ReCreation Celebration bike ride along the Mill Creek Greenway Trail, September 2012
Photo Credit: Jeff Agaciola

Recreation on the Mill Creek is something we like to celebrate at the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities. On September 29, we hosted our first annual Mill Creek ReCreation Celebration to honor our paddling off-season, the Mill Creek Yacht Club. These intrepid paddlers have floated the stream over 80 times, induced over 450 crevemates, and drawn attention to our long-abused but resilient urban stream.

Recreational opportunities abound in the Mill Creek! The Celebration’s activities included a float trip in conjunction with Great Outdoor Weekend on September 22. Paddlers put in at Koenig Park in Reading and floated four miles to Caldwell Park in Garthage. We kicked off the festivities on September 29 with a 10-mile loop bike ride. Thirty-five cyclists gathered at Caldwell Park for a 5-mile ride to the Mill Creek Bridge, where Dr. Mike Miller gave a brief presentation on the Lower Mill Creek. Afterwards, we enjoyed a potluck dinner at Hartwell Golf Club. We shared excellent food and learned about the Council’s latest project: stream restoration along the Mill Creek and Congress Run adjacent to the Hartwell Golf Club.

We had a blast with everyone and couldn’t have asked for better weather! Proceeds from the Mill Creek ReCreation Celebration fund continued efforts to develop recreational opportunity on the Mill Creek. Thank you to everyone who came out and enjoyed the beautiful day with the Mill Creek Yacht Club. See you next year!
COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT
Vision Plan for Liberty Township

To continue planning for future growth, preservation of environmental resources, and introduction of greenways, parks, and quality of life assets, Liberty Township is updating its Vision Plan this year. The plan was introduced in 2006 to ensure that Liberty Township balances economic growth and sustainability and took into account the interests of almost 40,000 residents.

Liberty Township is home to the headwaters of the Upper Mill Creek, the northernmost point of the 28.1-mile run of the Mill Creek main stem on its journey south to the Ohio River. Activities in the headwaters have an exponential impact on everything downstream. Initiatives such as the Vision Plan for Liberty Township ensure the value of local streams and natural areas are considered as development continues within the region. This prevents not only the water resources in Liberty Township, but those downstream as well.

By spring of 2013, Liberty Township will have a draft of the Vision Plan. Updates can be found under the Planning/ zoning tab of www.liberty-township.com.

UPPER MILL CREEK WATERSHED SYMPOSIUM

Engaging in Watershed Action Planning

On October 4 the Council hosted the Upper Mill Creek Watershed Symposium. Over 40 representatives from the community were there to voice their ideas about watershed issues and the prioritization and implementation of improvement projects in the Upper Mill Creek Watershed. We discussed successful projects in the Upper Mill Creek including the Morris Farm Floodplain Wetland, Liz Claiborne Wetland, West Chester Service Center Bio-retention Ponds, stream restoration on Beaver Run, the Duke Realty Two Stage Channel, and Twin Creek Preserve. We also used maps to designate priority areas for future projects and current areas of concern.

A very special thanks to the Butler Soil and Water Conservation District for presenting a case study in Beckett Ridge, to Ohio State University Extension for facilitating the work groups, to Liberty Township for scouting the venue, to Liberty Heights Church for their hospitality, and to Skip’s Bagel Deli for great food. We also thank Butler County Water & Sewer and Butler County Storm Water District for assisting with the Watershed Symposium planning.

A complete report on information gathered at the Watershed Symposium was presented at the Full Council Meeting on November 13. The four main priority issues attributed by the Watershed Symposium attendees were: outreach and education, improving water quality and reducing nonpoint source pollution, stream and riparian restoration, and introducing best management practices and demonstration projects. An updated Upper Mill Creek Watershed Action Plan (UMC WAP) is projected for 2013.

The next steps towards a revised plan include: holding a technical workshop to compile Mill Creek water quality data; identifying unique stakeholders in the watershed; creating an open and ongoing database of project proposals and completed projects; identifying impervious surfaces and detention/retention basins; organizing a creek walk to compile a photo inventory; making recommendations on watershed improvements, restoration, protection goals; and implementation based on assessment of current status; and launching a stream monitoring program.

HANDS DIRTY, FEET WET

Dispatches from the Mill Creek Yacht Club

“I dream of the day when canoes will be available for rent along the Mill Creek every day of the summer, and kids spend their summers at local swimming holes along the creek. For now, I’m glad that my kids get to spend one day on the creek. They, at least, now have a vision for what it can be.”

—Larry Falkin, City of Cincinnati Office of Environmental Quality

A record number of paddlers came out for the Great Outdoor Weekend Mill Creek Float trip on September 22. Altogether we had 32 people on the water! We put in at Koenig Park and took out at Caldwell Park, traveling approximately four miles. For Great Outdoor Weekend the Council also held two hours of Twin Creek Preserve. It was a beautiful day for a walk around the site. Twenty people including students, professors, and interested citizens explored the Preserve, all excited to learn about the new park.

SPOTTED IN THE MILL CREEK WATERSHED!

Great Outdoor Weekend Float Trip
Lower Mill Creek

Great Outdoor Weekend Float Trip
Lower Mill Creek

Chip Skidmore
West Fork Mill Creek

CONTACT US

720 East Pele Rose Way
Sud, 4301
Cincinnati, OH 45202

Phone: (513) 563-8800
Fax: (513) 621-9325
info@millcreekwatershed.org
millcreekwatershed.org

Council Member Profile: The Law Offices of Charles G. Skidmore

The Council is delighted to recognize member organization The Law Offices of Charles G. Skidmore. Chip is an enthusiastic supporter of improvements to the Mill Creek and has been a long-time supporter of greenway trail development in his hometown of Wyoming. An avid paddler with a heart for adventure, Chip and his son regularly explore the Mill Creek in their kayaks.

“Paddling the Mill Creek was a reveal — I expected most of it to be a storm drain or a wasteland. Instead, I found a fascinating ribbon through the heart of Cincinnati. A float on the creek offers unique insights into Cincinnati’s history, and lessons in land use, abuse, and restoration. Nature is resilient, and I’m continually surprised at how, given a chance, the creek has regenerated and healed itself. Some sections of the creek are downright beautiful. The Mill Creek is a recreational resource of great potential, and it’s right in the backyard for many Cincinnatians.” — Chip Skidmore

We thank Chip for his support and know he will be the first to organize an impromptu float on the Mill Creek on a sunny afternoon.
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720 East Pete Rose Way
Suffa 420
Cincinnati, OH 45202
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