



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter August 2020



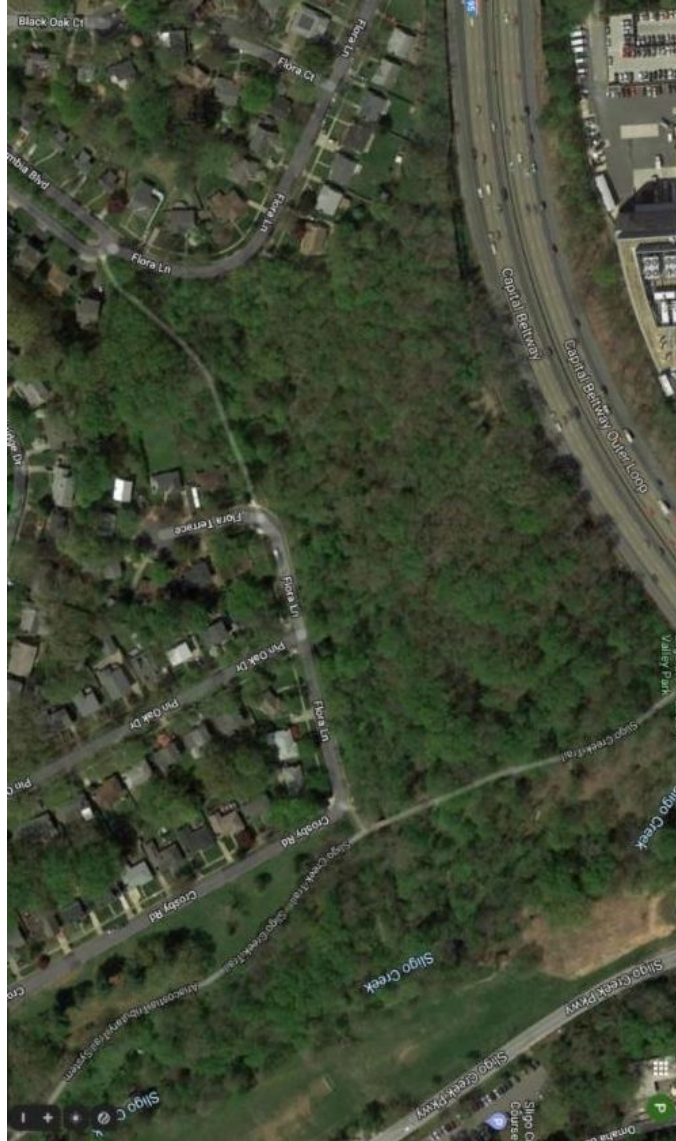
Ellen X. Silverberg photo

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Public Hearings on Beltway Expansion in August and September

Public hearings will be held in August and September on the Maryland Department of Transportation's "Draft Environmental Impact Statement" (DEIS) regarding the state's proposal to expand the Capital Beltway with two



Sligo Creek Park along the south side of the Beltway across from Holy Cross Hospital

toll lanes in each direction.

Online hearings are scheduled for August 18, 20, and 25 and September 3, with in-person hearings on September 1 (in Largo) and September 10 (in Rockville).

These hearings precede the deadline of October 8 for submitting written comments on the DEIS. More details on the hearings, with helpful links, are in this story from WTOP [here](#) and this blogpost entry at the Audubon Naturalist Society [webpage](#).

At a July 15 briefing, the DEIS was heavily criticized by staff with Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC), according to a report by Citizens Against Beltway Expansion.

M-NCPPC staff identified nine areas in which they felt the DEIS is flawed, leading Montgomery County commissioner Natali Fani-González to comment, "This is dead before arrival." The full Commission adopted the staff's 63-page analysis as its current position on the 18,000-page DEIS and serves as its guide for public comments.

M-NCPPC owns 30 acres of land and stream valleys directly adjacent to the Beltway in Rock Creek Park, Sligo Creek Park, and Northwest Branch Park that would be destroyed or directly impacted by the Beltway widening. Under its governing laws, M-NCPPC cannot approve the use of parkland for non-park purpose unless high hurdles are cleared to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts.

The deficiencies in the DEIS raised by Commission staff include (1) insufficient accounting for the Intercounty Connector (ICC) as an alternative to expanding I-495, (2) inadequate planning for stormwater management and protecting the environment in or near construction zones, (3) failing to address the requirement to keep parks whole as per the Capper-Cramton Act and Historic Preservation Act, (4) failure to leverage public transportation and carpooling, and (5) failing to meet requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) regarding social equity so project benefits flow to historically challenged populations.

Casey Anderson, the Commission's chair, raised doubts that the project would pay for itself or deliver other promised benefits, such as significant financial support for transit projects. He added, "that's without any accounting for the cost of water and sewer pipe relocations that are not included in the project budget." To watch the meeting in its entirety, go to [Planning Board site](#).



Bioswale on the north side of the Beltway in Sligo Creek Park

New Stormwater Controls for Long Branch

New storm sewers, rain gardens, and retention ponds have been installed on and near Glenside Road to help protect Long Branch -- Sligo's longest tributary -- from stormwater damage.

These projects include three rain gardens, sixteen storm drains, and a deep pool called a "scour hole" (all built by the City of Takoma Park) and a re-channeled and planted floodplain (built by Montgomery Parks).

At the intersection of Glenside with Jackson, the city installed five storm drains and a rain garden; at Merwood, seven storm drains, an outfall channel, and another rain garden; and at Haverford, four storm drains, a rain garden, and a scour

pond.

Most of these installations are designed to offset increases in impervious surface from new sidewalks along Glenside that were requested by local residents, according to Ian Chamberlain, construction manager for the city.

He notes that the city went well beyond the sidewalk mitigation requirements to further control runoff and sediment, anticipating federal Clean Water Act requirements that might be imposed later on.

Design for the sidewalk started in February 2017, followed by construction in May 2019. The stormwater units were installed last fall. This spring, the rain gardens were planted and final touches were completed by the end of June. "I am happy to report construction is now complete," writes Ian, "and, barring a little rip-rap lift at Jackson, the installations are holding fast."



This new rain garden at Merwood collects storm water and allows it to infiltrate slowly and get absorbed by plants.



The plant species used in the rain gardens and bioswales are, at Anne St., Black Chokeberry, Redtwig Dogwood, and Swamp Milkweed; at Jackson, Black Chokeberry and Buttonbush; at Merwood, Spicebush and Hummingbird Clethra; and, at Haverford, Buttonbush and a mix of Joe-Pye Weed and Swamp Milkweed. Near the mouths of each installation are planted Virginia Iris, with Soft Rush around the bed overflows.

Of the total design and construction costs (about \$987,000), a little over half went toward stormwater management.

"This project had some significant challenges to mitigate on the site," Ian wrote. "It was difficult in both design and construction. I am extremely happy it is performing well. The City will have to continue watching it in the coming years through the ever increasing severe storms, but I am hopeful we built in

enough redundancy for it to remain intact for the lifespan of the installed pipe and structures."

An additional stormwater project was installed by Montgomery Parks on its property between Jackson and Long Branch. A newly dug runoff channel now extends the water

flow path, provides a more stable transition to the creek, adds system capacity, buffers the creek from neighborhood stormwater inputs, and provides additional floodplain habitat. The Parks' Matt Harper further notes that a great deal of English ivy and dumped rock were removed and the site was re-planted with native trees, shrubs, and herbaceous plants.

-- M. Wilpers, Editor (editor@fossc.org)



This rain garden at Jackson is designed to collect stormwater from flow off the street surface from the input lined with stones at right.

Help Remove Trash from Sligo

Four months after our spring Sweep the Creek event was cancelled, it's a good time for us to do our part in keeping the park as clean as possible.

When you go out for walks, bike rides, picnics, or play time, please consider bringing a bag, gathering up what you can, and taking it to your trash cans and recycling bins at home. It's recommended that you wear gloves made from nitrile or other protective material. Be sure to wash your hands with soap afterwards.

We don't recommend collecting trash from within the creek itself, as this summer's heavy rains have caused a significant increase in coliform bacteria in Sligo's waters.

Let's do what we can to keep our beautiful park beautiful.

Nature Sightings in July

All the heat and humidity in July did not deter our intrepid nature photographers from documenting a tremendous variety of intriguing plant and animal life in the Sligo watershed on iNaturalist. Thanks to all who braved the elements to share these wonders.

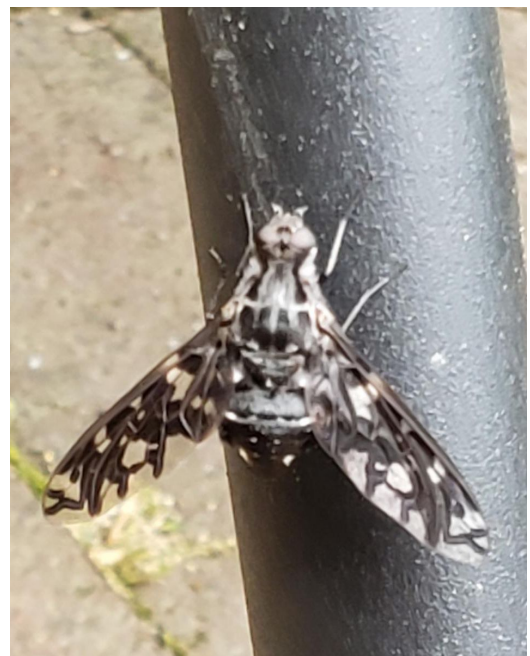
Known photographers for this month's selection are Stephen Davies, Dan Treadwell, Katja Schulz, Manoli Strecker, Ron Wertz, and Kit Gage. You can follow many more Sligo sightings on iNaturalist by choosing the "project" titled "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed."



Red-eared Slider at Kemp Mill Urban Park on July 25 by Ron Wertz



Eastern Calligrapher near Takoma Park Middle School on July 3 by Katja Schulz



Tiger Beetle Fly near South Mansion on July 10 (photographer unknown)

Wandering Gliders mating at the Wheaton Branch ponds on July 25 by Stephen Davies



Short-horned Grasshopper at the Wheaton Branch ponds on July 23 by Manoli Strecker



Common Watersnake near the confluence of Sligo and Long Branch on July 25 (photographer unknown)



Blue Dasher dragonflies mating at Forest Grove Neighborhood Park on July 10 by Ron Wertz



Common Chipmunk near Dennis and
Mayes on July 24 by Ron Wertz
and Hayes on July 24 by Ron Wertz
July 24 by Ron Wertz



Tree Swallow at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds
on July 12 by Dan Treadwell



Orchard Oriole juvenile at the Wheaton Branch ponds
on July 9 by Stephen Davies



Rhododendron Leafhopper near Takoma Park Middle School on July 3 by Katja Schulz



Cutleaf Coneflower at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on July 25 by Ron Wertz



Spicebush Swallowtail near Dennis and Hayes on July 24 by Ron Wertz



Belted Kingfisher at the Beltway stormwater ponds on July 11 by Dan Treadwell



Yellow-bellied Slider at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on July 23 by Dan Treadwell

Keep Our Programs Going

Support FOSC!

We rely on your donations in order to monitor, measure, report, plan, and advocate for the Creek and its plant and animal residents.

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Your support is greatly appreciated!

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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 (Christine Dunathan): webmaster@fosc.org

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



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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.