



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter March 2016



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Don't Miss Our Annual Open House, "Inspiration Works," March 22

Meet Sligo neighbors, enjoy refreshments (sandwiches, veggies, cookies), learn about our many projects, and hear how new stormwater initiatives will develop in the watershed at our annual "Inspiration Works" open house on Tuesday, March 22, from 7-9 pm. The event takes place at the Sligo-Dennis Community Building, along the Parkway just upstream (north) from Dennis Avenue.

Our committees will present informative displays of their recent work on invasives, water quality, stormwater, and natural history. Get answers to your questions from the organizers at each table.

Our guest speaker is Pamela Rowe, the RainScapes planner with Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. She'll give us an update on stormwater projects in Sligo and the rebate program that provides up to \$2,500 to homeowners for stormwater improvements. She'll also describe the new Neighbor to Neighbor (N2N) process, geocaching, and pet-waste management.

Pamela has worked for nearly 20 years to protect and restore local watersheds. She now works with residents and groups on innovative approaches for managing stormwater. She spends as much time as she can paddling or sailing the region's many beautiful rivers and the Chesapeake Bay.



Guests enjoy our natural history display at a previous open house for Friends of Sligo.

Don't miss this great annual event!

Learn to ID and Report Water Pollution March 5

Have you ever noticed an oily film or a strange color in Sligo's waters while enjoying the Park -- and wanted to report it to the authorities? Learn simple ways to identify and report water pollution in Sligo Creek and nearby waterways at the second Water WatchDogs training on Saturday, March 5, at the home of Kit Gage. Water WatchDogs is a simple, email-based reporting system that gets the news directly to people in county government who can do something about it.

The workshop runs from 8:30 to 11:15 am. Kit's address is 8007 Park Crest Drive, Silver Spring, between Piney Branch Road and Sligo Creek Parkway. Come as early as 8:15 to socialize. This second workshop in the series focuses on the stretch of Sligo between Piney Branch Road and Maple Avenue, but the lessons can be applied anywhere.

To register, email Anne Vorce at avorce@aol.com by 5 pm on Tuesday, March 1. (If you miss that deadline and are still interested, please email her to find out if open slots remain.) In your email to register, mention any water pollution issues you have noticed in and around Sligo Creek, especially in the area of our focus (Piney Branch to Maple). That way, the workshop leaders can prepare to address them at the training.



Water quality expert Lori Lilly leads the first Water WatchDogs training in Sligo in fall 2015. (A. Vorce photo)

The workshop begins with pollution ID training by Lori Lilly, an independent environmental consultant who has done extensive pollution investigation work in our watershed.

Her presentation is followed by an introduction to the Water WatchDogs reporting system by its founders, Anne Vorce and Kathleen Samiy. They will also relay recent success stories in which citizens have stopped pollution by using this system. The group will then take a brief field visit to nearby Sligo Creek to apply some of the lessons learned.

This workshop is made possible, in part, by a grant from the Chesapeake Bay Trust, through Montgomery County's Department of Environmental Protection Water Quality Protection Charge Program. The grant enables the Water WatchDog program to expand its users

through educational programs for the Sligo community and an upcoming Bike Ride for Clean Water along the Sligo Creek Trail and trails linking down to the Anacostia this year.



Sligo Creek
WaterWatchDog

For more information, contact Anne Vorce at avorce@aol.com.

Construction Begins on Verdant New Kemp Mill Urban Park

Thousands of newly planted natives and cultivars will soon grace the renovated Kemp Mill Urban Park, where construction begins in March after a multi-year planning process. The park, located

between the Kemp Mill shopping center and Arcola Avenue, is scheduled to re-open in the spring of 2017.

The renovated landscape will feature more than 700 new trees and shrubs and at least 7,000 new wildflowers, grasses, and aquatic plants. Kemp Mill will become the second ambitiously naturalized park in Sligo following the wetlands completed at Evans Parkway Park in Wheaton last year. For full drawings of the Kemp Mill renovations, visit the Parks' website [Kemp Mill drawings](#). At Montgomery Parks, the project leader is Aaron Feldman and David Linton is the construction manager.

At the center of the park will be three small ponds to replace the one large pond. These smaller ponds have been designed to deter the hordes of Canada Geese that overran the old park before it closed.



Artist's conception of the new Kemp Mill Urban Park (Montgomery Parks image)

Landscape architects have incorporated several features into the new ponds to make them less attractive to geese. Each of the three ponds will be smaller and narrower than the old pond, providing less "take-off" room for the geese, who need wide expanses of water to gain flight. The new ponds will be bordered by dense vegetation rather than the turf-grass they so love to eat. Finally, the ponds' circulation pumps will create ripples on the water's surfaces, which geese tend to avoid. In addition, new signage will discourage visitors from feeding the geese, which had become a popular activity.

About 150 new trees will include native Sassafras, Witch-hazel, Ironwood (*Carpinus*), and Shumard, Chestnut, and Swamp White Oak, along with cultivars of sixteen other species. A staggering 500 new shrubs will include cultivars of Virginia Sweetspire, Red-twig Dogwood, Summersweet, Buttonbush, American Cranberry, and seven more species.

Alongside these will be nearly 4,000 herbaceous plants from two dozen species, including native Cardinal Flower, Swamp Milkweed, Turtlehead, Alumroot, Gayfeather, Mountain Mint, Black-eyed Susan, Swamp Verbena, and Ostrich Fern. About 3,500 ornamental grasses from nine species and cultivars will also be added, plus about 740 aquatic emergent plants from eight species, six of them non-cultivar natives: Tussock Sedge, Soft Rush, Arrow Arum, Pickerelweed, Arrowhead, and Burreed.

-- Michael Wilpers

Save the Date: Spring "Sweep the Creek" is April 23-24

Mark your calendars for our next Sweep the Creek clean-up event on Saturday and Sunday, April 23 and 24. This spring's event is part of the fourteenth consecutive year for Sweep the Creek, which began in September 2002.



As usual, some sections of the Park will be scheduled for a Sweep on Saturday morning, 9-11 am, with other sites happening on Sunday afternoon, 1-3 pm. The schedule will be gradually filled in as section leaders are confirmed. For the latest schedule, visit our [website](#).

We will provide all necessary materials in cooperation with Montgomery Parks, including gloves, trash bags, cleaning wipes, drinking water, and sign-up sheets for students who want to earn service-learning hours. Your friends can also join

FOSC (no membership fee) and receive this newsletter and occasional announcements and information. For any questions, email Patton Stephens at litter@fosc.org.

In 1903, "So wild and sylvan a retreat, a very Eden of rest and natural beauty"

On a hot day in May of 1903, a visitor to Sligo encountered what he called "a Little Mountain Stream" surrounded by a "Dense Jungle" and "great trees of old primordial forest" making for a "wild and sylvan retreat."

The visitor was Mr. F. H. Robbins, an official with the Adventist Church, who was exploring land for Washington Missionary College (now Washington Adventist University) and Washington Sanitarium (now Washington Adventist Hospital).

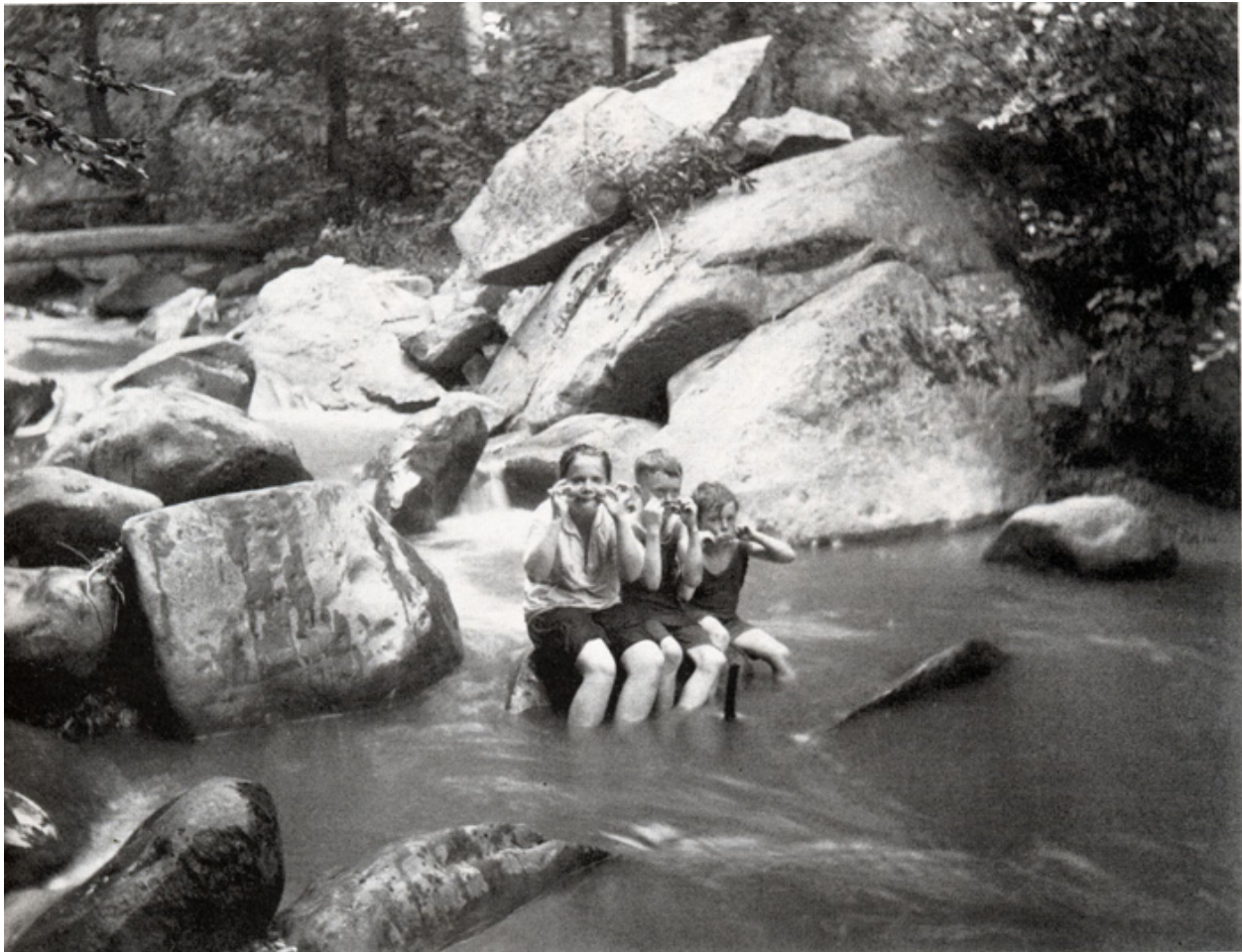


1906 photo of Sligo upstream from a dam between Geneva and Maplewood Avenues

Our treasurer, Dee Clarkin, discovered Mr. Robbins' recollections in a 1924 publication while helping research botanist Charles Lester Boyd, author of the the 1940 "Flora of the Sligo Valley." Mr. Robbins' article, written as a fundraising piece, reflects on his first visit to the site twenty one years earlier. Here is a compelling excerpt.

"A May day twenty-one years ago [1903], I shall never forget . . . The day was oppressively hot. I had several times before visited the beautifully wooded suburb, Takoma Park, seven miles north of the Capitol building, and knew that it was several hundred feet higher than the city, and much cooler. I had heard of the Flower tract, and the beautiful Little Mountain Stream, the Sligo, but had never before visited them.

"In Takoma the houses everywhere nestled among the great trees of the old primeval forest, and as we passed out of the village beyond the homes, my wife, my children and I were soon winding our way down a long, steep hill into a wild and densely wooded ravine, through which flowed a lovely little rivulet rippling among the great boulders, sometimes glittering in the bright May sunshine, but generally flowing and singing under the deep cool shadows of the Restful Forest Trees.



Perhaps some of the "great boulders" mentioned by Robbins in recollecting his 1903 visit to Sligo (photos from Historic Takoma via Takoma Voice online)

"Weary of the oppressive heat of the city, we reclined on the banks of this beautiful brook, and looked up through the leaves of the forest, so densely wooded that we could scarcely get a glimpse of the blue sky above. I could hardly believe it possible that so near to the great, hot, busy, capital city, was so wild and sylvan a retreat, a very Eden of rest and natural beauty.

"To the best of my knowledge this was the first visit ever made by any of our people to this beautiful place At my first visit a scythe or an ax would have been necessary to cut through the Dense Jungle of matted vines and undergrowth that covered the ground among the trees where are now the lawns and campus and buildings of the College and Sanitarium."

F. H. Robbins, "What Has God Wrought?" *Columbia Union Visitor* (Mount Vernon, OH), vol. 29, no. 44, November 1924. See original article [here](#).

Need to Reach Us?

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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.