

# Wolf Creek

# Stream Team

## "Occasional" Newsletter ☺

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*From the office of Montgomery Soil & Water Conservation District  
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### [A Word from Your Fearless Motivator](#)

A heartfelt greeting to you all and my apology for the long absence of our 'occasional' newsletter. Life at the Soil and Water District and on the home front have been a bit hectic this spring... I've recently returned from the National River Rally, an annual meeting organized by River Network. What an incredible experience! I'll tell you more about it later. The WCST would really benefit if we could send a few members next year to Colorado. We are very much on track with stream monitoring and volunteer meetings. Speaking of which, we should meet in June for discussion and planning as well as setting Monitoring dates for July through October. [Please contact me at your earliest convenience to RSVP for the best dates for your schedule: Saturday, June 19<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>.](#)

### **Our Next Outreach Opportunity**

The third outing for our WCST slide show will be presented to the Brookville Kiwanis club on Thursday June 17<sup>th</sup>, 12:00 pm at the Trinity Lutheran Church. The first one was last November for local zoning officials, and the second was for the Exchange Club of Dayton in March. I am looking for 1 or 2 members of the team to accompany me. That way, you can familiarize yourself with the slide show and build confidence to present it to other civic groups as requested. Please RSVP by June 15<sup>th</sup>.

### **Get Your Feet Wet and Do The Right Thing**

Are you ready for some good conservation fellowship and a free float down the (soon to be more) Scenic Stillwater River? Then mark your calendar for Friday June 18<sup>th</sup>, 8:30 am to noon. There will be four launch sites: Indian Hills 4H camp, Fenner Rd / 48, West Milton City Park, and Aullwood Audubon Center. Volunteers will be treated to a thank-you lunch and receive a commemorative T-shirt. To register, call Angela Manuszak at the Miami Conservancy District at 937-223-1271.

### **Ohio EPA to Produce Video on Rapidly Developing Watersheds**

Chris Cotton of OEPA's Southwest Office is working with me and Angela Manuszak to produce a video about Rapidly Developing Watersheds; this is a designation that applies to the Wolf Creek Watershed. Although there will probably not be any specific mention of the Wolf Creek Watershed, Chris does want to use some footage from our area.

One of the highest impacts that development has on our streams is higher flows during storm events because of increased runoff from hard surfaces. If you can think of any good scenes from our area that illustrate this, and/or some sort of language that conveys the idea of why people should care about our stream health in relation to development, then contact me to discuss your thoughts.

### **Toxic Spill in Wolf Creek Last Month**

I was alerted to this on May 17<sup>th</sup> when Rich Barksdale & I were monitoring at Westbrook Rd. in Brookville. John Wiest (gave us WWTP tour March 13) saw us and stopped to chat. This is still under investigation by the Division of Wildlife; the EPA and Ohio Department of Agriculture are also aware of the incident. The official Report is due to be completed in about one month.

I called and spoke with the Investigator at the Division of Wildlife's Xenia office the same day I heard about it. Initial investigations indicate that some sort of termite pesticide being used on Brookville's 4-12 campus currently under construction, was the source. The toxin entered the creek at the outfall near the intersection of Timberwolf Way and Wolf Creek Pike, on the south bank, upstream of the WWTP. Division of Wildlife staff responding to complaints by creekside residents began their field investigation the following day, April 25<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, by that time the creek was in high flow because of rain, such that mortality counts were not thorough due to turbidity and flushing downstream. Counts made at that time approached 4500 organisms from Brookville to Sycamore Park. These included, fish, crayfish, frogs, hellgrammites, and leeches. Unexpectedly, by Monday, further creek observations yielded live fish as well.

This sort of incident certainly brings a sense of outrage to any of us who are directly involved in the health of our watershed. Lots of questions should be asked at a time like this, most importantly perhaps being 'how could this have been prevented?' I'm not sure how to answer that, except to say that citizens and elected officials need to have an ongoing dialogue about how to protect the community from potential threats such as inefficient land use planning and high impact construction site practices, just to name a few.

When the official report is published, I will see that all our local papers get the information out to the public. If there is to be an effective impact by publicizing this incident, it's important that we get all of the facts straight first. When I obtain the report, I will summarize it at our next volunteer meeting, and we can formulate an official response by the Wolf Creek Stream Team.

### **Sewer Main through Wolf Creek Planned for 2007**

Stream Team member Jim Henderson attended a Clayton City Council meeting last month, which confirmed what I had heard by word of mouth. Montgomery County is officially planning to construct a sewer main alongside Wolf Creek, including the North Branch, in 2007.

Like many of you, I learn about things as we go along; I am by no means an expert, but I do learn to ask lots of questions. Many of us are acquainted with stream channels that have significant erosion problems from the increased runoff from developed areas. The erosion exacerbates leakage from adjacent aging sewer lines. I used to think that siting sewer lines in or near creeks was one of those development practices that were done in the era of environmental ignorance. However, this isn't the case. There are two basic reasons why this practice is still used. Creeks are at the lowest elevation in the landscape. This is where a sewer line must be located in order to facilitate gravity flow. Secondly, there are many different parcels that must be crossed, and right-of-way issues can be a problem. A couple of questions come to mind: Could stream integrity be

preserved by locating lines elsewhere and using pumping stations? Also, can the government use eminent domain to resolve right-of-way issues? More importantly, is extending new sewer lines the best use of public funds in light of the fact that older lines closer to cities are in need of repair?

The larger issue is how to properly manage the development that inevitably follows the extension of the service boundary. As always, citizens need to be involved in the decisions made by their elected officials, if they want a say in what their community will look like 5, 10, or 25 years from now. We need to help educate our elected officials on the environmental impacts of poor land use planning. It's all about being involved and proactive, rather than reactionary only when something negatively affects our personal interests.

### **Monitoring Update**

Five groups had set dates for monthly monitoring at their respective locations: James McGee Blvd., the North branch at Oakes Rd., North Branch at Diamond Mill, and the main branch at Westbrook. We have completed seven of ten monitoring sessions that were scheduled in April and May. The other three were rained out. So far in 2004, 15 volunteers have donated a total of 86 hours.

You may recall Sarah Hippensteel who taught our original training workshops in 2002. I rode with her to the River Rally in Virginia a couple of weeks ago. We discussed the Wolf Creek Stream Monitoring program, and there is a possibility of getting local funding to enhance our kits with an electrochemical meter and e coli test supplies. I'll keep you posted.

Once again, please RSVP at your earliest convenience about two proposed dates for our next volunteer meeting: Saturday June 19<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>.

### **Lawn Wisdom**

Imagine the conversation The Creator might have had with St. Francis on the subject of lawns:

>GOD: Frank, you know all about gardens and nature. What in the world is going on down there on the planet? What happened to the dandelions, violets, thistle and stuff I started eons ago? I had a perfect, no-maintenance garden plan. Those plants grow in any type of soil, withstand drought and multiply with abandon. The nectar from the long lasting blossoms attracts butterflies, honeybees and flocks of songbirds. I expected to see a vast garden of colors by now. But all I see are these green rectangles.

>ST. FRANCIS:

It's the tribes that settled there, Lord. The Suburbanites. They started calling your flowers "weeds" and went to great lengths to kill them and replace them with grass.

>GOD: Grass? But it's so boring. It's not colorful. It doesn't attract butterflies, birds and bees, only grubs and sod worms. It's sensitive to temperatures. Do these Suburbanites really want all that grass growing there?

>ST. FRANCIS:

Apparently so, Lord. They go to great pains to grow it and keep it green. They begin each spring by fertilizing grass and poisoning any other plant that crops up in the lawn.

>GOD: The spring rains and warm weather probably make grass grow really fast. That must make the Suburbanites happy.

>ST. FRANCIS:

Apparently not, Lord. As soon as it grows a little, they cut it - sometimes twice a week.

>GOD: They cut it? Do they then bail it like hay?

>ST. FRANCIS:

Not exactly, Lord. Most of them rake it up and put it in bags.

>GOD:

They bag it? Why? Is it a cash crop? Do they sell it?

>ST. FRANCIS:

No Sir. Just the opposite. They pay to throw it away.

>GOD:

Now let me get this straight. They fertilize grass so it will grow. And when it does grow, they cut it off and pay to throw it away?

>ST. FRANCIS:

Yes, Sir.

>GOD:

These Suburbanites must be relieved in the summer when we cut back on the rain and turn up the heat. That surely slows the growth and saves them a lot of work.

>ST. FRANCIS:

You aren't going to believe this Lord. When the grass stops growing so fast, they drag out hoses and pay more money to water it so they can continue to mow it and pay to get rid of it.

>GOD:

What nonsense. At least they kept some of the trees. That was a sheer stroke of genius, if I do say so myself. The trees grow leaves in the spring to provide beauty and shade in the summer. In the autumn they fall to the ground and form a natural blanket to keep moisture in the soil and protect the trees and bushes. Plus, as they rot, the leaves form compost to enhance the soil. It's a natural circle of life.

>ST. FRANCIS:

You better sit down, Lord. The Suburbanites have drawn a new circle. As soon as the leaves fall, they rake them into great piles and pay to have them hauled away.

>GOD:

No. What do they do to protect the shrub and tree roots in the winter and to keep the soil moist and loose?

>ST. FRANCIS:

After throwing away the leaves, they go out and buy something which they call mulch. They haul it home and spread it around in place of the leaves.

>GOD: And where do they get this mulch?

>ST. FRANCIS:

They cut down trees and grind them up to make the mulch.

>GOD:

Enough. I don't want to think about this anymore. St. Catherine, you're in charge of the arts. What movie have you scheduled for us tonight?

>ST.CATHERINE:

Dumb and Dumber, Lord. It's a real stupid movie about ....

>GOD: Never mind, I think I just heard the whole story from St. Francis