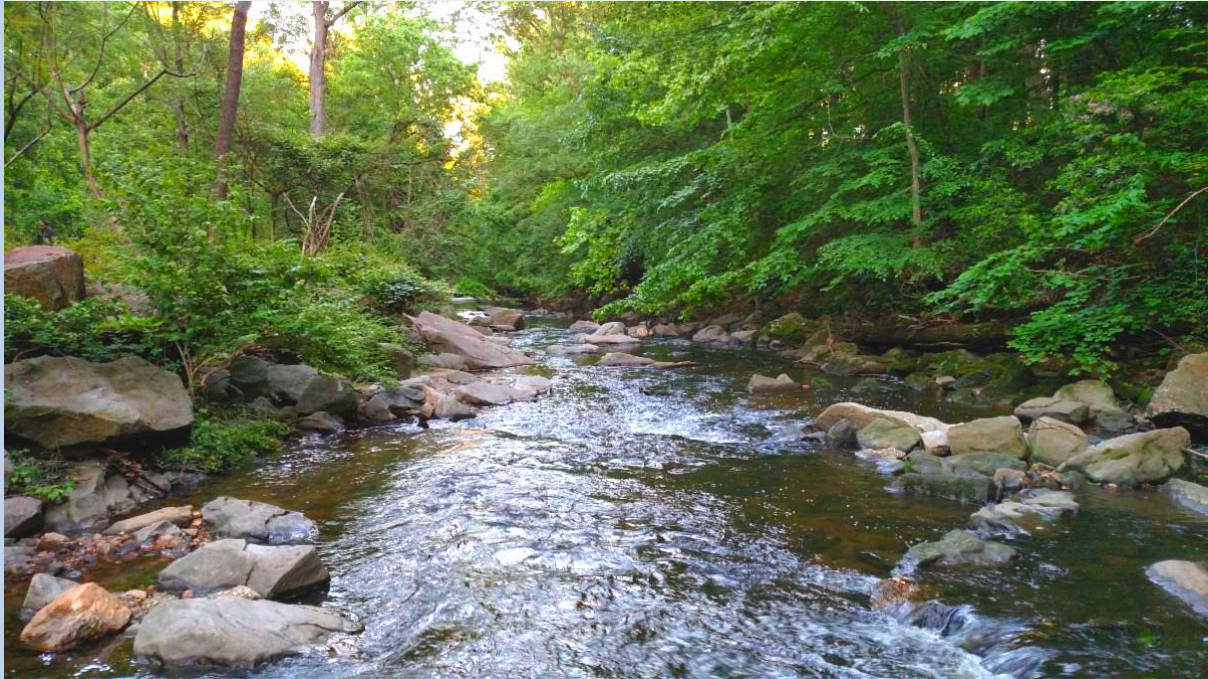




# Friends of Sligo Creek

**Newsletter**  
**January 2026**



*Photo by Xavier Courouble*

## **In this issue:**

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Seeds Sown and Put To Bed

Flood Risk Explorer -A Modeling Tool for Sligo  
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Three regions got together in... Sligo

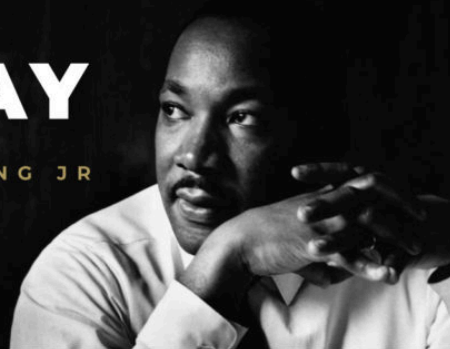
Upcoming Events

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Recent Nature Sightings

# MLK DAY

REMEMBERING  
MARTIN LUTHER KING JR



## **Join Friends of Sligo Creek & Montgomery Parks in celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day**

Even if you have just an hour, your effort at a park cleanup or a Weed Warrior work morning is a meaningful contribution!

**We'll provide gloves, bags, and some grabbers.** For students, SSL hours are available.

Give back to your community, help beautify our green spaces, keep litter out of our streams, and protect wildlife.

### **MLK Litter Cleanup at Sligo Creek Trail**

**between Colesville Rd. and Wayne Ave. (FOSC Section 5)**

**Sat, Jan 17 from 10:00am - 12:00pm**

**Three Oaks Dr. and Sligo Creek Parkway**

Our FOSC Stream Steward Carrie Noel-Nusbaum will lead the group. To participate, [register here.](#)

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### **MLK Litter Cleanup at Long Branch Local Park**

**Sat, Jan 17 from 10:00am - 12:00pm**

**8700 Piney Branch Rd, Silver Spring 20901**

FOSC VP Ed Murtagh & Drew Mackay will lead the group. To participate, [register here.](#)

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### **MLK Litter Cleanup at Dale Drive Neighborhood Park**

**Sat, Jan 17 from 1:00pm - 3:00pm**

**125 Dale Drive near Piney Branch Rd, Silver Spring 20910**

FOSC Stream Steward Chris Richardson will lead the group. To participate, [register here.](#)

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### **Weed Warrior Work Morning at Long Branch Stream Valley Park**

**Sun, Jan 18 from 10:00am - 12:00pm**

**at University Blvd. and E. Wayne Ave.**

Join FOSC Weed Warrior Supervisor Barbara for a non-native, invasive plant removal work morning at Long Branch Stream Valley by Wayne Ave. We will meet at the footbridge at the end of E. Wayne Ave. Parking is available on E. Wayne Ave. and Garland Ave.

(requires walking down the concrete steps to the bridge) or at the lot at University Blvd. and E. Wayne next to the picnic tables and basketball court. To participate, [register here.](#) Slots still available!

## Change is in the Bag



You may have noticed that plastic carryout bags are no longer available at many Montgomery County stores. This change is part of the County's **Bring Your Own Bag** law, which went into effect on January 1, 2026. The law is designed to reduce waste by prohibiting plastic carryout bags at most retail locations.

The goal is simple: reduce waste, protect our waterways, and become better stewards of our resources. The Bring Your Own Bag law, which FOSC advocated for, encourages everyone to bring their own reusable bags. They are sturdier, hold more, and are less prone to tearing than plastic bags.

Stores may still provide paper bags for a 10-cent fee, of which five cents goes to the business and five cents to the County's Water Quality Protection Charge fund to pay for initiatives that reduce litter, prevent pollution, and manage stormwater runoff from our homes and streets into local streams. *(See sidebar)*

Carryout plastic and paper bags are used for just 15 minutes on average. As you likely know, single-use plastic bags are made from fossil fuels; their production results in greenhouse gas emissions at every stage of their life cycle, from extraction to production to disposal. Using fewer plastic and paper bags means fewer resources extracted from the earth.



### The County's Water Quality Protection Charge funds have:

- ▶ Installed over 30 stream restoration projects.
- ▶ Installed and maintained over 27,000 stormwater facilities or "best management practices" (BMPs).
- ▶ Offset the cost of over 2,000 stormwater management or landscape conservation practices voluntarily installed by private landowners on their properties (Rainscapes program).
- ▶ Inspected thousands of publicly- and privately-maintained stormwater management facilities to ensure they are working. These devices effectively remove pollutants before they get into our streams and reduce the volume of flood water.

*(Courtesy of MoCo DEP)*

Some businesses and customers are exempt from the law:

- Pharmacies can use plastic bags for prescription medications;
- Groceries may still offer plastic bags near the fresh produce, meat, seafood, bulk food items;
- Dry cleaners or garment services may use plastic bags;
- Restaurant takeout or delivery orders may use paper bags without charging the 10-cent fee;
- Customers who use SNAP, WIC, or other state-approved food assistance benefits at grocery stores are exempt from bag fees;

**Just bring your own reusable bag and avoid any confusion!**

Some nearby jurisdictions have had plastic bag bans for years. Prince George's County enacted its Bag It Right/Better Bag Bill in Jan 2024, as did Anne Arundel County. Howard County instituted its ban in Dec. 2019. The cities of Annapolis, College Park, Frederick, Laurel, Salisbury, Takoma Park, and Westminster, and the towns of Centreville, Chestertown, and Easton also have local ordinances governing the distribution of plastic carryout bags.

For details and a complete list of MoCo exemptions, visit [MoCo Bring Your Own Bag Law](#).

*(Content from PGCO, MOCO and the Montgomery County Council)*

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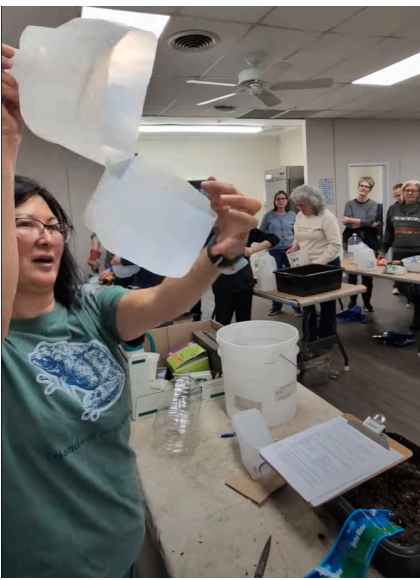
## NATIVE PLANTS

# Seeds Sown and Put to Bed

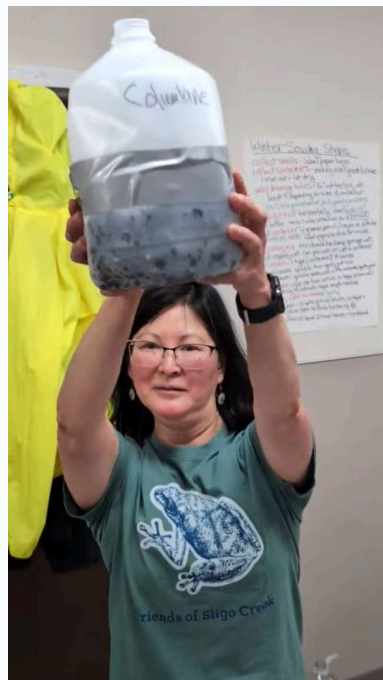
The tables were filled with milk jugs, drills and nails, scissors and bins of soil. The participants crowded around the tables, cutting, drilling, and filling the jugs.

FOSC hosted a fun in-person winter seed sowing workshop last Saturday to get a wide variety of native plant seeds that require cold stratification into containers to be placed outside for the next two months.

Come spring, the seeds will be seedlings ready to be planted in the garden. They'll help our local pollinators and other wildlife. Because they are perennials they will return year after year. And they are less work for the gardener since they know how to grow in our soils and climate.



Elaine Lamirande, FOSC president, demonstrating the jug cut on three sides so it can be easily opened and closed to check on moisture levels...and the seedlings in about 60 days.



Loaded with soil and seeds, the jug will be subject to cold temps and rain/snow while keeping the seeds protected from critters and weeds.



The finished jug outside.

*(Photos by K. Michels and E. Lamirande)*

**Due to popular demand, we're planning another winter weed sowing workshop on Saturday, Jan 31.** We'll send an announcement to FOSC members [you are a member, right?] with the time and the registration link. We'll also post it on the main page of the FOSC website.

In the meantime, you can start saving 1 gallon plastic milk jugs, 2-liter bottles, and other similar clear or translucent containers to get ready. We'll provide some native plant seeds and soil to get you started.

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***In case you missed it in the December newsletter:***

Winter seed sowing is what it sounds like: planting seeds in the middle of winter in a container that is left outside. With a hole in the top and holes in the bottom for drainage, the seeds in the container get sun and rain but are protected from critters and weeds. It is an easy, inexpensive way to get plants, it just requires just a little planning and know-how.

A few helpful websites for your winter-sowing project are:

- [UMD Extension - All the Dirt on Winter Sowing](#)
- [Wild Seed Project - Ideal Time for Sowing Native Seeds](#)
- [USDA-NRCS - Forb Seedling Identification](#)

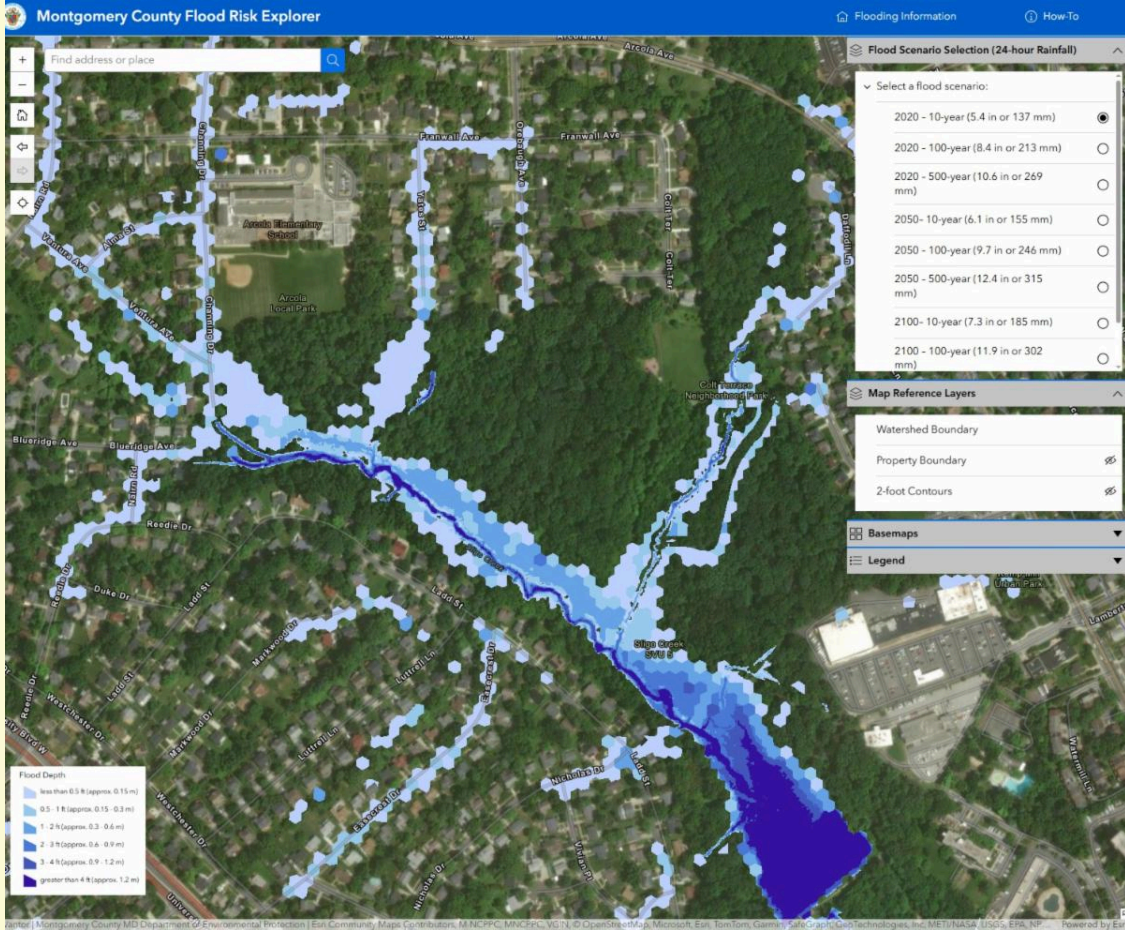
# The Flood Risk Explorer Tool for the Sligo Watershed

As the climate warms, and storms intensify, municipalities across America are seeking ways to assess the risk of flooding.

Montgomery County recently unveiled the Flood Risk Explorer, a specially-designed modelling tool that can help the County and its residents explore the potential for flooding from storms of varying intensities. The map-based tool uses data from many sources to model flood-prone areas of the Sligo Creek watershed.

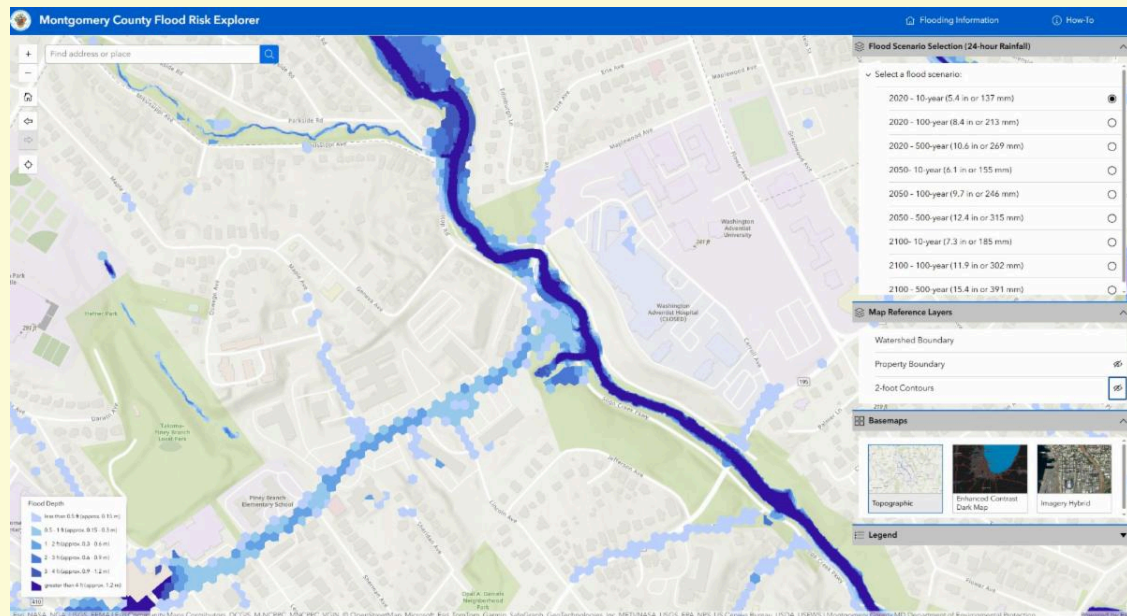
As County Executive Marc Elrich noted, “This map is a useful tool for County residents and businesses to see how their properties could be impacted by [future] devastating storms and the flooding they cause. While the County will be expanding its activities to address flooding, everyone can take steps to reduce their flood risk before the next big storm happens.”

The **Flood Risk Explorer tool** enables the user to put in an address to see what the model estimates the risk of flooding to be, in three timeframes: today (2020 data), in 2050, and in 2100. Users can select three possible storm strengths in each of those years, for a total of 9 different scenarios. Geographical contour and property line overlays, which can be turned on or off, add additional insight into the vulnerabilities of particular areas in the watershed.



Upper Sligo on the Imagery Hybrid base map under the 2020 scenario for a 10 year storm. The darker color represents deeper water; the Sligo Creek creek bottom is almost always represented in purple. The large purple area at the bottom right is the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds.

*(Click on the image to see a larger version)*



Lower Sligo Creek at Maple Ave in a closer-in view under the 2020 scenario for a 10 year storm. A 10-year storm event has a 10% chance of occurring in a calendar year. A 100-year storm event has a 1% chance of occurring in a calendar year.

Along with the Flood Risk Explorer tool, [the County has an extensive, highly useful set of webpages about Flood Management Planning](#), including a guide to using the tool,

information about flood modeling, key concepts in flood risk assessment, rainfall and flood-related terminology, managing stormwater, and more.

Flood modeling is complex. Inputs to the County's model for the risk calculations included:

- **Intensity, duration, and frequency (IDF)** of rainfall, as well as available data from historical readings from prior storms.
- **Topographic information** – Changes in land elevation across the modeled area.
- **Built infrastructure** – Buildings, roads, and other manmade features that may affect, or be affected by, how stormwater flows.
- **Storm drain infrastructure** – Above ground and below ground features (pipes, inlets and outlets, ditches and swales, etc.) intended to collect and carry stormwater, as well as stormwater management features that may store stormwater.

It should be noted that small stormwater projects, like rainscapes or bioswales, are designed to capture and filter water from smaller (1-year storm) rainfall events, not large storm events that cause flooding. Larger infrastructure projects are needed to control, convey, or store stormwater from major (10- or 100-year) storms. They can be engineered (dams, channels, pipes, pump stations) or natural (forests, floodplains, marshes, wetlands) depending on the geography and space available at the location. A combination of all of these tools are needed to help reduce the overall volume of a flood, but can not protect against every storm event. That's why knowing the flood risk of a location is so important.

Other watersheds in Montgomery County will be added to the Risk Explorer Tool over time. Residents and businesses in the Sligo Creek watershed are fortunate to have this information available to them now.



# Flooding Information



Translate

- [Home](#)
- [During a Flood](#)
- [Flood Management](#)
- [Resident Portal](#)

## Flooding

Flooding is the most frequent severe weather event and the costliest natural disaster. As climate change progresses, Montgomery County is taking steps to better understand flooding risks and working to reduce these risks. Each page below has useful resources to help prepare for an event before, during, and after a flood.

The **During a Flood** page has information on frequently flooded roads and how to report flooding to the County.

The **Flood Management** page provides background on the County's Comprehensive Flood Management Planning (CFMP) process and flood modeling. You can find the Flood Risk Explorer here, which shows the results of modeling the Sligo Creek watershed, the first of eleven watersheds to be modeled. The Flood Risk Explorer will be continually updated as new models are finished.

The **Resident Portal** lays out steps residents and businesses can take to reduce flood risk such as making plans before severe storms occur, making properties safer, and purchasing flood insurance.



[During a Flood](#)



[Flood Management](#)



[Resident Portal](#)

The County has put together a set of webpages about [what to do during a flood](#), [flooding preparedness for residents](#) as well as the [flood management planning process](#) which describes the comprehensive multi-agency process underway to assess flood risk, develop policies and programmatic changes to prepare and recover from flooding events, and communicate and engage residents and businesses on the actions they can take now to reduce flood risk.

*(Content and images courtesy of Montgomery County)*

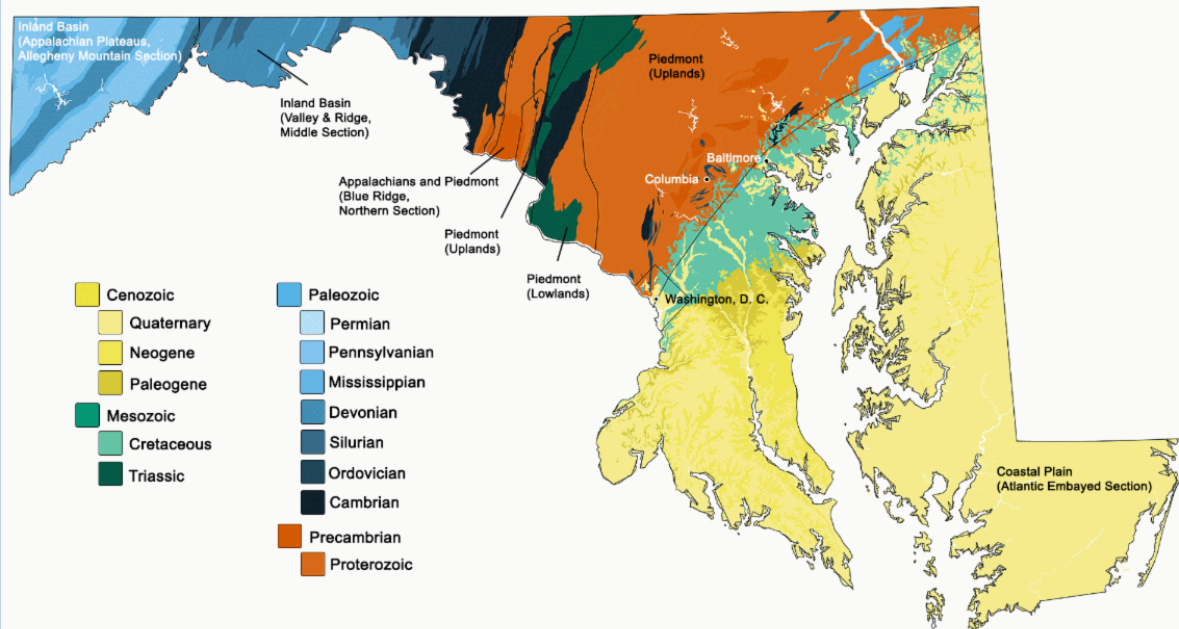
**Please be sure to view the entire newsletter!**  
**Click on "View entire message" or similar text at the bottom of your browser.**

### GEOLOGY

## A Piedmont, a Fall Zone, and a Coastal Plain Got Together in Sligo

We live in a diverse geological area, straddling the Fall Zone where the Piedmont region meets the Coastal Plain. Our Natural History mavens Michael Wilpers and Bruce Sidwell describe it thus:

"Sligo Creek begins in the Piedmont with gently rolling hills that yield, south of Piney Branch Rd., to the Fall Zone, with its steep ravines, a rapidly dropping creek bed, and accelerating currents, exposing giant boulders of ancient rock with dramatic veins of quartz. The Sligo Gorge is the most visible location to view this. At East/West Highway and the Pepco powerline meadow, the creek enters the Coastal Plain with its softer sediments and flatter topography."



*Click on the map for a larger version. (Map courtesy of earthathome.org)*

Technically, this shift in geology has some implication for the plants that thrive here. Plants in the [Native Plants for Wildlife Habitat and Conservation Landscaping in the Chesapeake Bay Watershed](#) (digital version; a printed paperback copy is also available for free in the [FOSC store](#)) are annotated with the region (Coastal, Piedmont, Mountain) where they are native; in fact some plants are found across the many regions of the Northeast, while others grow only in one or two. For example, you can see the cottonwood trees along the southern end of Sligo in the Coastal Plain.

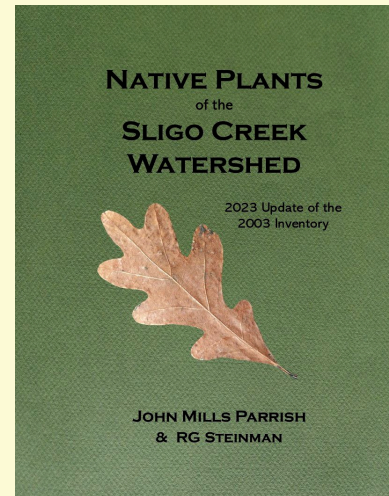
In the recently FOSSC-published **Native Plants of the Sligo Creek Watershed**, author John Parrish divides FOSSC Section 1 into 1-P (Piedmont) and 1-CP (Coastal Plain) using the southernmost edge of the Fall Zone as the boundary. Hence, plants listed as occurring in the powerline meadow are listed as 1-P. Those found only downstream of the powerline are listed as 1-CP. Yet plants can be venture where they aren't typically found if local microclimates and soil conditions are amenable.

Visit the [Habitats and Ecology page](#) and [Sligo's Amazing Geology page](#) under the [Natural History tab](#) of the FOSSC website to learn more about Sligo's unique and varied geology and ecology.

## Native Plants of Sligo, Renewed AND Reprinted

We've sold out of the printed book and are getting additional copies printed.

In the meantime, the book is available for reading at Historic Takoma and in the reference section of the Takoma Park, MD Library. You can also check out a copy from the Takoma Park MD Library or the Silver Spring (Charles McGee) Library, as well as through interlibrary loan from any Montgomery County Library.



Updated "Native Plants of Sligo" will again be available for sale in mid February.

## Upcoming Events & Volunteer Opportunities

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

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**Join Friends of Sligo Creek & Montgomery Parks in celebration of  
MLK, Jr. Day**

Give back to your community, help beautify our green spaces, keep litter out of our streams,  
and protect wildlife.

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**Weed Warrior Work Morning at Long Branch near Wayne Ave.  
Sun, Jan 18 from 10:00am - 12:00pm  
At the end of Wayne Ave - additional instructions will be emailed to all pre-registrants**

Join FOSC Weed Warrior Supervisor Barbara for a non-native, invasive plant removal workday at Long Branch Stream Valley by Wayne Ave. We will meet at the footbridge at the end of Wayne Ave. Parking is available on Wayne Ave. and Garland Ave. (requires walking down the concrete steps to the bridge) or at the lot at University Blvd. and Wayne next to the picnic tables and basketball court. To participate, [register here](#). Slots still available!

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## **Winter Seed Sowing Workshop**

**Sat, January 31 in-person event; time and location not yet confirmed.**

An in-person workshop to learn how to sow native seeds in winter for spring planting.

**Due to poplar demand, we're planning another winter weed sowing workshop on Saturday, Jan 31.** We'll send an announcement to FOSC members [you are a member, right?] with the time and the registration link. We'll also post it on the main page of the FOSC website.

In the meantime, you can start saving 1 gallon plastic milk jugs, 2-liter bottles, and other similar clear or translucent containers to get ready. We'll provide some native plant seeds and soil to get you started.

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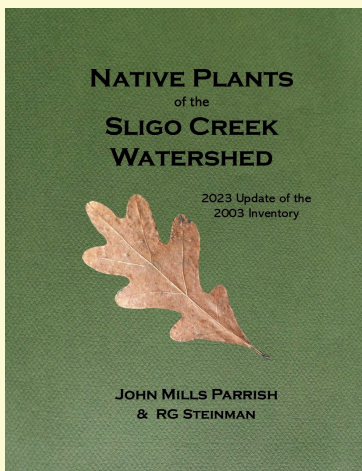
FOSC STORE

## **T-Shirt, Ball Cap, Fundana, Mug or Poster**

**Order your t-shirt, fundana, ball cap, mug, poster, or books from  
the**

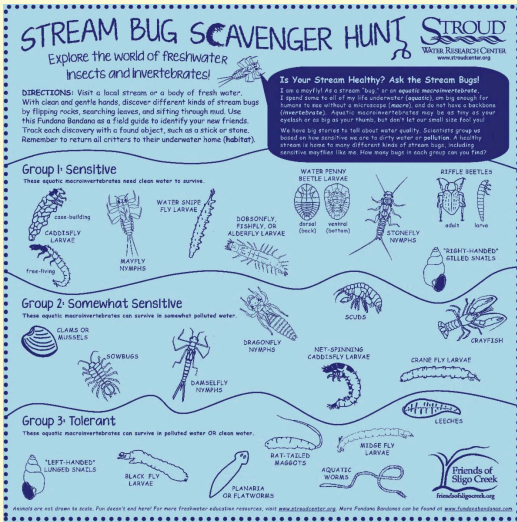
**[FOSC store](#)**

**You can have your order mailed to you or opt to pick it up locally.  
All sales support FOSC programs. Thank you.**



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

**Para la persona que gusta insectos en su vida...  
¡Una Fundana para la búsqueda del tesoro de insectos del arroyo!**



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.

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.

**JOIN FOSC / JOIN THE FOSC LISTSERV**

**The next drawing for a t-shirt, cap or fundana - your choice- will happen at the Volunteer Appreciation event in the Spring.**

- If you are already a FOSC member, join the **main FOSC listserv** to be automatically entered.

- If you are not yet a FOSC member and are reading this newsletter from your neighbor's copy, please join FOSC [at this link](#) to be automatically entered.

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## FOSC GIVING

**FOSC runs on donations! Your gift to FOSC keeps our many projects going.**

**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.



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

**FOSC is able to accept DAF gifts, gifts of securities, and planned gifts.  
Our EIN is #52-2345099**

**Your gift is greatly appreciated - thank you!**

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## NATURAL HISTORY

# Recent Nature Sightings

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from left to right: a Wood Duck, a Northern Shoveler, and two female Hooded Mergansers (*Lophodytes cucullatus*), at the Wheaton Branch stormwater ponds on Dec 24, 2025. (photo by camerashychris)

Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) A perching duck, able to perch and nest in trees as it is one of the few duck species equipped with strong claws to grip bark. Omnivores, they eat berries, acorns, seeds, and insects.

Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*) swishes its large bill to stir up tiny crustacean prey.

Hooded Merganser (*Lophodytes cucullatus*) is a species of diving, fish-eating duck, hunting by sight underwater.



A Red-shouldered Hawk (*Buteo lineatus*) in Sligo Creek stream valley park in the native plant meadow across from the golf course Jan 7, 2026. (photo by D. Treadwell)

The red of its shoulders is readily apparent from the back view of this raptor. They nest in wooded areas often near water, hunting small mammals, such as rodents, and small snakes.

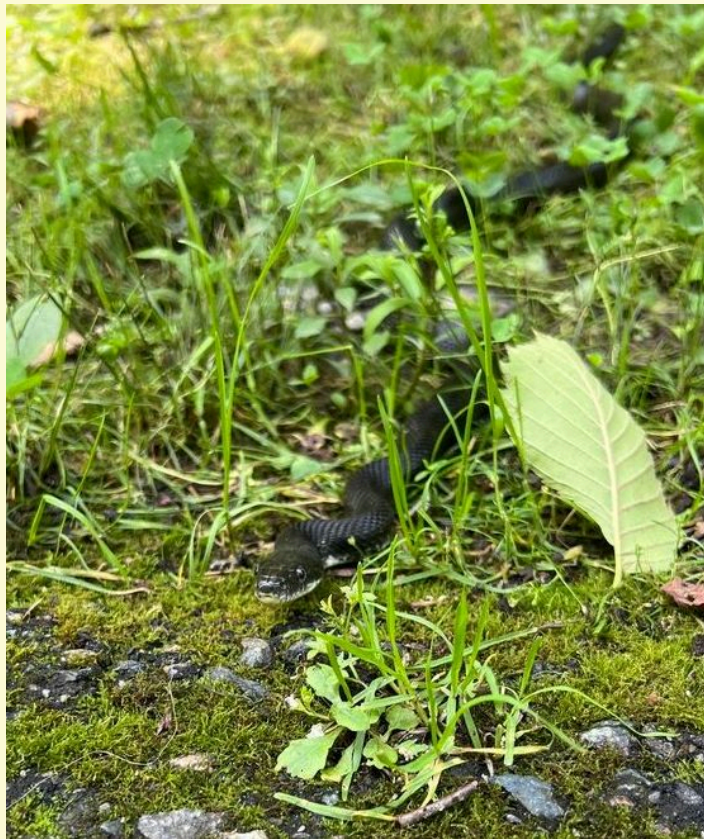
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Cooper's Hawk (*Astur cooperii*) near Sligo Creek and Jackson in Takoma Park on Dec 10, 2025 (photo by jimdella)

An agile hunter, Cooper's Hawk primarily hunts other birds but will also hunt for small mammals. Its tail and wingspan are shorter than the Red-shouldered Hawk.

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Eastern/Grey Ratsnake (*Complex Pantherophis alleghaniensis*) waiting to cross the Sligo trail near Forest Glen Rd. in June 2025. (photo by dailywalker)

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## Need to Reach Us?

President (Elaine Lamirande): [president@fosc.org](mailto:president@fosc.org)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Outreach (Mimi Abdu): [outreach@fosc.org](mailto:outreach@fosc.org)

Treasurer (Tom Walton): [treasurer@fosc.org](mailto:treasurer@fosc.org)

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

Newsletter Editors (C. Dunathan & M. Wilpers): [editor@fosc.org](mailto: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.*



[Join FOSC](#)

Friends of Sligo Creek | P.O. Box 11572 | Takoma Park, MD 20913 US

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