



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter February 2020



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Learn About Local Pollution from Microplastics on Feb. 18

Learn about pollution from small pieces of plastic in our local waterways at a talk on Tuesday, February 18, at the Silver Spring Civic Building, located at the corner of Fenton and Ellsworth. The event begins at 7:30 pm, but come at 7:00 to meet and talk with other Sligo residents. Parking is free after 6:30 in the county garage across the street on Ellsworth.

Our featured speaker is Jesse Meiller, a marine ecologist and environmental toxicologist at American University. She and her team are studying the prevalence and impact of microplastics from the breakdown of plastic trash (bags, bottles, containers) in the Potomac and Anacostia Rivers and their tributaries.

Her studies have found microplastics in the water and sediment of Nash Run, a tributary of the Anacostia, both upstream and downstream from trash traps in the creek. She has also found them in the intestinal tracts of fish in the Anacostia and Potomac Rivers. Read about her work in this brief [2019 article](#).



American University researchers collect microplastics from trash traps on Nash Run, a small tributary of the Anacostia River (AU photo).

Also speaking will be Kathy Michels, a Sligo resident, neuroscientist, and longtime advocate for better water quality in Sligo. She will talk about microplastics that can be dislodged from artificial turf and rubber surfaces on playgrounds and ball fields that have been installed at sites in the Sligo watershed.

One local case is the original synthetic field at Blair High School, which was replaced in 2017 after complaints from parents that its crumb-rubber and plastic fibers were breaking down and the surface had become too hard for safe use. The new field consists of similar plastic carpeting on a synthetic foam board on rocks, infilled with cork-coconut and silica sand.

Kathy will also address a synthetic carpet proposed by developers as



Synthetic surface recently installed at Dale Drive Neighborhood Park (Wilpers photo)

part of a renovation of the Ellsworth Drive pedestrian mall in downtown Silver Spring.

She'll also discuss the new Maryland legislative session in Annapolis, during which two bills are being proposed: one to eliminate state subsidies for synthetic play surfaces, the other to regulate the disposal of synthetic turf carpeting and rubber infill. Individuals and groups can express support for natural surface playing fields and help prevent state funding of synthetic turf through this Sierra Club (Maryland Chapter) [web page](#).

More information about pollution from synthetic turf is at this Sierra Club [website](#) and at

<https://www.safehealthyplayingfields.org>. For more information about this event, contact waterquality@fosc.org.

MLK Day of Service a Big Success



Francesca Bolen was of the 163 volunteers who cleaned up Hillwood Manor Park Jan. 20.

A tremendous turnout of 163 volunteers made the Service Day at Hillwood Manor Neighborhood Park and Sligo Creek Park, in honor of the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Holiday, a big success, demonstrating the community's dedication to making the park, the woods, and beautiful Sligo Creek a healthier place for all to enjoy.

The Service Day was organized by neighborhood residents Xavier Courouble and Susan Ewing with help from the City of Takoma Park, Montgomery County Parks Department, and Friends of Sligo Creek. Jim Anderson and Gregar Odegarden led a group of 45 volunteers in removing non-native invasive plants.

The Hillwood Manor cleanup was one of five held throughout the Sligo watershed. The others were at Long Branch Community Center, Takoma-Piney Branch Local Park (aka Takoma Woods), Sligo Creek Park from Piney Branch Rd. to Wayne Ave., and Evans Parkway Park.

As Takoma Park City Council member Talisha Searcy wrote about the Hillwood Manor event, "It was amazing to see people of all races, ethnicities, young, and old working together to make our community a better place." Council member Cindy Dyballa observed, "In the many years of City of Takoma Park service projects honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., this was the biggest group!"

Henry Coppola, Volunteer Services Coordinator with Montgomery Parks, spoke for the county in saying, "Your cleanup efforts are very much appreciated by our park users, our staff, and the local ecosystem and environment. It was inspiring to have one of our largest turnouts and most productive cleanups on a cold day and as part of the MLK Day of Service."

FOSC Advocacy Director Kit Gage wrote, "The huge support for this cleanup has made a big difference in this beautiful part of Sligo Creek Park. I'm so proud of you volunteers -- people kept coming, diverse by age, race, ethnicity, united by your orange and clear plastic bags, grabbers, and gloves to make the park a cleaner and healthier place."



Rebecca Courouble staffed the FOSC info table with enthusiasm on Jan. 20



The full haul of trash removed from Hillwood Manor Neighborhood Park and Sligo Creek Park on Jan. 20 (all photos by Carol King Woodward)

FOSC Seeks Web Contractor

Friends of Sligo Creek is seeking to hire a part-time contractor who is familiar with Salesforce and WordPress to help finish our new website and to manage the website and database. Our founding website manager retired a few years ago and the interim web specialist recently moved to New York City.

The new web manager must have facility with Salesforce, which we use for our database, and be able to update it regularly and implement the software that facilitates our use of it.

A key function of the database is to allow committee chairs and section leaders to reach specific subsets of our membership depending on the need for people interested in stormwater management, invasives removal, the twice-yearly Sweep the Creek



Carol King Woodward photo

events, our outings and talks. We expect this portion of the work to require about five hours per month.

For working on our new website, the new person must have facility in WordPress. The position requires coordinating with board and committee members to complete the migration of resources from the current website to the new one. Once the new site is made public, the person will work with FOSC volunteers in adding new information and features and maintaining their functionality. We expect this part of the position to require about 15 to 20 hours per month at first, gradually declining to about 10 hours a month on an ongoing basis.

The web manager will largely set their own hours, work from their own location, and use their own computer, but should be available every few days to fit this work into their schedule. The position is permanent part-time, pay is offered at \$40/hour, and the starting date is as-soon-as-possible.

To apply, send your resumé and a cover letter, with two references, to president@fosc.org.

Invasives Removal Feb. 22



Japanese Barberry will be a target for removal on Feb. 22 (eattheplanet.org photo)

Join Weed Warrior Supervisor Jim Anderson for an invasive plant removal workday in upper Sligo Creek Park on Saturday, February 22, from 9 to 11 am.

The group will meet at the back (southwest corner) of the parking lot of the Kemp Mill Shopping Center.

A focus will be removing Japanese Barberry, which has thorns, so dress accordingly. Wear long pants, long sleeves, and sturdy, closed-toe shoes. Bring gloves, pruners, and loppers if you have them, and water to drink. Gloves and tools are available to borrow if you don't have your own. No power tools or machetes allowed.

This workday is pre-approved for Student Service Learning hours by Montgomery County Public Schools.

Volunteers under 16 are not permitted to use tools so, if you are under 16, email the Weed Warrior supervisor (jdanderson1940@gmail.com) ahead of time to see whether they will have meaningful work for you to do. Volunteers 14 and under must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

For questions and to sign-up, contact Jim at jdanderson1940@gmail.com. This workday is co-sponsored by Montgomery Parks and the Friends of Sligo Creek. To learn more about the Weed Warrior program, go to www.weedwarrior.org.

Spring Sweep the Creek Apr. 18-19

Mark your calendars now for our next Sweep the Creek weekend, which is Saturday and Sunday, April 18 and 19.

Celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of Earth Day by joining in this fun and fulfilling community event. The Saturday cleanup will be in the morning and the Sunday sweep in the afternoon. Locations for each day will be announced later and posted on our website.

Nature Sightings in January

A gray, overcast day in January was no ordinary one at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds. On the morning of January 18, Stephen Davies spotted not only a Merlin with its prey but, moments later, a Peregrine Falcon flying overhead.

Both birds are very rare in Sligo, and the Peregrine is not frequently seen in the entire Mid-Atlantic region. Adding to the excitement that day were a group of American Crows chasing away a Red-tailed Hawk and a Pileated Woodpecker in flight with its dramatic red head and wing coloration in full display.

You can follow these and many more sightings in Sligo through the "project" on iNaturalist called "Fauna and Flora of Sligo Creek Watershed."



A Merlin with prey at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds on Jan. 18



Red-tailed Hawk (lower right) chased by American Crows at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Jan. 18



Pileated Woodpecker cruising over the Wheaton Branch ponds on Jan. 18



Belted Kingfisher at the Wheaton Branch ponds on Jan. 20



Peregrine Falcon over the Wheaton Branch ponds Jan. 18 (all bird photos by S. Davies)



Surprisingly fresh and untouched fruits of Carolina Horsenettle just downstream from Piney Branch Road Jan. 19



Winter Bittercress was coming up abundantly in the powerline meadow Jan. 17 (plant photos by M. Wilpers)



A species of glass snail found under a rock in the Long Branch watershed Jan. 11 (S. Davies photo)



A species of slender springtail in the Long Branch watershed on Jan. 11 (S. Davies photo)

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.