



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter \_ April 2021



*Photo by Ellen X. Silverberg*

## **Sweep the Creek Is Back (with Guidelines) April 17-May 2**

After two cancelled "Sweep the Creek" events in 2020, our most popular activity is back this spring with a system that allows small groups to schedule their volunteering across two weeks to make social distancing easier.

You can pick up your supplies during three weekend time slots at any one of eleven locations in Sligo and Long Branch Parks and do the work on a day of your choosing.

On April 17, 24, and 25, FOOSC volunteers will be stationed at various locations to give out gloves,



trash bags, recycling bags, and hand wipes provided by Montgomery Parks.

*Above: Sweep the Creek volunteer in 2016*

After collecting trash and recyclables, groups then leave their full bags at a location that they'll be told about when they pick up their supplies.

Five locations for picking up supplies will be staffed on April 17, three on April 24, and three on April 25. The locations include eight spots in Sligo Creek and three in Long Branch Park. Here is the link to a complete schedule: [Sweep pick up location shedule](#).

The guidelines for Sweep groups are as follows:

- A group can be no larger than 30 people (to arrange for larger groups, contact [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org)).
- Groups must follow these [Montgomery Parks Group Cleanup Requirements](#), just announced in March.
- Each group member (besides families) must submit a waiver form, which can be found here: [Waiver Form](#). For question 1, the "volunteer position" is "cleanup" and the "at/with" is "FOSC." Group organizers can submit all their waivers in a package to [valeria.espinoza@MontgomeryParks.org](mailto:valeria.espinoza@MontgomeryParks.org).
- Individual volunteers do not need to submit waivers.
- Face coverings are required during the cleanup.
- As always, individuals must maintain a six-foot distance from other people while in the park.

Watch this short video about the spring 2021 Sweep: [Sweep video](#)

Take photos of your Sweep work and your "favorite" trash finds and post them on Facebook (#FOSC Sweep the Creek) or email them to [webmaster@fosc.org](mailto:webmaster@fosc.org), and we'll post them on the FOSC website.

When you pick up your supplies, ask the FOSC volunteer where to leave your bags of trash and recyclables. You can also dispose of them at home in your regular trash and recycling containers.

For more information, email [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org).

---

## April 21: Learn How One Family Transformed Their Lawn into a



# Native Plant Habitat



What does it take to convert two acres of sod grass into a vibrant native plant habitat? Find out in a Zoom talk by Master Gardener Merikay Smith when she discusses "Less Lawn, More Life with Native Plants" on Wednesday, April 21, at 7:30pm. The Zoom link is <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82861059164>.

Merikay will walk us through the steps she has taken, with her husband and son, to turn her family's two-acre lawn in Darnestown into a landscape of native trees, shrubs, and perennials.

Plenty of time will be allotted at the end for posing questions about your own gardening challenges.

With avid gardeners for parents and grandparents, Merikay has been surrounded all her life by blooming plants, as well as homegrown foods. Her goal now is to make a positive environmental impact through personal choices — and join with others to share best practices and inspiration.

A past resident of the Sligo watershed, she now serves on the board of the Muddy Branch Alliance and volunteers with the Seneca Creek Watershed Partners. With these two organizations, she has organized native tree initiatives that distributed nearly 2,000 native trees to residents in the two watersheds. She also established a chapter of LDS Earth Stewardship for the Chesapeake Bay area.

A Master Gardener since 2007, Merikay is current chair of the Montgomery County Master Gardener Speakers Bureau, a group which talks about sustainable gardening practices to more than 100 community groups every year. She is also the founder of Earth Stewardship East ([www.eartheast.org](http://www.eartheast.org)), a local faith-based environmental group which has created more than 5,000 sq. ft. of conservation landscaping on the grounds of Pleasant View, an historic Black church in Darnestown, and which hosts a variety of Earth stewardship events.

If you have questions about the talk, contact [webmaster@fosc.org](mailto:webmaster@fosc.org).

---

## Water Main Break Floods Creeks with Sediment



A massive water main break along Piney Branch Road released a heavy flood of sediment into Long Branch on March 30 that impacted the Sligo Creek mainstem well into Prince George's County.

The leak gushed for more than an hour before contractors with the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC) located and shut off the relevant valve located some distance from the break.

Staff from Montgomery Parks arrived on the scene soon after the break and inspected Long Branch to the confluence with Sligo Creek and then followed Sligo to the county line.

*Left: Heavy sediment flow in Sligo Creek at Hillwood Manor at 2:30 pm on March 30*

Aquatic ecologist Rachel Gauza and stormwater specialist Brian Stephens conducted a biological assessment of the impact by visiting portions of the Long Branch stream below Piney Branch Rd. (near Domer, Kennebec, and Carroll Avenues). They also examined the confluence of Long Branch with the Sligo Creek mainstem. (See photo at right.) In none of these locations did they find dead aquatic wildlife, and fish were seen swimming normally in all sections.

*Right: Sediment flow entering Sligo Creek from Long Branch at 2:45 pm on March 30 (K. Zimmer photos)*



The team also collected samples of benthic invertebrates (insects, worms, and other small organisms that live in the creek bottom) from a site near Carroll Avenue. These samples will be compared with historic data from the same site as well as samples collected this year in other county parks. Bottom-dwelling organisms often require a rocky or pebbly surface in which to breed, consume nutrients, and overwinter.

The water main break occurred around noon in a major 16-inch pipe installed in 1935 that WSSC indicated is absent from the maps they used while digging in the area for Purple Line construction. Montgomery Parks routinely tracks

water main breaks and the resulting sediment deposits for a database required by Maryland Department of the Environment. This information, including Parks' investigations of these occurrences, are part of Park's MS4 stormwater permit.

According to the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection (DEP), the WSSC will not be required to pay a fine for this incident. Neither DEP nor Parks has indicated whether WSSC will be required to provide mitigation. Thanks to Audra Lew of Montgomery Parks for providing detailed information. For more information, contact [waterquality@fosc.org](mailto:waterquality@fosc.org)

---

## Upcoming Events

### **April 17-May 2: It's back! Sweep the Creek**

Litter pick-up for individuals and small groups. See top article above for details.

### **April 21: Merikay Smith on Less Lawn, More Life with Native Plants** 7:30 pm. See article above for details.

### **May 25: Native and Invasive Vines + Sligo Meadow and Planting Projects** 7:00 pm. Montgomery Parks' Corinne Stephens and Dianna Loescher presenting

---

## Support FOSC

It's simple, secure and helps fund FOSC's work

*Donate*



---

## Need to Reach Us?

President (Mike Smith): [president@fosc.org](mailto:president@fosc.org)

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

Litter (Patton Stephens): [litter@fosc.org](mailto:litter@fosc.org)

Advocacy (Kit Gage): [advocacy@fosc.org](mailto:advocacy@fosc.org)

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

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): [stormwater@fosc.org](mailto:stormwater@fosc.org)

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

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

Treasurer (Dee Clarkin): [treasurer@fosc.org](mailto:treasurer@fosc.org)

Webmaster (Christine Dunathan): [webmaster@fosc.org](mailto:webmaster@fosc.org)

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

---



*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.*

**Join FOSC**