



Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter July/August 2023



Photo by Xavier Courouble

ADVOCACY/NATURAL HISTORY

FOSC Helps Pass New Law for Pollinator Habitat in Powerlines



Black Swallowtail butterfly with New York Ironweed and goldenrods in the powerline meadow near Sligo Creek (Kristin Zimmer photo)

Friends of Sligo Creek's Michael Wilpers, chair of natural history, worked with state Del. Lorig Charkoudian, Sen. Malcolm Augustine, and the Maryland Chapter of the Sierra Club to pass a new Maryland bill that exempts powerlines from county and municipal "weed" ordinances.

The law enables electric utilities, including Pepco, to legally mow any section of powerline less often if it's mowed (a) no more than once every two years and (b) only from November through March and (c) if only half of such an area is mowed in any one fall-winter season. With 2,000 miles of powerline in Maryland, the result is a major advance for native plants, insects, birds, and other animals that rely on early-succession habitats such as meadows, grasslands, and shrubby areas.

Read more about it [in this June 2023 article](#) in *Sierra* magazine.

FOSC Board member Kristin Zimmer and birder John Stith lead tours of the Pepco powerline meadow every few months. Check the FOSC website [Calendar of Events page](#).

STORMWATER

Carolyn Condo Stormwater Projects



Kit Gage (foreground) pulls weeds in the rain garden behind The Carolyn Condominium. Working alongside her are (from left) April Scott, Paula M. Miller and Sky Brandt in Silver Spring.

Kit Gage, Advocacy chair at FOSC (at right), pulls weeds at Carolyn Condo's new rain garden, along with Condo board member April Scott (at left), and Paula M. Miller and Sky Brandt, downhill neighbors (Photo courtesy of Bethesda Magazine)

The [July/August 2023 issue of *Bethesda Magazine*](#) features an article about local projects that tame stormwater in creative ways. "**Welcoming and Managing the Rain**" (pp. 144-153) explores a diverse set of stormwater projects, including one at Carolyn Condominium in downtown Silver Spring for which FOSC was a key partner.

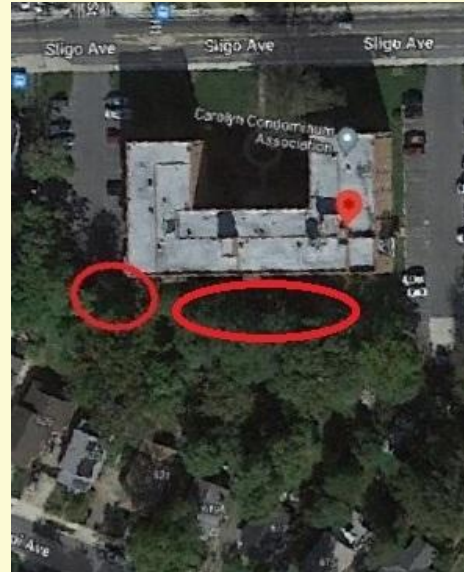
The Carolyn Condo on Sligo Ave. used to channel stormwater runoff from its roof, which inundated its downhill neighbors. FOSC was a key partner in a two-phased project, creating a conservation landscape initially and then a large rain garden behind the condo building.

The project helps keep the downhill homes from getting flooded, a horrible problem for many years. It's been a great cooperative effort among the condo and its Green Team, the homeowners, FOSC, and the contractors, and was supported by the Chesapeake Bay Trust Grant program.



Above, from left to right:

- 1) Digging the pit for the rain garden;
 - 2) A 24" HDPE pipe creates additional water-holding capacity;
 - 3) Underdrains and observation wells were added before filling with the planting mix;
 - 4) Downspout connections were installed and rock dams added.
- Later, 600 plants were installed in the rain garden. (Photos courtesy of Carolyn Condos)



The finished almost 1,000 sq ft rain garden behind the building, looking east, after a major storm. It performed exactly as designed during its first major stormwater event of more than 1.3" in less than 20 minutes.

Carolyn Condo's conservation landscape, sited to capture runoff from the west parking lot (on the left), and the rain garden along the back of the building that captures and absorbs stormwater from the 7,600 sq ft roof.

WEED WARRIORS

Pope Farm Nursery: A Green Machine



Sligo Weed Warriors visiting with Rochelle Bartolomei (at left), Director of the Native Plant Program at Pope Farm. The Pope Farm motto, "Qui Plantavit Curabit," on the building in the background means "One who plants, preserves."

County-owned Pope Farm Nursery in Gaithersburg is MoCo Park's green machine, growing a huge array of plants in open-air beds on 92 acres. Virtually all of the trees, shrubs, and ornamental plants installed in Parks' 37,000 acres of Parks are grown at Pope Farm. Pope Farm Director Brian Dahl started the Native Plant program in 2012. In the 11 years since, the Native Plant Program has grown to use several greenhouses and 2 fields of native plants.

FOSC Weed Warriors recently visited Pope Farm to learn firsthand about the Native Plant Program and meet with the program's director, Rochelle Bartolomei. As Weed Warriors, we see the destruction caused by non-native invasive plants and the importance of replacing them with natives to try to win back the areas we clear of invasives.

Rochelle puts the ecosystem concept to work by collecting and growing native plants from seeds harvested from local ecotype native plants, sometimes going to great lengths to find hyper-local native plant seeds. She scouts for native plants seeds in MoCo parks, though if needed she will collect seed from nearby sites within the local Piedmont and coastal plain seed zones. The program has preserved seed from over 200 local ecotype plants.

The Native Plant program is a big operation, regularly growing about 125 different species for Parks use, stormwater projects and many other public uses as well as for the popular [spring and fall native plant sales](#) at Locust Grove Nature Center and Maydale Nature Classroom, and in the spring at Black Hills Regional Park.

Staff also blend the native seed mixes that Weed Warriors sow to fill the areas left vacant by removal of invasive plants.



Gathering seeds at Maydale Nature Center (MoCo Parks photo)

Pope Farm Nursery info courtesy of Montgomery Parks

Touring the greenhouses and native plant gardens at the farm, we learned a lot about native plants in different habitats and the native seed mixes. We discussed ways we can work more closely with Pope Farm Nursery to get particular native seeds and plants for our restoration efforts.

Our Weed Warriors' working relationship with the Nursery has helped Friends of Sligo Creek successfully expand the native plantings in Sligo to protect and preserve our watershed.

--Ed Murtagh, Vice President of FOSC

WATER QUALITY

Testing the Waters



FOSC Water Quality committee volunteers Pat Ratkowski (at left) and Dean Tousley (seated) with MCPS student interns testing air quality and ambient noise levels

Four MCPS student interns interested in aquatics and oceanography recently joined FOSC Water Quality monitors Dean Tousley and Pat Ratkowski to take a look at the upstream world that feeds into the ocean.

At the 13th Avenue water quality testing site in Takoma Park, they helped assess the site's conditions, took samples, and assisted with the water testing protocol, measuring temperature, pH, turbidity, and parameters like phosphate, nitrate and copper. They also took readings for airborne particulates and noise levels. The results demonstrated just how interconnected things we do on land are with our waterways.

Results

Overall, the site's water was in moderately good shape that day, though its temperature and pH numbers were unusually high, and its chloride level was also a bit elevated for a summer reading.

On the positive side, chlorine, detergent, and coliform readings all came in substantially lower than average for this site, an encouraging sign for a site that sees water from every Creek tributary all the way up to Blueridge Avenue in Wheaton.

The students are part of the Summer RISE program of the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) Dept. of Partnerships, which gives rising high school juniors and seniors hands-on experiences at businesses in areas of their career interests. One Ocean Scuba in Rockville, a designated PADI Eco Center for its sustainable diving practices and local conservation work, provided the internships.

-- Pat Ratkowski, FOSC Water Quality chair



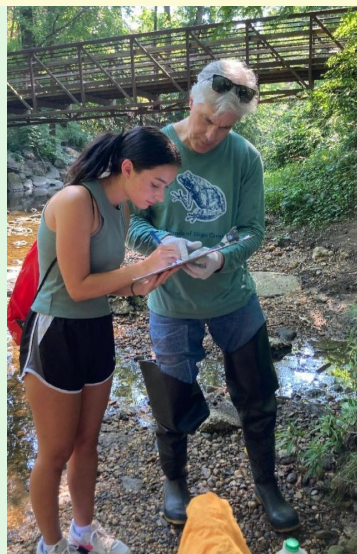
Veteran FOSC water quality tester Dean Tousley testing for chloride and chlorine with the Colorimeter



Students recording nitrate/nitrite and phosphorus levels



A student learning how to read the air quality instrument



A student recording ambient noise data

(All photos by Colette Carter of One Ocean Scuba)

NATURAL HISTORY

Take a Walk for Science

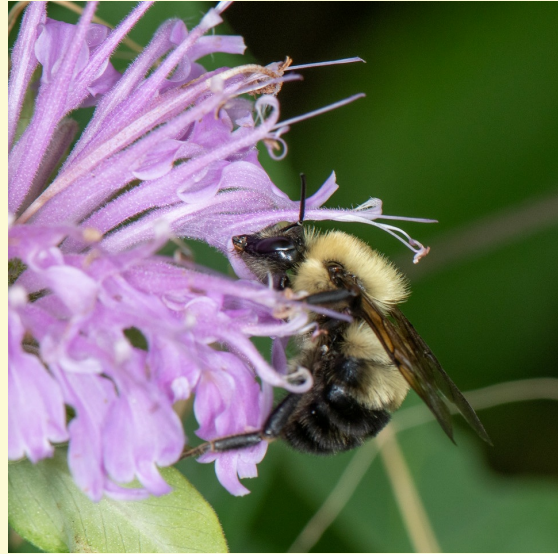
The Ask A Bumble Bee (AABB) project, the subject of [FOSC's June talk](#), is recruiting people for late summer and fall surveys of flower preference among bumblebees. You may have seen the surprising preliminary results of the project in the [June FOSC email](#). If you're intrigued, the AABB project is the place for you!

Volunteers visit their survey site -- a garden or natural area -- for 30 minutes and count the flowers that the bumble bees do and don't visit. The only requirement is that you learn the difference between a bumble bee and a carpenter bee, as they look somewhat alike. With that knowledge, you count bees visiting flowers, take photos of the flowers in bloom, and assess the abundance of blooms and their dispersal across in your survey area.

Project leader Jenan El-Hifnawi has put together instructions and an example survey to help you get started. I did several surveys last year, both at my home garden and at a pollinator habitat area at work.

The information will help improve planting guides, seed mixes, and land management strategies for bumble bees, a key pollinator. Visit the [Ask A Bumble](#) website to learn more about becoming a volunteer surveyor, and contact Jenan at bumblebeecount@gmail.com to sign up.

-- Elaine Lamirande, FOSC President



Two-spotted bumble bee (*Bombus bimaculatus*) on a Wild Bergamot (Heather Holm photo)

Watch Jenan's talk on the [FOSC YouTube channel](#). AABB is a part of Sam Droege's Bee Inventory and Monitoring Lab of the US Geological Survey at the Patuxent Wildlife Refuge in MD.

Did you know?

The EPS Industry Alliance takes clean, tape-free, label-free #6 styrofoam for recycling.

Save up #6 styrofoam pieces from packing boxes (**NOT** peanuts) and bring it to the drop off in Crofton. According to EPS Alliance employees, the operation is continuing to grow. It's not uncommon for neighborhoods to do a group collection to bring to the dropoff.

The collection bins are located in the parking lot of their office building and are accessible 24/7.



EPS Industry Alliance
1298 Cronson Blvd, Ste 201
Crofton, MD 21114
(410) 451-8340 or (800) 607-3772
epsindustry.org/recyclingmap

The City of Bowie holds a paper shredding and styrofoam recycling event each Spring. [Check the city's website](#) for details in late winter. Only hard Styrofoam like the kind found in electronics packaging, with glue and tape removed, is accepted.

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

Upcoming Events

Saturday, Aug 26: For Landscapers -Learn How to Maintain a Rain Garden

Nature Forward is partnering with FOOSC and the Chesapeake Bay Landscape Professional Program to offer training for landscape rain garden maintenance to native Spanish-speaking landscapers in the Sligo Creek watershed.

The 1 day training will be hands-on, using the rain gardens at Woodend, the Nature Forward headquarters in Chevy Chase.

Thanks to grant funding, Nature Forward is able to offer full scholarships, plus \$200 participation stipends.

Please share the flyer and links with your Sligo watershed neighborhood listservs and any landscapers you know who might be interested.

After Nature Forward has approved a scholarship, it will provide a coupon code for free registration. If someone registers before obtaining approval for a scholarship, NF will refund the fee.



CBLP
CERTIFICADO DE GESTIÓN SOSTENIBLE DE BMP DE AGUAS PLUVIALES PARA TRIPULACIONES

La duración del taller es de un día. Programa de Certificación Profesional de Paisajismo en la Bahía Chesapeake (CBLP en inglés).

August 26th, 2023
8:30am - 2:30pm
Chevy Chase, MD

¿Es usted un profesional del paisaje quien habla español y trabaja en el condado de Montgomery? Puede calificar para una beca completa, más un estipendio de participación de \$200 para esta capacitación. Por favor, rellene este formulario para aplicar: <https://forms.office.com/r/VEGZDAGxLU>

Diseñado para cuadrillas de mantenimiento y líderes de cuadrillas que aún no han completado la capacitación de Nivel I Certificación Profesional de Paisajismo en la Bahía Chesapeake (CBLP en inglés).

El programa educativo se enfoca en el compromiso, la interacción y el aprendizaje práctico. Los temas incluyen actividades de mantenimiento de Buenas Prácticas de Manejo (BPM) rutinarias y no rutinarias; identificación de plantas; plantas nativas adecuadas para BPM; identificación y manejo de plantas invasoras y desarrollo de un plan de mantenimiento. Se proporcionarán materiales de educativo a todos los participantes.

Los participantes que completan la clase recibirán el Certificado Profesional de Paisajismo en la Bahía Chesapeake para Equipos de Campo (CBLP-CREWS en inglés).

[HTTPS://CERTIFIED.CBLPRO.ORG/CBLP-CREWS/](https://certified.cblpro.org/cblp-crews/)

Flyer for Spanish-language Landscaper Training
(Click on the flyer to download a copy)

Apply here for a scholarship

Register here for the Sligo watershed landscaper training

Sunday, Sept 10: FOOSC table at the Takoma Park Folk Festival - A volunteer opportunity

Have fun, enjoy the music and help the community on Sunday, September 10. Join other FOOSC volunteers at the FOOSC table for a couple of hours between 9:30 am and 6:00 pm, letting people know about the park and creek, upcoming events like Sweep the Creek, and inviting people to join FOOSC.

We'll have experienced FOOSC members at the table throughout the day. Listen to the music, chat with people, or help run activities for kids.

[Sign up here](#). Thank you!



Wednesday, Sept 20: Lawn Care for You and the Environment, with Mary Travaglini of MoCo Parks Dept.

The time and meeting link will be available about 10 days before the event on the **[FOOSC website homepage](#)** and the **[Calendar of Events page](#)**.

Saturday Sept 23 and Sunday Sept 24: Sweep the Creek

A multiple-site litter removal event along Sligo Creek and Long Branch at various times during the weekend. Check back on the [Sweep the Creek page](#) in mid-September for the detailed schedule. FOSC will distribute bags and gloves for participants. All ages welcome.

We're planning to expand the number of sites at which we weigh and count plastic, glass and metal containers. *New this fall*: we may also sample creek water for testing microplastic levels -- the pollution you cannot see.

Save the date and stay tuned!



Fearless Sweep the Creek leader Ed Murtagh weighs a bag of plastic bottles and cans at the 2023 Spring Sweep.

Closing Sept 7: "Celebrating Sligo Creek"

Art exhibit at the Takoma Park Community Center, 7500 Maple Ave, Takoma Park.

The "Celebrating Sligo Creek" exhibit features the work of longtime Sligo Creek photographer Julius Kassovic, who has generously shared iconic photos of Sligo with FOSC over the years; photographer Lynn Alleva Lilley; and mixed media artist Steven Robinson.



"CHIAROSCURO V" by J. Kassovic

OTHER VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES:

Now to the end of Sept - Summer Water Quality monitoring: For folks who are trained already, there are slots available for FOSC/ARK testing. **Please email Pat Ratkowski at wq@fosc.org if you can take a slot of two. Thanks!**

Nest Box Monitoring and Maintenance

FOSC is looking for volunteers who can commit to regularly visiting blue bird and tree swallow nest boxes at Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds for monitoring and maintenance once they are installed in late Fall 2023. **Birding experience is valued, but interested beginners are also welcome.**

To be part of this environmental stewardship project, send an email with your contact information and a description of your birding experience to naturalhistory@fosc.org. Please put **Nest Boxes** in the subject line. Thanks!



A bluebird pair at the Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds from long ago. We hope the nesting boxes will attract them to the Ponds for the next nesting season. (Stephen Davies photo)

NATURAL HISTORY

Recent Nature Sightings in Sligo



An American Beaver helpfully munching on non-native Primrose-willow at the Beltway ponds on July 6 (Dan Treadwell)



Crown-tipped Coral Fungus (left) and Jellied False Coral Fungus (above) near Jackson and Glenside on July 9 (redcedars)

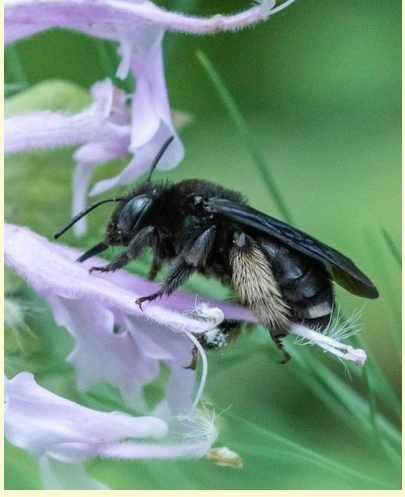
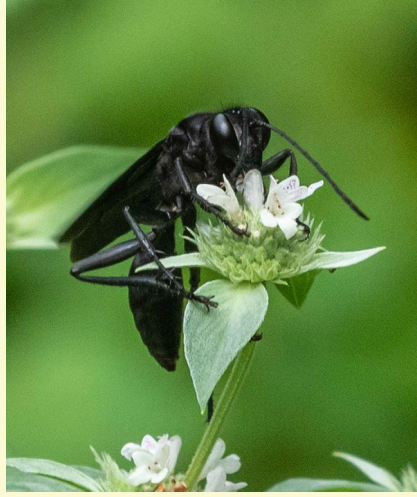


Pollinators

Above: Sweat Bee, Golden Northern Bumble Bee, Common Compost Fly

Below: Masked Bees, Great Black Digger Wasp, Two-spotted Longhorn Bee

(Photos by maragay on July 16 near Cedar and Wayne, Katja Schulz on June 4 in the powerline meadow, and Heather Powers on July 17 near Normandy & Flower.)



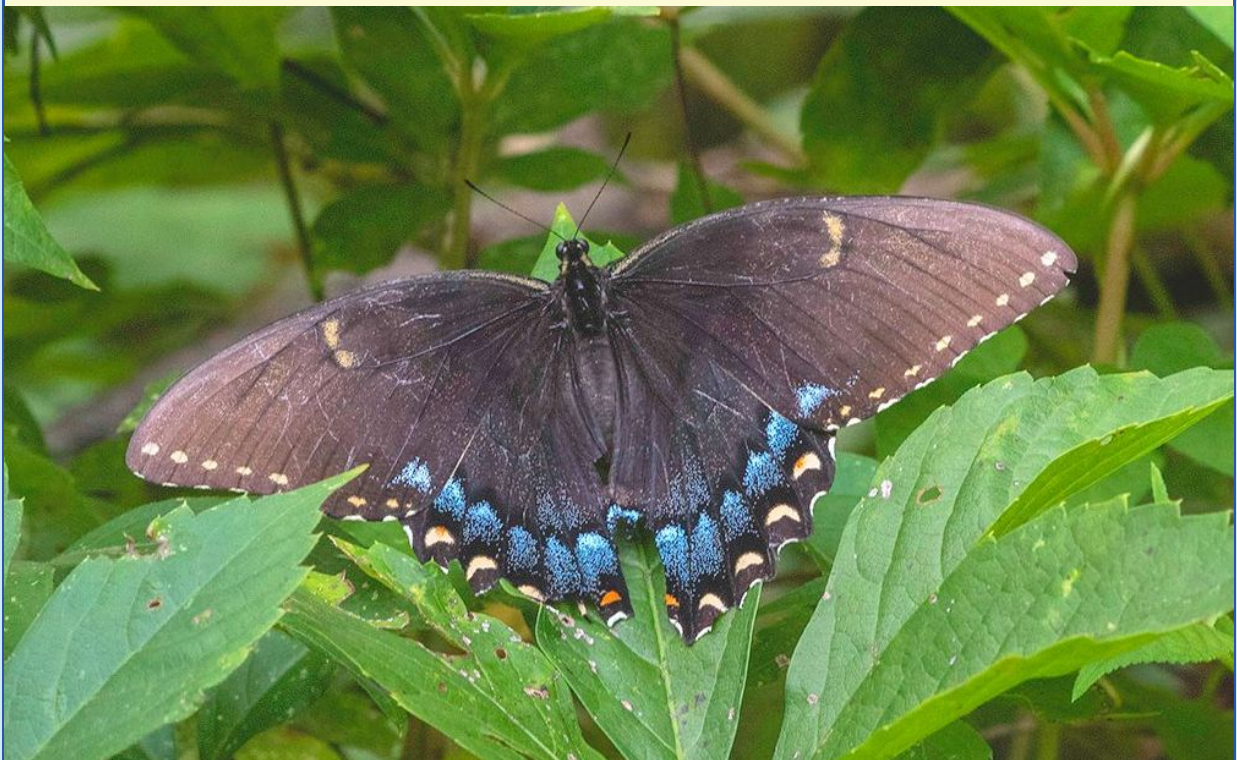
Attentive Green Heron at the Beltway ponds on July 7 (Dan Treadwell)



Left: Green Heron caught a Blue Dasher dragonfly on July 8.
Right: Yellow-crowned Night-Heron caught a Red Swamp Crayfish on July 14.
Both at the Beltway ponds (Dan Treadwell)



Red-shouldered Hawk (left) and Pileated Woodpecker (right, probably attending to its nest) at the Kemp Mill stormwater ponds on July 10 and 14 (Dan Treadwell)



Female Eastern Tiger Swallowtail (dark morph) near Cedar and Wayne on July 19 (maragay)



Peacock Fly near Belle Ziegler Park on
July 6 (Katja Schulz)

Northern Cinnabar Polypore near Dale
Drive Park on July 9 (marsrevolt)



Honeycomb Coral Slime Mold near Dale Drive Park on July 9 (marsrevolt)

Photo selection by Michael Wilpers, FOSC chair of natural history. 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.

Your gift funds FOSC programs

You can give via [this Donate button](#) - it's simple and secure.



Or if you prefer, send a check to this address:
Friends of Sligo Creek, P.O. Box 11572, Takoma Park, MD 20913
Thank you!

FOSC STORE

FOSC T-shirts to Wear Anytime

Celebrate the last days summer with a FOSC T-shirt for yourself, family, and friends. This is the one you will wear all the time -soft, cool, and with a great message!

The tees are made of organic cotton. Right now the short sleeved tees are available in 5 sizes, small to XL. Long sleeved tees are available in XL only; we'll have more long sleeved tees at the TPFF. Prices range from \$22 to \$27.

You can order the tees directly from the [FOSC store here](#) or on the upper right tab of the FOSC [homepage](#). All sales support FOSC programs.



Sligo resident Zia models the FOSC T-shirt (J. Kassovic photo)

Need to Reach Us?

President (Elaine Lamirande): president@fosc.org

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

Litter/Sweep the Creek (Tanya DeKona / 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 (Pat Ratkowski): waterquality@fosc.org

Outreach (Sarah Jane Marcus): outreach@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

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