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Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter

August 2025

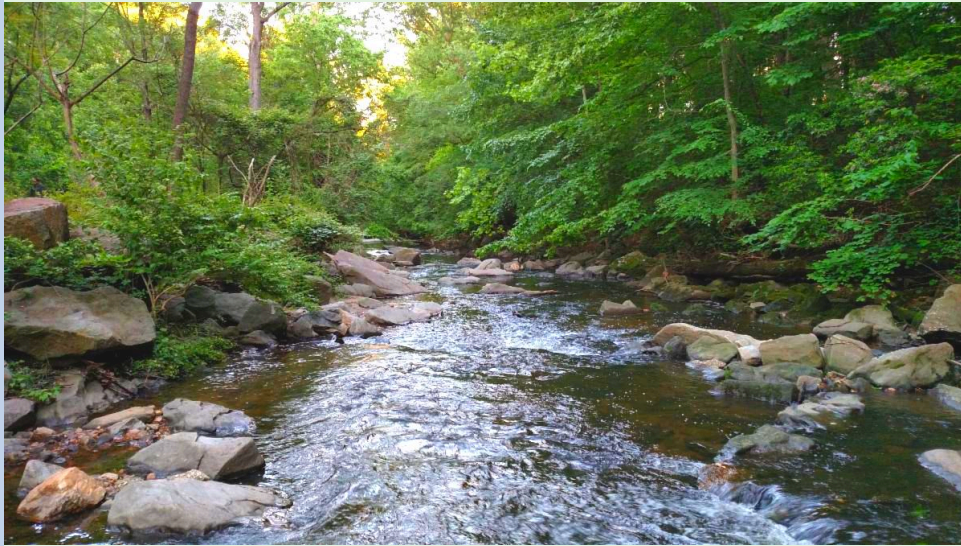


Photo by Xavier Courouble

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NATURAL HISTORY

FOSC Recognized as Local Hero by Rep. Jamie Raskin

A couple of weeks ago, Rep. Jamie Raskin recognized FOSC as a Local Hero for our "daily commitment to preserving and beautifying the Creek even through the ravages of climate change, heavy rainfall and flooding." [Check out the video below!](#)

Thank you, Congressman Raskin! And thank you to all our FOSC volunteers whose work protects the plants, animals, aquatics, and water quality of the creeks and parklands.



SLIGO

Illegal Dumping *Still* Continuing

All four trash compactors at the MoCo transfer station are now open for construction and demolition debris.

In the last 10 days, however, three more instances of illegally dumped construction and demolition (or "C & D") debris were reported to Park Police. These occurred along Sligo Creek Parkway from Piney Branch to Old Carroll Ave.

Nick Clements, FOSC Litter Hotspot coordinator, contacted the Park Police Asst. Chief - Patrol Branch to get an update on their efforts to catch those responsible for the dumping. Persons of interest have been identified, but police are not releasing further information at this time.

Please report any dumping you see directly to Park Police at 301-949-8010 (answered 24/7). A quick email to litter@fosc.org is an easy way to let FOSC know about it too.

Treat dumped bags with care, as they may contain hazardous waste.

Thank you to everyone who has reported dumping to date.

Bagged construction and demolition waste can be hazardous. It can contain asbestos, lead, mercury, PCBs and other toxics. Municipal solid waste can also contain food spoiled with pathogens, old pharmaceuticals, and toxic cleaning or home maintenance products. Both of these waste streams can contain "sharps" such as nails, razors, glass shards, etc. There is also the possibility of fire initiators from discarded solvents and lithium batteries.

Please report any bags you find, with a photo and a detailed location, like "20 paces toward the creek from the bench at..." to Park Police.

-- Paul Chrostowski
FOSC Advocacy and
Water Quality Committees

NATURAL HISTORY

Moth Night in the Powerline Meadow



Part of the group views night-flying insects at Moth Night (M. Wilpers photo)

Our very first Moth Night in the powerline meadow, on Sunday, August 3, was a smashing success, drawing about 25 people from young students to retirees to view 67 types of night-flying insects that perched on an illuminated screen. A welcome break from the high heat and humidity made for a pleasant and fascinating night.

Tony Fatcher, emeritus biology professor at Washington Adventist University, and a friend of his set up a large screen with a powerful lamp fueled by a generator. He and Adrienne van den Beemt, a middle school science teacher and insect expert, provided illuminating commentary and identified most of the insects.

They have posted excellent photos of our observations on iNaturalist (see the project "[Fauna and flora of the Sligo Creek watershed](#)" and scroll to Aug. 3). They range from impressively large moths to miniscule leafhoppers and planthoppers. Four of the insects were recorded for the first time in the USGS quadrant where the meadow is located (USGS Washington Northeast), according to the MD Biodiversity Project.

You may think of moths as dull brownish creatures that flutter around the front porch light. But up close, their intricate coloration, delicate scales, and complexity are remarkable, as is their tremendous diversity.

An estimated 160,000 species of moths exist worldwide, most of them nocturnal (active at night). Moths have four wings, two on each side of their body. Moth antennae are often feathery, in contrast to butterfly antennae which are typically thin with a ball on the end. Most moths are pollinators, visiting flowers for nectar. As winter nears, moth caterpillars form cocoons and overwinter in leaf litter. Another reason to leave the leaves under your bushes and trees.



Adrienne discovers a Sphinx Moth alighting on her pants.
(C. Dunathan)



Tony Futcher captures a photo of an insect (M. Wilpers)



Fun with moths
(C. Dunathan)



Snowy urola moth
(*Urola nivalis*)
(Tony Futcher)



Small-eyed Sphinx Moth (*Paonias myops*)
(Adrienne van den Beemt)



Red-Lined Panopoda Moth
(*Panoposa rufimargo*)
(Tony Futcher)



Iliia Underwing Moth (*Catocala ilia*) with one set of wings folded
(Adrienne van den Beemt)



Pearl Moth (*Spilomelinae* subfamily)
(C. Dunathan)

LITTER

Fall Sweep the Creek: Getting the Litter from the Flood

The Fall Sweep the Creek is slated for Sat, Sept. 27 & Sun, Sept. 28.

The schedule will be posted on the FOSC home page, the Sweep the Creek/Litter page, and in the newsletter by the third week of September.

No registration is needed, just some of your time volunteering. Ask a friend or neighbor to come out with you to chat as you eliminate litter and the pollution it causes. We will provide the gloves, bags and trash grabbers.

As you might guess, this Fall's Sweep the Creek will be key for removing the litter brought into the creek by the recent flood, which deposited a lot of litter from our neighborhood streets, and from the major commercial centers in the watershed: Wheaton, Silver Spring, Takoma Park, and the New Hampshire Ave. and Riggs Rd. corridors.

Litter has ended up all along the banks, in the trees, in the undergrowth, tangled around rocks and sticks. The regular flow of water won't reach much of this litter.

We're on the lookout for "trash caches" from the flooding. Do you know of one?



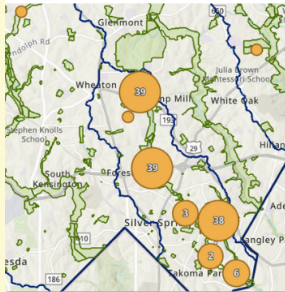
Reminders of the flooding
(Anne Burson)

Please let us know about it here! You, our readers, are a great source of knowledge about the conditions in your part of the watershed.

Speaking of litter, Nick Clements, of hotspot fame, has held cleanups this summer: in PG County at East/West Highway and Sligo, at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds, at Hillwood Manor park downstream of New Hampshire Ave, and at Sligo Creek Park near Kemp Mill. (As you probably know, we hold cleanups all year round.) Our Weed Warriors and Ploggers are also out there weekly collecting significant amounts of trash. All of these cleanups adds up!

So far in 2025, we have collected 400 large bags of trash and an amazing 4,000 pounds of bulk items! We are getting close to our 2024 record as MoCo's #1 watershed group for litter removal (see below). FOSC volunteers are the best! Thank you all.

2024 Impact on Trash - The Friends of Sligo Creek MONTGOMERY PARKS



1,793 pounds of trash removed by FOSC Weed Warriors at 35 WW events!

Total Weight
13,630 lbs

Trash Bags
395

Tires
9

Recycle Bags
77

Oversized Items
1,632 lbs



Thank you FOSC Sligo Stewards, Weed Warriors and volunteers for your incredible stewardship and support!

Total Volunteers
802



Cleanup Events
130

Parks
27

Total Volunteer Hours
1,690

Volunteer Service Value
\$59,133

FOSC removed **13,480 pounds** (57%) of the total trash from the Sligo Creek watershed (23,705 pounds). Trash levels have decreased from 2023 (roughly -2,000 pounds). FOSC is once again the **#1 watershed group!**

To calculate Total Weight we assume an average weight of 25 lbs per trash bag and 22 lbs per tire.
To calculate volunteer service value we used the 2024 MD volunteer time value of \$34.99/hr



WATER QUALITY

Good News for FOSC's Water Quality Monitoring Program

Good news from the FOSC Water Quality program:

First, FOSC has a brand new Colorimeter with a 2-year warranty. With it in hand, we were finally able to conduct our full range of tests when we conducted our monthly water quality testing in August.

FOSC's monthly monitoring of chemical, physical, and bacterial conditions in Sligo Creek and its tributaries is now available for broader use in the community of governmental and non-governmental organizations concerned with the challenged health of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. After bolstering the formality of FOSC's testing regime with new program and field procedure manuals, modifying our standard field data sheet, and augmenting our quality assurance procedures through enhanced calibration of equipment and documentation, most of FOSC's test results have now been certified for inclusion in the Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative (CMC) Data Explorer database. The CMC Data Explorer is populated and used by dozens of relevant government agencies and NGOs in the five states that are part of the Chesapeake Bay Program, as well as EPA.

The results from our early August round of tests have already been entered in the Data Explorer. Our efforts will potentially see much broader use by all the entities



The small but mighty colorimeter water quality analyzer

working on improving the troubled health of the world's largest estuary.

-- Dean Tousley, head of monthly water quality testing and Water Quality Committee co-chair



Chesapeake Monitoring Cooperative (CMC) website

Please be sure to view the entire newsletter including the Recent Nature Sightings by clicking on "View entire message" or similar text at the bottom of your browser.

NATURAL HISTORY

Fantastic Fungi in Sligo

Serenella Linares, Director of Programs at the Mt. Rainer Nature Center, gave an inspiring, entertaining and informative fungi talk to a group of 20 people. The group put our new-found knowledge to the test looking for fungi in Sligo. In a few minutes some sharp-eyed folks found puffballs, various shelf fungi, and others. Thank you, Serenella for a fantastic intro to the world of fungi!



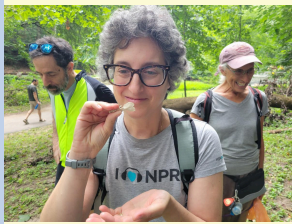
Serenella Linares discussing fungi (above) and discussing a specimen found specimen near the trail (below).



Serenella ID'ing a specimen.



A tiny puffball next to a leaf.



Scent is a key characteristic when ID'ing fungi.

Viewing the underside of a mushroom is essential for an accurate ID.

NATURAL HISTORY

Whaaat...Sponges in Sligo?!

Did you know there are freshwater sponges in Sligo? We didn't until a few weeks ago.

On a field study in June looking for freshwater mussels in Sligo with his team, Jorge Bogantes Montero of the Anacostia Watershed Society (AWS) reports: "We instead found important freshwater sponge colonies in the creek. Sponges are an even lesser known group of organisms than freshwater mussels."

Freshwater sponges live attached to surfaces in rivers, streams and lakes. Only a few species live in freshwater; most sponges live in marine ecosystems. Like mussels, they are filter feeders, trapping plankton and other tiny organisms in the water through their spongy bodies, and from symbiotic algae living on the sponges.



A Fragile Freshwater Sponge (*Eunapius fragilis*) a native species of the Anacostia River

The National Park Service describes freshwater sponges as sensitive to water conditions, with their presence indicating high water quality and low levels of pollutants. The presence of sponges in Sligo raises a lot of fascinating questions about how and when they got here, and how they survive and thrive in Sligo's waters.

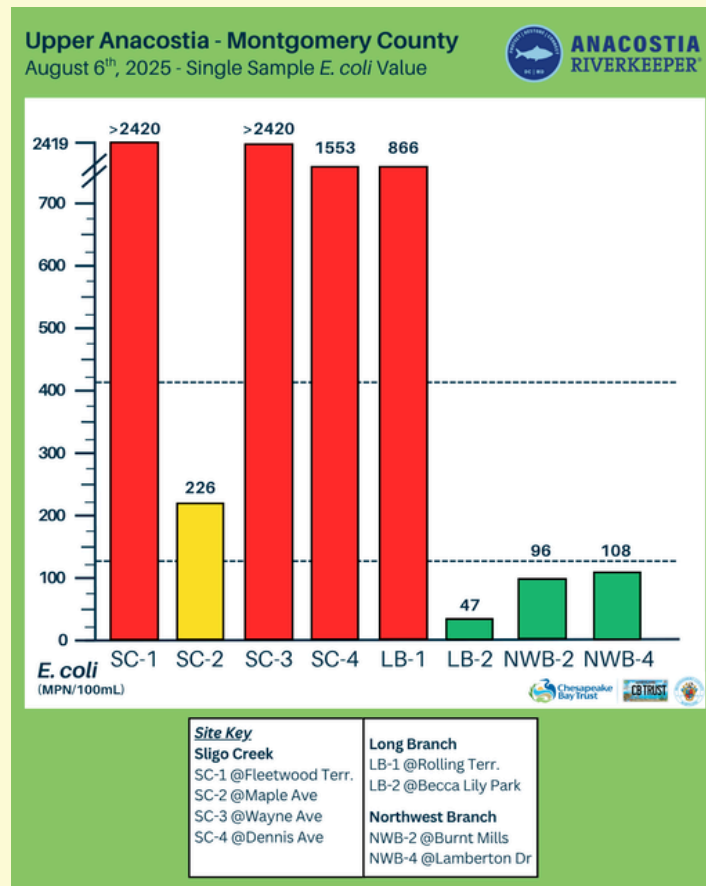
Jorge will lead a walk in Sligo on Sept. 6 to see the sponges and talk about their ecology and the efforts that AWS is making to document and protect them in the Anacostia River watershed. See **Upcoming Events** below to register.

WATER QUALITY/STORMWATER

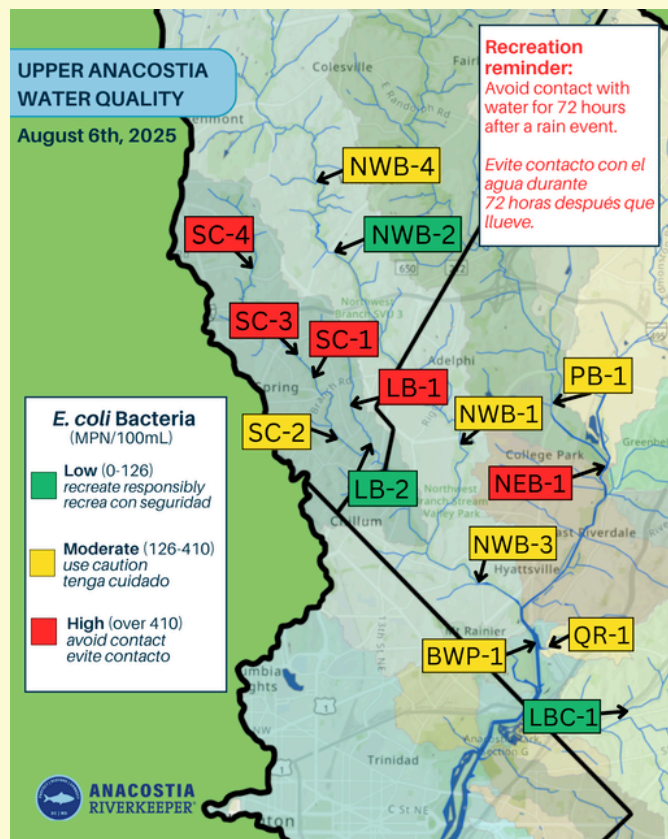
Summer Water Quality Red, Yellow and Green Results

The August 6th water quality test results span the spectrum - from well above the cutoff for *E. coli* readings - unsafe - to green and solidly in the low range where contact with the water is deemed relatively safe.

High temperatures and dry conditions before the Aug. 6 testing date are typically expected to lower the levels of *E. coli*, as at SC-2, LB-1 and NW Branch-2 and -4. But as we saw last year when temperatures were very high and conditions dry, they seem to be conducive to higher *E. coli* readings at some sites, perhaps due to marked evaporation which concentrate the *E. coli*? FOSC, Anacostia Riverkeeper, and other groups are pondering the mystery.



The takeaway -- test results are influenced in different ways by the weather and no site in the Sligo watershed has consistently safe levels of bacteria, so humans and pets should err of the side of caution and keep out of the creeks.



SLIGO CREEK AND LONG BRANCH

Always Wondered About...

- Wondering about a mammal, amphibian, reptile, fish, or bird?
- See problems in the creeks or parklands you think FOSC could help with?
- Heard an interesting speaker you think FOSC could host?
- Have an idea you want FOSC to know about?



Flood-related damage a parkgoer sent to FOSC. We reported it to WSSC.

It takes just a moment to let us know here. We'll figure out what we can do and let you know!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Upcoming Events & Volunteer Opportunities

Watch the [FOSC Home page](#) and the [FOSC Calendar of Events page](#) for more upcoming FOSC programs and volunteer events.

Sponges in Sligo?!

Saturday, Sept 6 from 10:00am - 12:00pm

Mid-Sligo location - provided after you register; one week before the event.

[Register here](#) -- You must register so we can reach you in case the event is postponed.

Jorge Bogantes Montero, the Natural Resources Program Manager at the Anacostia Watershed Society and "discoverer" of the sponges in Sligo, will lead a walk in mid-Sligo to observe the sponge colonies. They are filter feeders, trapping tiny organisms in the water through their - yes -spongy bodies, and from symbiotic algae. What do they contribute to the ecology of the creeks? How do they survive in Sligo's waters?

[Join us to learn more](#) about these unexpected aquatic organisms, see them in the creek, and watch Jorge take samples for species identification by a sponge expert at the University of Michigan.

[Register here](#)

FOSC at the Takoma Park Folk Festival

Sunday, September 7 from 10:30am - 6:30pm

[Sign up here](#) to volunteer

Have fun, enjoy the music and help the creeks and the parklands at the Takoma Park Folk Festival. Join other FOSC volunteers at the FOSC table for an hour or so between 10:00am and 6:00pm, letting people know about the creeks and parks and ways to protect them, upcoming events like Sweep the Creek, and inviting people to join FOSC. Sign up is simple and much appreciated.

[Sign up here](#) Thank you!

FOSC STORE/LISTSERV

T-Shirt, Ball Cap, or a Fundana?

Now in the FOSC Store: the poetry volume **Decolonizing the Park**, by Dennis Huffman, a FOSC Weed Warrior and Sligo watershed resident.

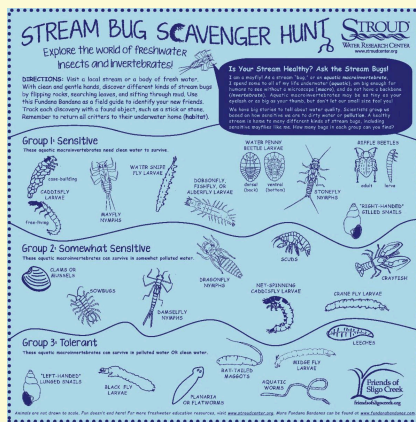
Decolonizing the Park



Dennis Huffman

**For the buggy person in your life...
a Stream Bug Scavenger Hunt Fundana!**

Accurate drawings of stream bugs that morph into flying creatures that feed fish, birds and others. Learn how we know stream health by who is living in the water. Fundanas are 100% cotton, last for years, and have many uses.



¡Y ahora en español!

Para la persona que gusta insectos en tu vida...

¡Una Fundana para la búsqueda del tesoro de insectos del arroyo!

Dibujos precisos de insectos de arroyo que se transforman en criaturas voladoras que alimentan a los peces, pájaros y otros. Descubra cómo sabemos la salud de los arroyos según quién vive en el agua. Las fundanas son 100% algodón, duran años y tienen muchos usos.



Order your fundana, t-shirt, ball cap and mugs from the [FOSC store](#). You can have your order mailed to you or opt to pick it up locally. All sales support FOSC programs. Thank you.



JOIN FOSC / JOIN THE FOSC LISTSERV

The next drawing for a t-shirt, cap or fundana - your choice- will happen in fall 2025. To enter the drawing:

- **If you are already a FOSC member, join the [main FOSC listserv](#) to be automatically entered in the drawing.**

- **If you are not yet a FOSC member** and are reading this newsletter from your neighbor's copy, please join FOSC [at this link](#)! You will also be entered in the drawing.

FOSC GIVING

**Donating to FOSC keeps our many projects going.
You can give anytime and in any way that suits you!**

**Make a gift, set up a monthly gift, make a birthday gift,
a gift in honor of someone, or a gift in memoriam.**

**Just use this link: [Donate here](#) or use the Donate button below.
It's simple and secure.**



**If you prefer to write a check, please send it to:
FOSC, P.O. Box 11572, Takoma Park, MD 20913**

Your gift is greatly appreciated - thank you!

NATURAL HISTORY

Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



Grapevine Aphids along the paved trail at the Beltway on Aug. 8 (lauriedkr)



Straw-colored Flatsedge in the powerline meadow on Aug. 8 (kristin-marie)



Solitary Sandpiper at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on Aug. 16 (dtread)



Two-striped Grasshopper in the powerline meadow on Aug. 16 (kristin-marie)



Studies in Orange and Black
Convergent color evolution in four insect orders

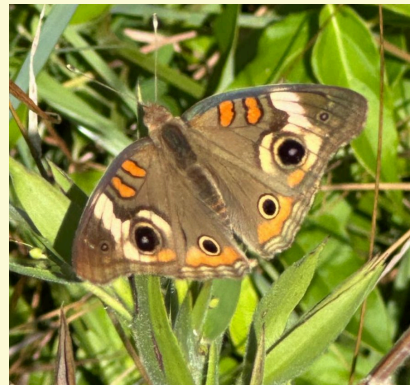
Above left: **Hibiscus Sawfly** (Hymenoptera) near Alton and Noyes on Aug. 13 (lauriedkr)

Above right: **Large Milkweed Bug** (Hemiptera)
near Cedar & McNiell on Aug. 17 (allenbrowne)

Below left: **Migratory Monarch** (Lepidoptera)
near Clayborn & Long Branch trail on Aug. 19 (liefgrabenstetter)
Below right: **End Band Net-winged Beetle** (Coleoptera)
near Springvale & Wayne on Aug. 17 (allenbrowne)



DeKay's Brownsnake near Aspen Ct. on Aug. 9 (michelle_m_roy)



Left: **Callosamia** moth wing near Houston & Haddon on Aug. 11 (liefgrabenstetter)

Above: **Common Buckeye** in the powerline meadow on Aug. 9 (marsrevolt)



Above: Dog-day Cicada gets personal near Maple & Vine on Aug. 13 (tabby_maul)



Right: Angle-wing Katydid goes to film noir school near Sligo Ave. & Mississippi on Aug. 15 (alie81)



American Bullfrog (tadpoles) at the Forest Glen wetlands on Aug. 9 (dtread)

Photo selection and captions by Michael Wilpers (questions or comments, naturalhistory@fosc.org).
All photos taken from the iNaturalist project, "Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed"
([Fauna and Flora of the Sligo Creek Watershed · iNaturalist](#)).
Photo credits reflect those provided in the iNaturalist system.

Need to Reach Us?

President (Elaine Lamirande): president@fosc.org

Invasive Plants/RIP (Walter Mulbry): invasives@fosc.org

Litter/Sweep the Creek (Ed Murtagh): litter@fosc.org

Advocacy (Kit Gage): advocacy@fosc.org

Natural History (Michael Wilpers): naturalhistory@fosc.org

Stormwater (Elaine Lamirande): stormwater@fosc.org

Water Quality (Dean Tousley & Anne Vorce): waterquality@fosc.org

Outreach (Sergio Obadia): outreach@fosc.org

Treasurer (Tom Walton): treasurer@fosc.org

Webmaster (Christine Dunathan): webmaster@fosc.org

Newsletter Editors (C. Dunathan & M. Wilpers): 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.



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