



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter July 2016



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

Contents

Meet County Council Members

Dozens Bike Sligo

Champion Trees Tour

New Annotated Map of Sligo

Need to Reach Us?

Meet with Council Members Elrich, Hucker, and Leventhal

Friends of Sligo Creek has arranged a public meeting with three of our County Council members on Thursday, July 21, at 7:30 pm, at the Silver Spring Civic Building. Come at 7:15 to socialize and enjoy refreshments.

Confirmed at this time are Tom Hucker, George Leventhal, and Marc Elrich, with a possibility that Nancy Navarro will join them.



County Council members Tom Hucker (left) and George Leventhal (mymcmedia.org)

FOSC president Kit Gage will moderate a discussion of environmental issues that impact Sligo, such as funding for the Parks Department, water quality monitoring and improvement, tree planting and removal, and the water quality protection charge. That charge is a county property tax that raises funds to improve the water quality of our streams and reduce the impacts of stormwater runoff.

The event was suggested by our board, committee chairs, section stewards, and other members of the FOSC Roundtable during its annual meeting last winter.



County Council member Marc Elrich (bethesdamagazine.com)

"It's important for County Council and FOSC folks to get to know each other and their shared environmental interests and concerns," notes Kit. "We wanted to have an opportunity for informal give-and-take with some of the members of Council."

Elrich and Leventhal are at-large members of the Council. Elrich chairs the Public Safety Committee and sits on the Education Committee. Leventhal chairs the Health and Human Services Committee and sits on the Planning, Housing, and Economic Development Committee. Hucker represents District 5 (which covers the area east of Rt 29 and

between New Hampshire Ave and 29). He sits on the Public Safety, Transportation, Infrastructure, Energy and Environment Committees.

For more information about the event, contact president Kit Gage at president@fosc.org.

Dozens Bike Length of Sligo for Clean Water

Thirty-four riders, ages nine to 85, biked from Sligo's headwaters to the confluence with Northwest Branch and beyond to the Anacostia River, 12 miles away, as part of our first Community Bike Ride for Clean Water on June 12.

Along the route, bikers stopped at a dozen special sites that highlighted success stories and challenges in the many efforts to improve our stream and surrounding habitat.

Kathleen Samiy, co-founder of Water WatchDogs with Anne Vorce, led the group, which left the Kemp Mill area at 8:30 am and arrived in Bladensburg two hours later.



Leader Kathleen Samiy guides the tour into the meadow restoration project in the powerline corridor.

At the stops, Kathleen shared interesting facts of local history and ecology. You can view a map of all the stops, with information about each one, on our website [here](#). Stops included the headwaters, the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds, the Park Valley Road stone bridge and Green Streets project, the former home site of Rachel Carson at Maple Avenue and the nearby Brashear's Run stormwater outfall, the Sligo Gorge at the Carroll Avenue bridge, the Pepco powerlines meadow restoration, and the confluence of Sligo Creek with Northwest Branch in Bladensburg.



Kathleen points out the stormwater pipe at Wayne Avenue that drains part of downtown Silver Spring and where FOSC regularly measures water quality.

"It was a lot of fun, and very informative," wrote one of the riders. "I learned about channelized streams, the transition from Piedmont to Coastal Plain, how a stream originates, the positive changes brought about by FOSC and its allies, the history of the places we rode through, and plenty more. I deeply appreciate the high quality of the planning and execution of this project."

Another called it "a highlight of the spring for me." The nine-year-old's mother reported, "I am so glad we did that ride. We both had a great time. Thanks so much for organizing it. Cannot wait to go again."

"The bike tour provided a visceral sense of the air, water, and landscape," noted leader Kathleen, "as the group rolled along through natural, vegetative, and topographic changes and traversed gradually downhill to nearly sea level. How fortunate we are that water quality and habitat improvement projects by the FOSC and DEP [county Department of Environmental Protection], which may not be obvious to a casual observer, are improving our waterways and striving to improve water quality and increase native flora and fauna."



Riders stop at the bridge near the confluence of Sligo and NW Branch. (Alan Bowser photos)

The second Community Bike Ride from Sligo headwaters to

the Anacostia will be held in spring 2017.

The bike ride was made possible by a grant to Friends of Sligo Creek from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, through the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection's Water Quality Protection Charge. Bladensburg Waterfront Park and the Prince George's County Community Connect Program provided the classroom and boat ride on the Anacostia.

For a full account of the bike tour and a slide show, see our website page [here](#).

Tree Lovers Visit Champion Trees



Leader Joe Howard discusses the huge Sawtooth Oak in Nolte Park.

About 40 tree lovers joined leader Joe Howard on a bike tour of the biggest trees in the Sligo watershed on June 4.

Along the way, Joe treated the group to his deep font of knowledge about the champion trees living right in the Sligo Creek valley, which include a Yellow Buckeye, a Sourwood, the state champion Silverbell, and an extraordinary Northern Red Oak.

The tour included giants of many native species, such as American Sycamore and Southern Magnolia, as well as some surprises, including a Sawtooth Oak in Nolte Park, a Coast Redwood (brought back from California decades ago), and a Deodar Cedar, a species native to the western Himalayas.

A champion tree is the largest known example of its species in a particular region. The size of a champion is determined using three numbers: height, average width of

the crown, and circumference of the tree's trunk 4.5 feet off the ground.

The six-mile route roughly followed the creek, with side excursions into park lands and private yards that are home to these beauties. Along the way, riders got to visit a total of 18 impressive trees, a testament to the nurturing environment of the Sligo Creek valley and its surrounding neighborhoods.

Joe Howard is a 40-year resident of Sligo, a member of the Montgomery County Forestry Board, and founder of the Register of Champion Trees for the county. He is also well-known as a "trash emperor" for his ongoing litter-removal efforts in Sligo.

You can learn more about champion trees at the county's champion tree webpage [here](#) or at the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service page [here](#).

-- Pat Ratkowski



Champion Tree tour visits a giant American Sycamore. (Pat Ratkowski photos)

New Map of Sligo Highlights

Thanks to the efforts of our Water WatchDogs team, an informative new map of the Sligo watershed had been added to our website and can easily be printed on letter-size paper.

It marks a dozen key spots related to habitat, geology, water quality, stormwater management, and human history. The map's reverse side annotates each site with useful background from a variety of perspectives. Find the map [here](#).

Twelve highlighted spots extend from the headwaters (near Arcola Elementary School) to the confluence of Sligo with Northwest Branch in Hyattsville. Eight of them focus on water quality, five on habitat, five on human history, and two



Sligo Creek Watershed



on geology (most address two themes).

The map provides an introduction for the newcomer to Sligo, as well as some likely surprises even for long-time residents (such as a little-known site where Rachel Carson lived).

Although the map was produced for the recent Community Bike Ride for Clean Water, it can be used for any visit to the creek. (For funding credits, see story on the bike ride above.)

Thanks to Water WatchDogs co-founders Kathleen Samiy (who designed the map) and Anne Vorce for this wonderful new guide to our watershed!

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Friends of Sligo Creek is a nonprofit community organization dedicated to protecting, improving, and appreciating the ecological health of Sligo Creek Park and its surrounding watershed.