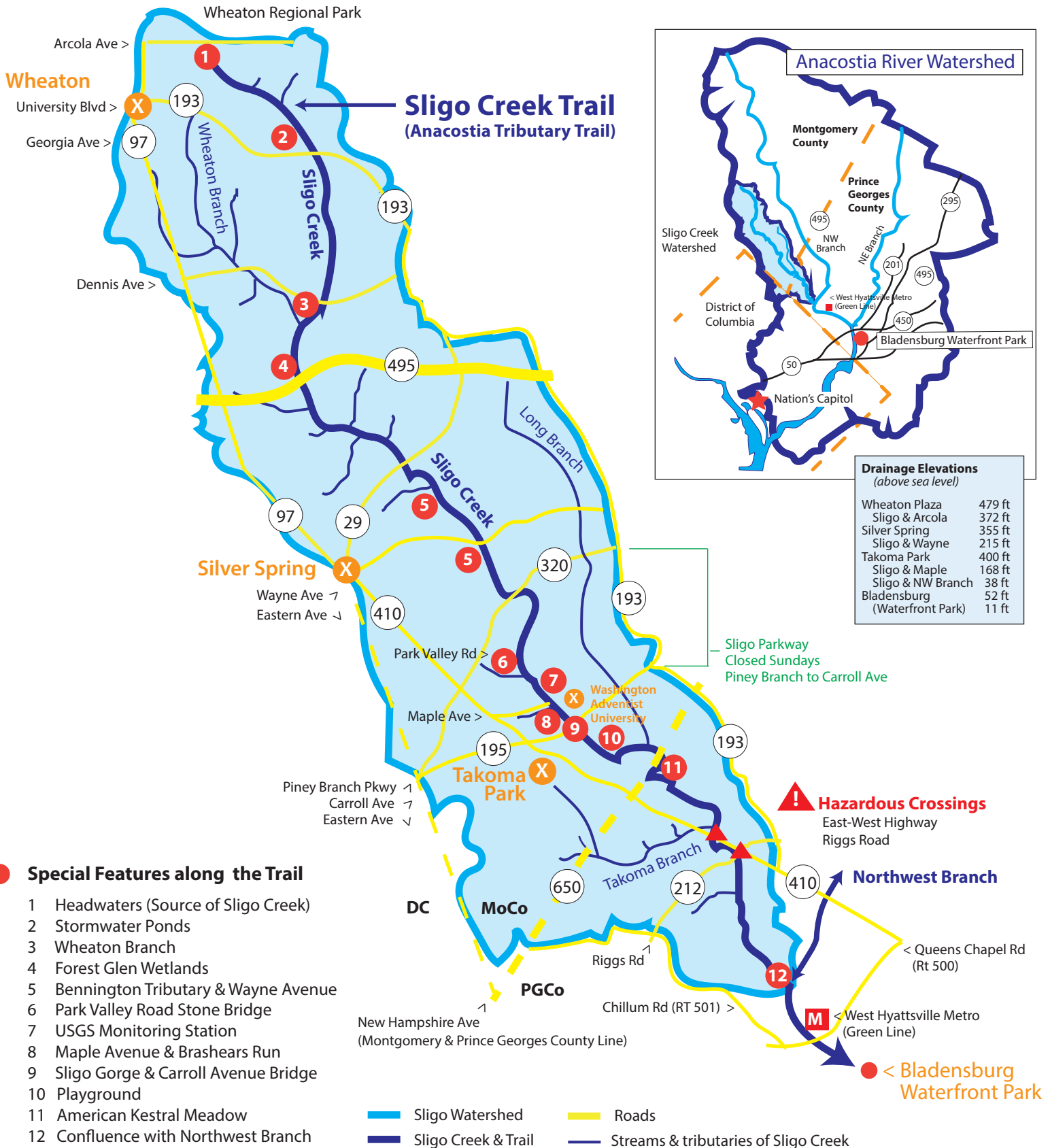




Sligo Creek Watershed



This map of special features along the Sligo Creek Trail is made possible by a grant to expand the citizen-based Water WatchDog pollution reporting program of the Friends of Sligo Creek. The grant is funded by the Chesapeake Bay Trust, through the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection's Water Quality Protection Charge Program. The map was created under the grant for the event "The Bike Ride for Clean Water: From the Headwaters of Sligo Creek to the Anacostia." The first bike ride was held June 12, 2016, as a pilot for the ride in the Spring 2017.



Attribution: Map by Kathleen Samiy

Special Features to See Along Sligo Creek Trail

The Sligo Creek Watershed includes Sligo Creek Park and surrounding urban and residential areas totaling 7,085 acres. The headwaters of the Creek (source) originate behind Arcola Elementary School at Channing Drive and Blueridge Avenue in the Silver Spring/Wheaton area. The Creek flows into the Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River at Hyattsville. Of the seventeen watersheds that drain into the Anacostia River, the Sligo Creek Watershed is the most urbanized.

Sligo Creek Park was established in 1927 as part of a larger effort to protect all streams flowing into Washington, DC. The Park's boundaries enclose 543 acres of streams, ponds, wetlands, flood plains, and uplands. Surveys show that the Park is home to 372 species of native plants, 68 species of breeding birds, 100 species of native bees, 45 species of butterflies, 13 species of fish, six species of frogs, and various types of salamanders.

Sligo Creek Trail is a hiker-biker trail along the Creek that is part of the Anacostia Tributary Trail System (ATTS). The trail goes through both Montgomery and Prince George's Counties, although the largest portion is in Montgomery County.

1 Sligo Creek Headwaters Area (Water Quality and Habitat) Our tour starts at the source of Sligo Creek in the headwaters area. Headwaters and their wetlands are essential to a healthy, diverse ecosystem. The headwaters area consists of tributary, intermittent and underground streams, vernal pools and springs. The organic matter found here helps sustain habitats for creatures that are critical to our water quality (such as macroinvertebrates, insects and fish). The headwaters area also filters groundwater and helps keep sediment and other pollutants from flowing downstream.

2 Stormwater Ponds (Water Quality, Habitat) Montgomery County built these two large ponds in the late 1990s to manage stormwater runoff from areas with large amounts of pavement. Since then, thinking has changed. The idea now is for stormwater to percolate into the soil close to where it falls, to limit runoff. While these projects are no longer 'state of the art', they are home to many plants found nowhere else in Sligo: large stands of Cinnamon Fern and Showy Bur-Marigold. Barred Owls and Red-Shouldered Hawks routinely nest here. This is the only spot where all six of Sligo's frog species congregate to mate. The ponds are Sligo's best place to see dragonflies and damselflies.

3 Wheaton Branch Ponds (Water Quality, Habitat) The Wheaton Branch enters Sligo Creek downstream from Dennis Avenue. This tributary drains a large area including Wheaton Plaza. Even in the midst of dense urban development, nature abounds. After two large stormwater management ponds were built, 13 native fish species were found – versus only three before. Herons, night-herons, geese, Belted Kingfishers and turtles visit the ponds. The wooded uplands near Sligo are home to Veery and Wood Thrush (with their gorgeous songs). In the fall, hickories give the hillside a golden yellow canopy.

4 Forest Glen Wetland (Water Quality, Habitat) Just upstream from Forest Glen Road, this wetland was created for habitat and to hold stormwater runoff before it entered the Creek. Cattail and Cardinal Flower grow here. The ponds host Wood Ducks, Snapping Turtles, and Green Frogs.

5 Bennington Tributary & Wayne Avenue (Hot Spots) These two different spots are where stormwater from downtown Silver Spring's east side goes into Sligo Creek. The Bennington Tributary, thought to originate under Ellsworth Place Mall, drains 115 acres via buried pipes, under Ellsworth to Bennington Drive, with an elevation drop of around 120 feet to Sligo Creek. Wayne Avenue drains many sites, including the Whole Foods parking lot

and SSIMS. The Tributary and Wayne Avenue are frequent points of entry for pollution in Sligo Creek, so FOSC volunteers routinely monitor and test for biological and chemical discharges there. Part of the riparian buffer of the Bennington Tributary was restored by MCDOT (Fall 2020), which should help water quality.

6 Park Valley Road Stone Bridge (History and Water Quality) The new bridge (2019) replaced the 1931 historic bridge with a similar stone facing. Also notable, the steep Park Valley Road is part of a "Green Street" project that captures stormwater runoff with planted bioswales and pervious parking pads to infiltrate water, absorb pollutants, and remove silt.

7 USGS Monitoring Station (History and Water Quality) The US Geological Survey runs a water quality monitoring device. The system tracks key water quality indicators for water moving through Sligo Creek in real time and can be watched on the FOSC website. Herons and night herons often hunt prey at the waterfall and old dam.

8 Maple Avenue & Brashears Run (History and Hot Spot) Rachel Carson once lived at the corner of Maple and Hilltop. She lived there in the 1940s after writing her first book (*Under the Sea Wind*), but before she began her seminal work on the dangers of pesticides, *Silent Spring*. Nearby, under the long slope of Maple Avenue, are pipes channeling water that many years ago formed Brashears Run. These pipes drain a large complex area into Sligo Creek and are the source of frequent pollution. The emerging water is monitored often for pollutants by FOSC.

9 Sligo Gorge and Carroll Avenue Bridge (Geology and History) The steep slopes signal you're in the heart of the 'Sligo Gorge'. Ancient rock of the Piedmont has been dramatically cut away by eons of erosion as the creek accelerates downward toward the flat Coastal Plain. The 2018 bridge was designed to replicate the 1932 bridge, which had replaced the 1909 concrete bridge. The 1878 original was a wooden footbridge across a 225 foot ravine.

10 Playground, Sligo Creek North Neighborhood Park (History) This playground is adjacent to the former location of a dam and an old Mill Pond. The pond extended from Flower Avenue to New Hampshire Avenue and provided water for the historic Sligo Mill from 1812 to 1920. Above it sat the Sligo Glen Hotel (1900 – 1920), along Heather Ave overlooking the pond.

11 American Kestrel Meadow (Geology, Habitat, Water Quality) In this spectacular spot, notice how the slopes along the **Pepco power lines** contrast with the flat expanse downstream. The hills are part of the Piedmont region (extending to the Blue Ridge), while the flat topography marks the western edge of the Coastal Plain, which extends to the Atlantic. Since 2008, Pepco has reduced mowing to allow a shrubby meadow to develop. More than 120 plant species have been documented. American Kestrels (a small falcon) use the meadow. Since their numbers are in decline statewide, the meadow is being managed with their needs in mind, which will also benefit dozens of other bird species. A FOSC team monitored semi-aquatic insects in the stream and found an abundance of mayflies, caddisflies and other pollution-tolerant species, but greater diversity awaits more clean water progress.

12 Confluence with Northwest Branch of the Anacostia River Sligo Creek is a tributary of the Northwest Branch. This merging of streams marks the southern boundary of the Sligo watershed and the western limits of Hyattsville. The landscape reflects extensive work to remove non-native invasive plants and the subsequent planting of native meadow and grassland species and trees along the stream banks and floodplains, including Black-eyed Susan, milkweed, and bee balm.