



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter June 2020



*Ellen X. Silverberg photo*

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## Invasive Plants, Habitats, and Vegetation Management June 23

Learn how Montgomery Parks will be managing plant life in the forests, meadows, and riparian woodlands of our parks when plant ecologist Ryan Colliton gives a live-streamed talk on Tuesday, June 23, at 7:30 pm.

He'll be joined by Weed Warrior Coordinator Corinne

Stephens. They will discuss updates to the Parks' 2009 vegetation management plan and the Weed Warrior program.

The event is co-hosted by Friends of Sligo Creek and the Neighbors of the Northwest Branch. Keep an eye out for a Zoom invitation to arrive through this newsletter list a week in advance of the talk.

Ryan Colliton is the Unit Lead for Vegetation Ecology and Management, which is housed (along with Wildlife Ecology and Management) within the Division of Park Planning and Stewardship. He came to Montgomery County from Michigan, where he was chief of natural resources and regulatory compliance for Huron-Clinton Metroparks.



*Ryan Colliton during a prescribed burn as part of his previous work in Michigan (photo courtesy of Montgomery Parks)*

The existing Montgomery Parks plan was published in 2009 and is titled "Comprehensive Vegetation Management Plan for M-NCPPC Parkland in Montgomery County, Maryland." You can peruse the plan here: [2009 Vegetation Management Plan](#). The new plan will update the 2009 version based on more recent data about the spread of invasive species and the arrival of new ones, and the status of rare, threatened, and endangered species, among other factors. The new plan is likely to add a system for prioritizing management units based on their important ecological characteristics.

For a broader view, read the Parks' [2013 Natural Resources Management Plan](#). It describes all the major habitats in the county and provides links to a variety of other management plans (such as those for deer and streams).

For more information on this event, email [naturalhistory@fosc.org](mailto:naturalhistory@fosc.org).

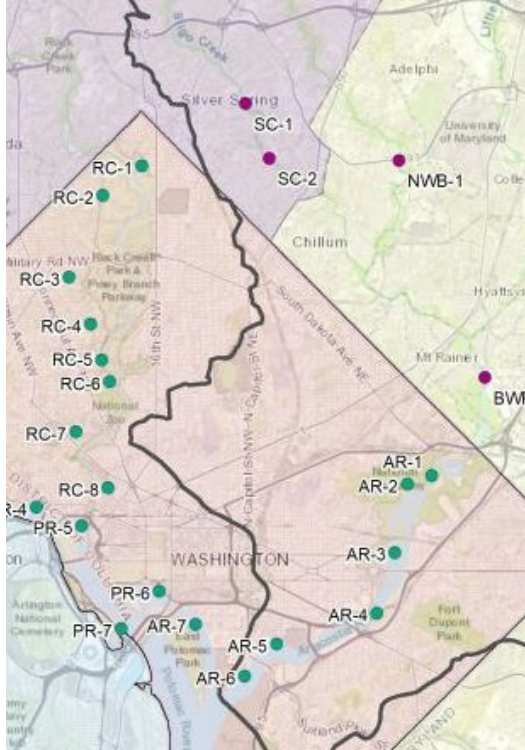
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## Help Monitor Water Quality in Sligo

You can volunteer to monitor the water quality in Sligo Creek this summer by joining a new program started by Anacostia Riverkeeper in collaboration with Friends of Sligo Creek and other local organizations.

The first step is to sign up for the required online training. You can choose either Monday, June 15, or





*SC-1 and SC-2 are sites for water-quality monitoring in Sligo this summer. (Anacostia Riverkeeper map)*

Tuesday, June 16. Each session runs from 12:00-1:30 pm. Register on this Eventbrite page: [water quality training](#).

After completing this training, volunteers will do the actual monitoring every other Wednesday, anytime between 7 am and 1 pm. (In case of heavy rain, the monitoring will be done the next day.) Each monitoring date requires about 15-20 minutes to make measurements and collect a water sample, which need to be dropped off at the Anacostia Riverkeeper lab in Bladensburg.

The monitoring runs from mid-June through the end of September. Volunteers choose to do as many, or as few, of the seven or eight dates as they can fit into their schedule.

Volunteers will measure water temperature, air temperature, pH, and

dissolved oxygen. They will collect a water sample to drop off for analysis of bacteria and turbidity at Anacostia Riverkeeper. All results will be posted online within 24 hours. Volunteers must be at least 18 years old or, for younger students, participate with a parent or guardian.

Two locations in Sligo Creek have been selected for monitoring (see map above): (1) Between Wayne Ave. and Piney Branch Rd., near the parking pull-off along Sligo Creek Parkway and (2) near the first parking lot on Sligo Creek Parkway downstream from the Maple Ave. Photos showing both locations will be posted on the websites of Anacostia Riverkeeper and Friends of Sligo Creek. The sites themselves will be marked by orange tape tied to nearby trees.

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.

For more information or to ask questions, contact [waterquality@fosc.org](mailto:waterquality@fosc.org).

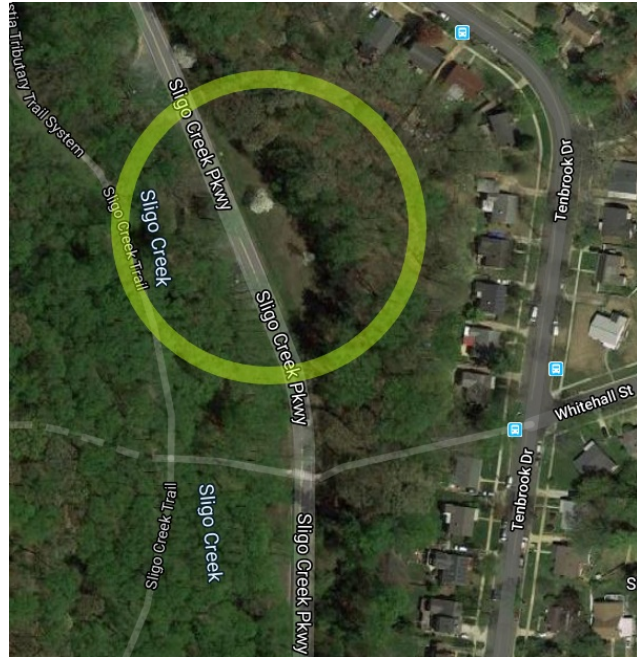


## New Meadow in Upper Sligo

As you travel along Sligo Creek Parkway between Dennis Avenue and University Blvd. this summer, keep an eye out for a modest new meadow being established by Montgomery Parks on a sunny slope along the east side of the roadway.

In early May, Parks staff planted a seed-mix with more than two dozen species of native wildflowers, most of them regional eco-types.

Once the plants become established, they will beautify the parkway for human eyes and provide valuable nectar and pollen for foraging insects and birds.



*Location of new meadow along the parkway just north of Dennis Ave.*

The site will be mowed a few times this June and July to encourage warm-season grasses. Once the meadow is established and competition from weeds has been reduced (two or three years after planting), mowing will be limited to once a year in winter. Extensive flowering is unlikely in the first year or two, as many of these plants need a couple of seasons to establish strong root systems before putting on showy displays of flowers for humans to enjoy and pollinators to forage on.





*The site of the new meadow as it appeared in early May of 2020  
before wildflower seeding was done (Parks photo)*

About two-thirds of the seed mix is purple coneflower, lanceleaf coreopsis, partridge pea, smooth oxeye, Ohio spiderwort, and marsh blazing star.

The rest consists of aromatic aster, zigzag aster, black-eyed Susan, golden alexander, smooth blue aster, New England aster, blue false indigo, butterfly milkweed, narrowleaf mountainmint, wild senna, wild bergamot, gray goldenrod, mistflower, white avens, tall white beardtongue, tall coreopsis, Maryland senna, sundrops, licorice scented goldenrod, hairy beardtongue, and orange coneflower.

To see the full list of species with Latin names, eco-types, and percentages of each in the mix, go to this page at the Ernst Conservation Seeds website for their [Showy Northeast Native Wildflower Mix](#).

This small meadow is the second project of its kind in Sligo. A much larger meadow was planted across from the Sligo Golf Course in 2016 and 2017 but suffered considerable damage during repair work to underground infrastructure by Washington Gas. Montgomery Parks plans to restore the meadow with compensation from the gas company.

For more information on this meadow project, contact [naturalhistory@fosc.org](mailto:naturalhistory@fosc.org).

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## Nature Sightings in May

Enjoy this selection from hundreds of photos submitted to iNaturalist in May and collected into the "project" titled "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed."

Below left is chicory, photographed in Piney Branch Portal Park on May 27. This member of the aster family, native to Eurasia, was brought to North America in 1785 by the governor of Massachusetts and is now widely naturalized.

Below right is a native mining bee collecting pollen (probably from multiflora rose) for its brood of eggs laid in a nest tunneled into bare ground; it was photographed near the intersection of Brunett Avenue and the Parkway on May 25.



Below left are cottontail rabbits near the corner of Fenton St. and New York Ave. on May 25. During courtship, as Charles Fergus describes it, both sexes "leap high into the air in an exuberant display."

Below right is a zabulon skipper (a native butterfly) seen near Kennebec and Houston on May 25. Their caterpillars feed on grasses while spring adults feed on the nectar of blackberry, clover, vetch, privet, and honeysuckle.





At



left is  
blue-  
eyed

grass (a native iris) captured here near Hickory and Montgomery Avenues on May 23.

Below left is a Solitary Sandpiper (a species that passes through Sligo on migration) seen on May 13; below right is a Veery (which nests in Sligo) on May 15; its somewhat eerie song harmonizes with itself in a downward spiral; both were observed at the Wheaton Branch ponds.





A dark-banded owl moth seen on May 25 between Naim Rd. and the Sligo headwaters. Its caterpillars feed on wilted and decaying leaves.



A bullfrog observed at the Beltway stormwater ponds on May 27. They are omnivorous, but insects make up most of their diet. They are resistant to the venom of copperheads.

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## 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.*