

FALL 2018

The Future of Olentangy Watershed Greenspace

Before we celebrate the greenspace that we have, and evaluate it in light of the one million more people that are expected in the Columbus area, we need to see what we have now and what people want in the future.

“We need a balance before things get too crazy,” explains Laura Fay, FLOW Science Committee Chair. “People need greenspace for calming. The birds and the river need it.”

We do know that greenspace and openspace is not readily available to all. The Trust for Public Land ranked the city of Columbus 62nd out of the 100 largest cities in US for park acreage, investment, access, and amenities. This rank applies just to Columbus, not the entire lower Olentangy watershed.

No single database identifies natural areas (greenspace) and recreational open space within the watershed. This makes watershed-wide planning difficult.

A grant from Columbus Foundation is letting FLOW address this issue now. Project Greenspace is a comprehensive study to map all greenspace and park space in the Lower Olentangy watershed, and to develop priorities that meet the needs of those who live in it. It is hoped that this information will also protect the existing spaces that are most valued.

Data and maps are being compiled for rivers and tributaries, prairies, marshes, and ponds, parks, sports fields, and playgrounds. Ryan Pilewski, Watershed Resource Specialist with Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District, has been merging, mapping, and analyzing data from all municipalities in the Lower Olentangy watershed.

Once all data is in, FLOW will be able to prioritize their future efforts and make recommendations. This might include focusing on areas next to already protected parcels: areas around streams, high quality woodlands, and areas that connect existing greenspaces.

The project will provide the tools to bring together concerned parties in a unified approach to the watershed. The data is already being requested by other groups.

The future vision for the Olentangy River and valley is also dependent on public feedback, which FLOW is collecting from residents via public meetings and a survey. Those on FLOW’s mailing list will receive an e-mailed survey. You can add your thoughts by going to www.olentangywatershed.org and clicking on the survey link in the Project Greenspace article. Please encourage others to take this survey too. Specific suggestions are especially useful.

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.

One Little Thing

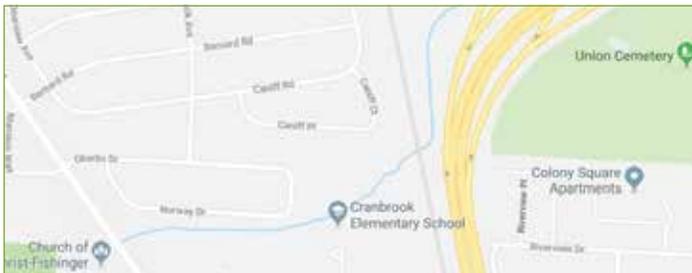
Leaves can be a challenge for homeowners in the fall. They can also be a challenge for stream quality. If too many leaves are dumped or washed into a creek, they pile up and smother vegetation that should be growing in the stream. This leads to erosion and the degradation of the stream banks.

We can help to keep excess leaves away from the streams by not dumping leaves over stream banks and by being mindful of leaves washing into storm sewers. We can keep leaves away from the street edge and other places where they might end up in the storm sewers. Instead, we can compost, shred with our lawnmower, or bag for curbside pickup.

This is one little thing that we can incorporate into our life right now.



Restoring Slyh Run



Slyh Run flows east from the Smith Nature Preserve on Fishing Road and passes through the Cranbrook Neighborhood and Cranbrook Elementary School.

Most of the time, Slyh Run passes quietly through residential areas on its way from near Riverside Methodist Hospital to the new OhioHealth campus. On rainy days, though, runoff from yards and pavement causes water to gush rapidly through its already undercut banks, taking soil, vegetation, and macroinvertebrates with it.

Its flood plain should flood about a dozen times a year to filter and slow the water and provide animal habitat. Instead, it might flood twice on a good year.

A few years ago, the invasive honeysuckle was so thick that a person could not get to the stream.

Taking Action

But there were people who cared. The little stream and its surroundings have been getting a lot of attention from Friends of the Lower Olentangy and others over the past three years.

Nancy Cruickshank lives in the neighborhood and recalls speaking with FLOW's Laura Fay about a stream cleanup. "More and more neighbors got involved," she explained.

FLOW has organized more than a dozen workdays there. Thanks to the efforts of FLOW volunteers, neighbors, OSU students, LUSH Cosmetics employees, and OSU Pay It Forward students, honeysuckle has been replaced by native shrubs and trees with strong, bank-holding roots, and a prairie has been added.

"The first workday generated a lot of interest among the neighbors," says Nancy. "I see people down there with their dogs, kids playing ball. People go back there now."



Slyh Run prairie with native pollinator plants and bluebird boxes.

The Bridge

The stream once had a pedestrian bridge that was used by students to get to and from Cranbrook Elementary School. Since it became unsafe and was removed, students have had to walk along Kenny road, with no sidewalks, or take a bus to the school that was right behind their neighborhood.

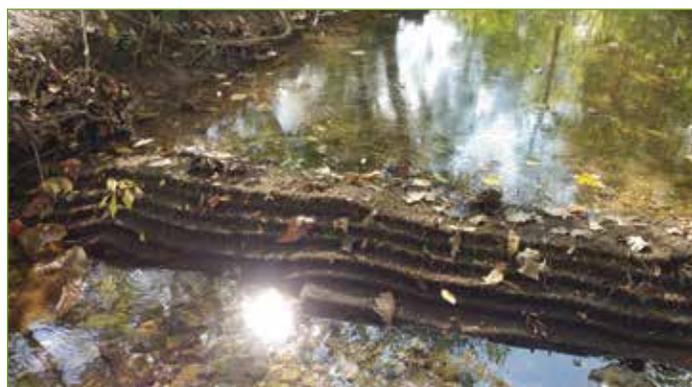
FLOW has just finished fundraising to pay for a new 45-foot pedestrian bridge. Funds came from The Columbus Foundation, a community garage sale, a Go Fund Me campaign, and the City of Columbus. The last challenge is getting engineering plans for the concrete abutments.

Slowing the Flow

Slyh Run's biggest problem is fast-moving stormwater runoff, which erodes and undercuts the banks and degrades stream life and health.

This is because 41% of its watershed is covered with hard surface, and it has only 0.9 miles of open stream as compared with 15 miles of stormwater pipe. The only open stream channel runs from Smith Nature Preserve to SR 315 and Olentangy River Rd. to the Olentangy River, carrying large volumes of stormwater with every rain.

To slow and filter the stream, FLOW has installed innovative barriers called stream inserts. These foot-high barriers create obstructions that let stream material build up behind them. They also become coated with a healthy biofilm that helps to filter and clean the water.



Stream insert filtering and slowing water.

It is hoped that the stream inserts will improve water quality, and create habitat for macroinvertebrates. It is also hoped that they will direct water away from collapsing banks and to the floodplain.

"These inserts have had a significant positive impact on a small urbanized stream in Reynoldsburg," noted Kurt Keljo, Watershed Resource Specialist at Franklin Soil and Water Conservation District. "We are excited that this approach to stream restoration is being implemented by FLOW in Slyh Run and are hopefully curious as to the effect it will have on this impaired stream."

The stream inserts were made possible by a Western Reserve Land Conservancy Grant from Dominion Energy.

Upstream, people can slow the flow with prairies or rain gardens, plant native vegetation along the stream rather than mowing close to it, and avoid putting rocks or raking leaves into the stream.

Water Quality Challenges

Volunteers have sampled Slyh Run water quality over the past two years by counting the number of different organisms found. It received a score of 6.9 (or D-), significantly lower than the other area streams sampled.

A report card has been mailed to residents along the stream to inform them of the water quality and what they can do to improve it. Suggestions include:

- Do not allow anything but water into the storm sewers
- Reduce pesticide and fertilizer use
- Plant native vegetation, especially along banks
- Clean up pet waste
- Wash vehicles on the lawn
- Consider a prairie or pollinator garden.

Anheuser-Busch's Landscaping Makeover

Of all FLOW's commercial partners, Anheuser-Busch has the strongest commitment to water quality. FLOW has been working with them for eight years and next year's planning has started already.

This year, FLOW volunteers installed a rain garden and water-conserving natural landscaping in front of the administration building.

Amy Dutt, an engineer and landscape architect, designed the rain garden and landscaping.



Jessica Gazda, Environmental Health and Safety Manager and FLOW's primary contact, and Amy Dutt, project designer and owner of Urban Wild, with some of the new water-conserving landscaping.

The trees, shrubs, river rock, mulch, and all the plants were funded by a grant from Anheuser-Busch via the River Network.



Installation Team with Mike Stinziano

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:

- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Those who donated to FLOW via workplace giving programs through EarthShare. Many state, municipal, and county employees chose FLOW as their charity of choice.
- ▶ 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.
- ▶ Anheuser-Busch Columbus Brewery for their grants and annual volunteer service events that support FLOW and better water quality in central Ohio.
- ▶ Councilman Michael Stinziano and The City of Columbus for the reimbursement grant to help support the new Slyh Run Pedestrian Bridge at Cranbrook Elementary School.
- ▶ The Columbus Recreation and Parks Department for helping pre-auger the holes for our tree plantings at Rosewind Commons.
- ▶ Green Columbus for providing seedlings for our Earthday plantings, for containerized trees for Carmack Woods Phase 2 and balled and burlapped trees for Rosewind Commons Phase 2.
- ▶ The Columbus Foundation for grants to buy Trees for Schools and for Greenspace Planning.
- ▶ Franklin County Soil and Water Conservation District for their grant to the Worthington Hills Garden Club to create a bioswale.
- ▶ Western Reserve Land Conservancy and Dominion Energy for a 4th project grant.
- ▶ The pay-it-forward students at OSU for their help on 7 events in our watershed.
- ▶ Lush Homemade Cosmetics for their funding for 60 trees.
- ▶ REI for their 5th grant to support our river cleanups.
- ▶ The Arch City Flow team of Leadership Columbus for helping with fundraising and the tree campaign.
- ▶ Columbus City Schools Landscaping staff for pre-augering the holes for 123 balled and burlapped trees at 4 schools this fall.
- ▶ Candle Lab for hosting a fundraiser.
- ▶ The OSU capstone students for Rush Run, Carmack Woods and the Olentangy Trail projects.
- ▶ Russell Tree Experts for picking up honeysuckle debris, and Budget Dumpster for donating a free dumpster for honeysuckle debris.
- ▶ The many volunteers who come to workdays and otherwise stand up for a clean environment in the Olentangy 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.

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".



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. Go to www.kroger.com, select Savings & Rewards, and then Kroger Community Rewards. FLOW's new code is AU317.

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>.



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).

River Vision

Cruise by <https://www.olentangyvisionplan.com/> and take an enjoyable photo-filled survey to share your vision of what you imagine the Olentangy River could become. This survey is part of a visioning project by Jason Kentner at Ohio State University.

Fast Facts

The Lower Olentangy watershed contains:

400 miles of tributaries
35 miles of river 281 acres of wetland
996 acres of pond 354 acres of lake
369 sub-watersheds (*Tributaries with their own drainage source*)