at The Ohio State University, saw an article about watershed coordinators. She contacted the Ohio EPA and thus began the steps that formed Friends of the Lower Olentangy.

Using Amanda's OSU contacts and Vince Mazika's EPA

contacts, the original email got an enormous response. They formalized the group as a 501c3 non-profit, set up a board of directors, put together a mission, and began monthly meetings with educational and business topics.

The early founders envisioned an organization that would be a clearinghouse for the river, and sustainable over the years. The decision was made to work together with partners rather than serve in an adversarial role.

"I am so impressed with what FLOW has done and how it has maintained itself," Amanda says. "The city uses the river as an asset now. The water quality is maintaining, which is good with all the development pressure up north."

A grant allowed the group to hire Erin Miller as its first watershed coordinator. She served from 2000-2004, when the organizational foundations were established, membership was built, and the watershed plan was completed.

"Working for FLOW was one of the highlights of my career," Erin says. "The board members are extremely involved, and always have been. They did GIS mapping, took photos that brought the river to life, helped with financial expertise."

"It has always been a very reputable group, one that is science based and community focused. FLOW's vision is for the community to be connected to and appreciative of the Olentangy River," Erin explains.



Among the core group that started FLOW, and now enjoying the 20th anniversary: George Anderson, Joanne Leussig, Amanda Davey, Jennifer Fish, Russ Fish, Joe Motil.



Celebration day, FLOW-style: FLOW and Anheuser-Busch folks started the day by planting a pollinator garden.

Webster Park

Tucked into a neighborhood just south of Whetstone Park is a small nature preserve and bird sanctuary called Webster Park.

And around it are a couple dozen people who have banded together to protect and improve the quality of this 1.4 acre woodland.

By around 2005, this nature preserve was so choked with honeysuckle that residents could not even walk in it. Other invasive plants such as euonymus (wintercreeper), English ivy, and garlic mustard had also changed the ecosystem of the park significantly.

As a result, the group Friends of Webster Park was organized in 2005 to remove invasive plants, and generally to protect and care for this natural area, under the supervision of the Columbus Recreation and Parks Department.

The Friends work monthly to clear invasive honeysuckle and the invasive vines that climb and damage trees. Because of their efforts, the park is now clear enough of honeysuckle that they can enjoy the assortment of native trees, the return of wildflowers and native shrubs, the stream, and the welcome display of skunk cabbage poking through the snow in the spring.

Many trees have been saved from damage by removing invasive vines, and the native bushes are thriving.

Because the park must be maintained in its native state, the native species are allowed to follow their natural progression as much as possible. For example, naturally fallen trees in Webster Park remain where they land, to decay and provide shelter for small animals.

This is the possibility created by neighbors working together. What's not to love about a group of people who extend themselves on behalf of a patch of woodlands? What motivates the group to devote their time and effort to the park? "It is a combination of neighborhood pride, and some who are strongly motivated by environmental concerns," explains Jeff Caswell. "Plus, some have professional interest." Jeff and his wife Lucy are among the leaders of this group. They'll be moving from the neighborhood soon, but another neighbor, Michael LeHue, has already begun to coordinate the volunteers.

The Caswells have lived by the park for 43 years, but the park's history goes back a lot farther than that.

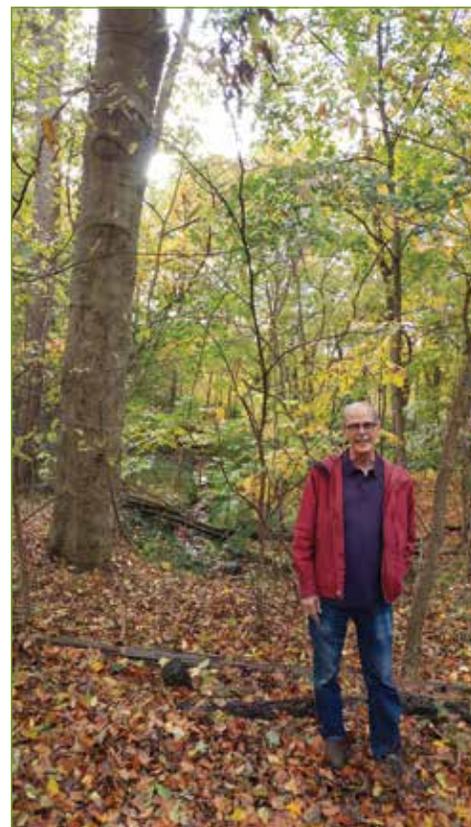
The area now known as the Webster Park subdivision was sold to Amason Webster (not "Amazon," despite the street name) by the Rathbone heirs on May 29, 1846. Webster's daughter Orell inherited the land in 1900 and, with husband Lewis Legg, subdivided it in 1909.

Their initial plat shows "Webster Park" at its current location, while the entire subdivision runs from High Street to Olentangy Boulevard, and from Erie Road to the edge of Whetstone Park.

The City Bulletin of May 8, 1926 records the transfer of this park plot to the city, specifying that it continue to be maintained in its native state as a wild bird asylum and wild flower preserve under direction of the superintendent of parks. Columbus Recreation and Parks Department is responsible for Webster Park today. In 2014 the city's Nature Preserve Advisory Council voted to name Webster Park as a Nature Preserve.



Sun glows peacefully on trees, fallen logs, and paw paws of Webster Park. The watershed is lucky to have such a passionate group volunteering monthly to ensure that this natural jewel is preserved!



Jeff Caswell above the ravine and creek at Webster Park.

Greenspace Planning Grant

Thanks to a Columbus Foundation grant, FLOW will be creating maps that show current greenspace preservation in the Olentangy watershed. This will include conservation easements, parks, areas preserved by private landowners, and other natural spaces that have been specifically set aside for preservation. The project should be completed in about 18 months.

The Olentangy River and valley is well recognized locally and beyond for its significance. While notable efforts have occurred over time in preserving it, development continues to diminish its grandness and vitality. The more comprehensive mapping funded by the Columbus Foundation will acknowledge the notable efforts of many to date, as well as indicate possibilities to further the preservation of the stream and valley. Presently there is no one data source that maps all the known natural green spaces.

FLOW's partner organizations are Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District, City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department, Delaware County Regional Planning Commission, Delaware County Soil and Water Conservation District, and the

Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission. They will work with the general public, public jurisdictions, and environmental organizations. GIS (Geographic Information Systems) will be used for mapping known preserved green spaces, as well as lack of preservation connectivity, and potential future linkages.

Area property owners will be invited to public meetings to receive information and give input. "The ripple effect of engaging people in the public process of preservation is huge," notes Tom Ryther, FLOW member and project volunteer. "What is greenspace and why and how do we acquire it, where is it and how is it used? This includes little pockets of natural greenspace that are part of subdivisions' homeowners' associations, which will be included with those participating in the mapping and planning process".

The expected further population growth here in Central Ohio and the Olentangy watershed gives FLOW this incentive to strengthen the preservation of this recognized and cherished landscape, now a historical remnant of that landscape that existed prior to contemporary growth.

Thanks to our Watershed Partners

Thanks to all of FLOW's watershed partners. Please consider visiting these businesses that help to support water quality where we live.

A special thanks:

- ▲ To Weilands Market at 3600 Indianola Ave., which turned its 56th Birthday Party into a big benefit for six nonprofit agencies, including FLOW.
- ▲ To those who donate to FLOW through the Kroger Community Rewards and Amazon Smile programs. This gives FLOW a percentage of eligible purchases at no cost to the shopper. Please see directions on the FLOW website for how to donate.
- ▲ To those who donated to FLOW via workplace giving programs through EarthShare. Many federal, state, municipal, and county employees chose FLOW as their charity of choice.
- ▲ To Western Reserve Land Conservancy (Dominion Energy) for their grant to restore Slyh Run at Cranbrook Elementary School.
- ▲ To Battelle employees for contributing, to Battelle for matching their employees' contributions, and to the River and Stream Team for another year of partnering to plant trees in the watershed.
- ▲ To Anheuser-Busch Columbus Brewery for their grants and annual volunteer service events that support FLOW and better water quality in central Ohio.
- ▲ To Lush Homemade Cosmetics, Crest Gastropub, and Patagonia for their continued support.
- ▲ To The Outdoor Source in Kingsdale. They have been supporters of FLOW events for years by providing kayaks for events, and helping FLOW to get grants from Patagonia.
- ▲ To Columbus Foundation for our Greenspace Planning Grant.
- ▲ To REI for supporting river cleanup and recreation events to stimulate the community in sustainable river recreation.
- ▲ To the many volunteers who come to workdays and otherwise stand up for a clean environment in the Olentangy Watershed.

Beauty and the Butterflies



Our distressed pollinator friends will have some beautiful and welcoming habitat along 270 starting next summer. Seventeen acres have been designated by the Ohio Department of Transportation as wildflower areas.

The areas, split between the Olentangy and Alum Creek watersheds, are at the I-270 exits for OH-315, US 23, and I-71 on the North side.

The area will be seeded with native wildflowers by next spring, and the new plants will spend next summer establishing themselves and developing deep root systems. Starting the following summer, the flowers will be in bloom for the enjoyment of motorists, as well as butterflies, moths, bees, hummingbirds, and other pollinators.

An additional benefit: There will be less mowing and better stormwater infiltration.

Pollinators keep our ecosystem functioning, and have been declining due to development and other human activities. You can help by making your yard pollinator-friendly: skip pesticides, and provide native flowering plants, water, and a shelter area that isn't disturbed often. For better impact, get your neighbors involved. The Internet will provide you with useful information.

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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.

FLOW relies heavily on volunteer participation to create positive change in our watershed.

Please contact us for information on how you can volunteer. We have a wide variety of opportunities to fit your schedule and match your skills and interests. To be added to the FLOW email list, please send a request to info@olentangywatershed.org with a subject line of "Email list".



FLOW Monthly Meetings

FLOW has public educational meetings at 7 p.m. on the first Monday of each month except during the summer. They are currently held at the Old Worthington Library, 820 High St, Worthington.

FLOW calendar of events

FLOW has a variety of activities throughout the year. Please join in! Check FLOW's calendar at www.olentangywatershed.org or see the Facebook page: Friends of the Lower Olentangy Watershed (FLOW).



An Active Year

FLOW's many volunteers worked at 85 events during 2017:

| Service | Event Numbers | Comments |
|---------------------|---------------|------------------------------------|
| Invasive removals | 20 | |
| Litter Cleanups | 15 | 233 bags of trash |
| Maintenance | 6 | |
| Outreach/Education | 29 | |
| Pollinator Planting | 3 | |
| Tree Planting | 12 | 3160 seedlings 213 larger trees |

Free ways to Donate to FLOW

KROGER PLUS CARD

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. Visit our website at www.olentangywatershed.org for the link and instructions.



AmazonSmile:

With AmazonSmile, you can donate to FLOW at no cost to yourself. Amazon donates 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to the charitable organization of your choice. Go to <https://smile.amazon.com/> and search for Friends Of The Lower Olentangy.

Thereafter, start your Amazon sessions at <http://smile.amazon.com>.

