



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter March-April 2020



Ellen X. Silverberg photo

Contents

- Spring Sweep Cancelled
- Invasive Plant Removal
- Kingfishers Share a Meal
- Water Quality Monitoring
- Grant for Spanish Brochure
- Comment Period for Ellsworth Pastic Turf
- Tips for Using iNaturalist
- Need to Reach Us?

Sweep the Creek Cancelled; Individual Efforts Welcome

For the first time in its 18-year history, Friends of Sligo Creek has cancelled its Sweep the Creek event that was scheduled for the weekend of April 18 and 19.

We look forward to holding future Sweeps, but in the meantime we hope everyone

will practice social distancing to the extent possible in order to reduce the spread of the coronavirus.



Volunteer in Sligo during a recent Sweep the Creek (Julius Kassovic photo)

Montgomery Parks welcomes individual cleanup efforts at this time as a way to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Earth Day in April. Be sure to practice social distancing and remain at least six feet away from other park visitors.

The Parks Department released the following statement for those interested in removing trash from any of its parks, including Sligo, Long Branch, and Wheaton Branch:

"We always appreciate help keeping the parks and streams clean. While group cleanup projects are currently suspended anyone visiting a park who wants to help out by doing some individual cleanup work by picking up trash while they are there is welcome to do so. Any trash collected should be placed in the appropriate cans in the

park or taken with them for disposal and everyone should maintain appropriate social distancing techniques. Bags and gloves can be requested by contacting the Parks Department's volunteer cleanup coordinator, Henry Coppola, at Henry.Coppola@montgomeryparks.org."

Thank you for your continuing support of Friends of Sligo Creek and your efforts on behalf of Sligo Creek. Looking forward to meeting again, when circumstances have improved.

Mike Smith
President, Friends of Sligo Creek
president@fosc.org

Group Weed Warrior Work Is Cancelled

Group activities on non-native invasive plants removal are cancelled for the time being, but Certified Weed Warriors can still go out on their own, get some fresh air and exercise, and pull or cut non-native invasive plants during the coronavirus



Garlic mustard is a main target of invasives work in April. (Wilpers photo of 3/27/20)

pandemic. Montgomery Parks urges users of its parks to practice "social distancing" and apply good judgement.

All Certified Weed Warriors who pull invasives during the shutdown should continue to log their service hours in the database. Montgomery Parks has just launched an easier way to enter your hours. The new database is [at this page on www.montgomeryparks.org](#).

You can now check the non-native, invasive plant species you worked on from a menu of species on the web page. Locations are also listed, so just check the ones that apply to your work. To see a list of parks in the Sligo watershed to choose from, first select

"Anacostia - Sligo" from the list of watersheds. Then click the specific park where you worked from the list. The abbreviations you'll see refer to the size and purpose of each park: SVU = Stream Valley Unit, NP = Neighborhood Park, and LP = Local Park.

Garlic mustard is a main focus for pulling in late March and early April. Here are two good websites describing garlic mustard and its impacts from the [Sierra Club Maryland chapter](#) and [Montana State University](#).

Please remember that only Weed Warriors who have been trained and certified through Montgomery Parks may control non-native, invasive plants on Montgomery Parkland. If you are interested in becoming trained, email MCP-WeedWarriors@montgomeryparks.org.

The Montgomery Parks COVID-19 webpage will continue to be updated as we learn more: <https://www.montgomeryparks.org/covid-19>.

Sharing a Meal with Social Distancing



A pair of Belted Kingfishers seemed to follow an avian version of social distancing

during their courtship at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds on March 28.

This practice is called "allofeeding" and can occur between mates during courtship and mating rituals (when it is called "courtship feeding"), egg laying or incubation, between peers of the same species, or as a form of parental care (from the Wikipedia article on "Allofeeding").

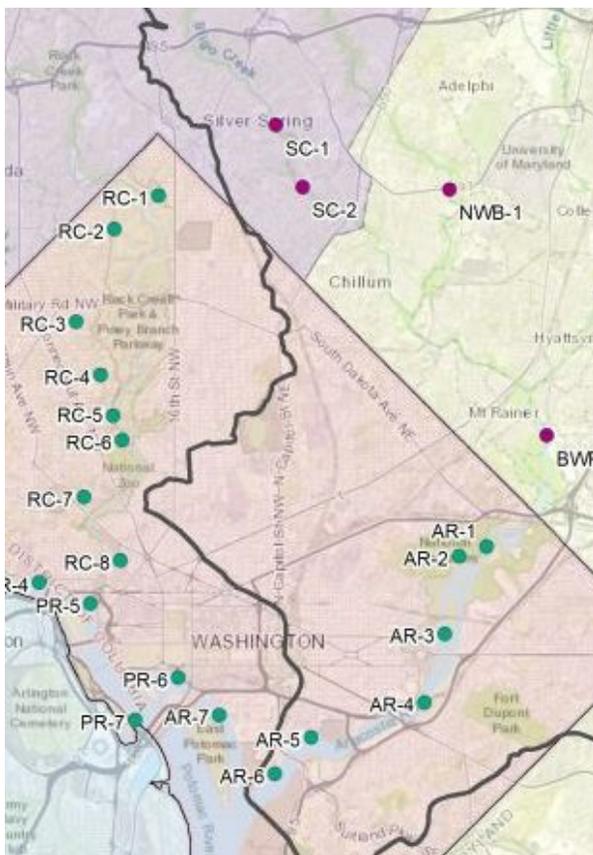
In addition to fish, Belted Kingfishers eat crustaceans (like crayfish, possibly the prey in these photos), molluscs, insects, amphibians, reptiles, young birds, small mammals, and berries. In a 1956 study in central New York, the kingfisher diet was equally divided between fish and crayfish.

Photos by Stephen Davies via iNaturalist.

Water Quality Monitoring Postponed

Sligo Creek's waters are still scheduled to be monitored for water quality this summer through a new volunteer program developed by the Anacostia Riverkeeper, but the trainings have been postponed from April 15 and 22 to dates in May or later and the start of the monitoring will be delayed.

To learn about the new training and monitoring dates, email monitor@anacostiariverkeeper.org and visit the Anacostia Riverkeeper website over the next few weeks at anacostiariverkeeper.org.



Some of the sites to be monitored for water quality through the Anacostia Riverkeeper program, including Sligo's (SC-1 and SC-2)

To be certified for monitoring this summer, volunteers must be at least 18 years old, or younger students with a parent or guardian, and attend one of the trainings. Each training session will run two or three hours and take place at Bladensburg Waterfront Park.

Volunteers can sign up for as many water sampling dates as they want. Sampling will occur every second Wednesday (with Thursday as the rain date).

Two locations in Sligo have been selected for water quality monitoring through this project:

(1) Between Wayne Avenue and Piney Branch Road, near the parking pull-off along Sligo Creek Parkway

(2) Downstream from the Maple

first mini parking lot along Sligo Creek Parkway

Photos of both locations will be posted on the websites of Anacostia Riverkeeper and Friends of Sligo Creek and they will be marked by orange tape tied to nearby trees. Each site will be monitored for bacteria, water temperature, air temperature, dissolved oxygen, pH, and turbidity and the samples analyzed at the Anacostia Riverkeeper lab. All data goes online 24 hours later after the samples are analyzed.

Anacostia Riverkeeper's water quality program is funded by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and is a collaboration with Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay, Corazon Latino, Friends of Lower Beaverdam Creek, and Friends of Sligo Creek. Results from the monitoring will be used to inform the public about up-to-date water quality health and to contribute to long-term policy decisions about D.C. and Maryland waterways.



Photo: anacostiariverkeeper.org

FOSC Wins Grant for Spanish Brochures

¿Qué es lo que hacemos?

FOSC (Amigos de Sligo Creek)
Amigos de Sligo Creek es un grupo comunitario dedicado a proteger, mejorar y apreciar la salud ecológica del Parque de Sligo Creek y las cuencas alrededor.

Limpieza del Arroyo Sligo Creek
Dos veces al año, cientos de voluntarios – incluyendo familias, y varios grupos – limpian la basura del arroyo para mantenerlo hermoso. Revisa nuestro calendario en fosc.org o contáctenos a través del correo electrónico: letter@fosc.org.

Remoción de Plantas Invasoras
Nuestro comité trabaja removiendo plantas invasoras que causan daños en los bosques del arroyo. Estas plantas fueron introducidas de otros continentes y causan un gran número de daños ecológicos: crecen y sofocan los árboles y los arbustos, y convierten el parque en monocultivos con un valor limitado para la vida silvestre. Coordinamos con el programa de Weed Warrior de los Parques de Montgomery. Contáctenos a través del correo electrónico: invasives@fosc.org.

Aguas de Lluvias y Calidad de Agua
El Comité de Aguas Pluviales educa a los residentes acerca de los efectos de las aguas de lluvia, aboga por mejorar las regulaciones e instala jardines de conservación como proyectos educativos. El Comité de Calidad del Agua monitorea e informa sobre la salud del agua del arroyo y coopera con otros socios para compartir información y mejorar su salud. Contáctenos stormwater@fosc.org o también: waterquality@fosc.org.

Abogacía
Somos defensores del arroyo y examinamos las políticas públicas que le afectan. Damos seguimiento de las normas pendientes, la legislación y los presupuestos de ciudad, el condado y los gobiernos estatales, servimos en paneles y grupos asesores, testificamos en las audiencias, y escribimos y nos reunimos con los funcionarios. Contáctenos advocacy@fosc.org.

Amigos de Sligo Creek

A generous grant from the Community Champions program of the energy company Constellation is allowing Friends of Sligo Creek to reprint our Spanish-language brochures that promote our work and opportunities to join in it to a broader community.

By covering the printing costs, this \$500 grant enables us to increase our efforts to extend the awareness of FOSC's many efforts in Sligo and engage the wider community in our work. In announcing the grant to our board, Constellation said that "we are proud of your dedication and efforts to improve our community."

Look for more of these wonderful brochures to appear in the bins of our kiosks positioned at nine locations along the paved hiker-biker trail from Kemp Mill to Hillwood Manor Park.

The Community Champions program of Constellation provides up to \$500 in grants for projects, organizations, or initiatives that focus on education, environment, or youth. To date, Constellation has awarded 1,000 of these grants. Constellation is an Exelon company that provides power, natural gas, renewable energy, and energy management products and services for homes and businesses in the United States. Constellation matches the electricity requirements of its offices and major data centers with renewable energy certificates (RECs) sourced from wind renewable resources.

Comment Period on Plastic Turf for Ellsworth Avenue



*Ellsworth Dr. street mall as it now appears
(Dan Reed photo)*

If you want to submit a comment to the Montgomery Planning Board about the proposal for artificial turf on the Ellsworth Avenue street mall, you must do so before 12 noon on the day before the public hearing on the proposal, which will be either April 16 or 30.

If the proposal (from the developer Foulger-Pratt) is not addressed at the April 16 meeting, it will be placed on the agenda for the subsequent hearing on Thursday, April 30.

At our public program in February, Kathy Michels spoke on the risks of pollution from artificial turf. Kathy has assembled a rich resource on this issue for the Maryland chapter of the Sierra

Club: <https://www.sierraclub.org/maryland/synthetic-turf>.

You can follow updates to the Planning Board's agendas at this website: montgomeryplanningboard.org/agendas/.

Any individual or organization may submit a written statement for consideration by the Planning Board. Be sure to indicate the project title and number at the top of your comment:

Downtown Silver Spring Project Plan No. 91998005C and Site Plan No. 81999002M

Comments should be addressed to Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board. All comments are made part of the public record. Submit your comments by email, fax, and/or snail-mail (US Postal Service).

For email: send to MCP-Chair@mncppc-mc.org.

For fax: send to 301-495-1320.

For US Postal Service: send to Casey Anderson, Chair, Montgomery County Planning Board, 8787 Georgia Avenue, Silver Spring, Maryland 20910.

You can send a copy of your comment separately to County Council Member Tom Hucker, councilmember.hucker@montgomerycountymd.gov.

If you have questions about submitting your comments, or would like to know of other county officials you might contact, email waterquality@fosc.org.



Artist's rendering of the artificial turf installation proposed for the Ellsworth Avenue street mall (Montgomery Planning Board image)

Getting the Most Out of iNaturalist

Spring is a great time to enhance your enjoyment of the iNaturalist online system and to help others appreciate the sightings you post.

A great way to see what's happening in Sligo is to follow the iNaturalist "project" called "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed." New photos and descriptions are posted daily by people throughout Sligo, from Kemp Mill to Hyattsville, so you can

see what flowers are blooming, which migratory birds are arriving, where frogs are appearing, the kinds of insects flying, and so much more.

If you are posting photos on iNaturalist, try giving viewers a richer experience by taking several shots from different angles. Various perspectives can be helpful in identifying the species, either for other visitors to your posting or through iNaturalist's image recognition system, which offers a series of suggestions based on your photos.

For plants (whether trees, shrubs, or wildflowers), it's best to shoot flowers and leaves separately, along with a side view of the whole plant. Then step back and take a shot of the context so people can see the habitat where you found it.

For sightings of animals, take advantage of the "notes" box to describe their behavior, which is usually fascinating for readers, or note how rarely or commonly you've seen them.

For questions or more information about enjoying iNaturalist, contact naturalhistory@fossc.org.



Take a top-down photo of flowers to show the number of petals (or petal-like structures).



Shoot each plant from a side view to show the arrangement of stalks and leaves. A contrasting backdrop helps the plant's details stand out.



*Step back and take a shot of the context in which you find a plant or animal.
This gives viewers a sense of the habitat where it occurred.
(Photos of golden ragwort in Long Branch on March 30 by M. Wilpers)*

Need to Reach Us?

President (Mike Smith): president@fosc.org

Invasive Plants (Jim Anderson): invasives@fosc.org

Litter (Patton Stephens): litter@fosc.org

Advocacy (Kit Gage): advocacy@fosc.org

Natural History (Bruce Sidwell): naturalhistory@fosc.org

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): stormwater@fosc.org

Water Quality (Pat Ratkowski): waterquality@fosc.org

Outreach (Sarah Jane Marcus): outreach@fosc.org

Treasurer (Dee Clarkin): treasurer@fosc.org

Webmaster (vacant): webmaster@fosc.org

Newsletter Editor (Michael Wilpers): editor@fosc.org



Find us on Facebook!



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.