



# Friends of Sligo Creek

Newsletter September 2023



*Photo by Xavier Courouble*

## LITTER/SWEEP THE CREEK

# Sweep the Creek

Sat, Sept 23 and Sun, Sept 24



*Scuba in Sligo? The famous Sligo scuba gear found by the Section 1 Sweep team at the Fall 2022 Sweep. What will you find?*



*Ed Murtagh, Sweep the Creek coordinator (and FOSC Vice President), weighing a bag of plastic bottles and cans at the Spring Sweep.*

### ***Whether it's for a few minutes or a few hours...***

Plan to join volunteers up and down Sligo, Long Branch and Wheaton Branch to Sweep the Creek of plastic bottles, cans, glass and various other (surprising) forms of litter. What will you find?

***Grab some neighbors and friends & help keep Sligo clean!***



Rep. Jamie Raskin @RepRaskin · 2d  
 Check out this wonderful artwork by students from East Silver Spring Elementary reminding us to keep Sligo Creek beautiful. These young artists know that environmental activism starts at home.

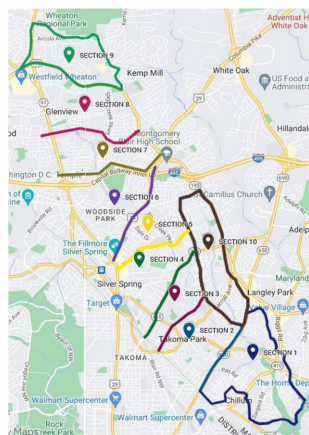


## Environmental activism starts at home

- **Make a real difference to the plants, animals, and humans who depend on the creek and park.**
- **No sign up is needed to participate** --just show up at one of the supply pick-up tables to get trash bags and gloves from a FOSC volunteer.
- **See the schedule below, or the [Sweep the Creek page](#) on the [FOSC website](#).** There are a number of changes in the sites this year, so before heading out, check the Sweep page. And any late-breaking adjustments to the schedule will be made there.
- **This fall, we'll continue sorting, counting, and weighing plastic bottles, cans, and glass containers** at section 7/8, section 9, and the Wheaton Branch Stormwater pond sites. Your help with counting and sorting would be greatly appreciated! Let the site leader know when you arrive.

*Note: Click on the items below to display a larger version*

Sligo Creek/Long Branch Section Map



[Section Map](#)

### Sweep the Creek Fall 2023

Sat, Sept 23 and Sun, Sept 24

#### Supply Pick Up Times and Locations By Section

- Section 1** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at Hillwood Manor Park 1<sup>st</sup> Ave and Elson St.
- Section 2** Delayed until a Saturday in mid-Oct, time/location TBD
- Section 3** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at the parking lot near the intersection of Sligo Parkway and Kerespond Rd.
- Section 4** Sunday, Sept 24, 1:00-3:00 pm: at the parking lot by the tennis courts just upstream from Piney Branch Rd.
- Section 5** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at the parking lot along Sligo Parkway just upstream (north) from Three Oaks Drive.
- Section 6** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at the Dallas Avenue parking lot along Sligo Creek Parkway.
- Sections 7 & 8** Sunday, Sept 24, 1-3:00 pm at Dennis Ave Recreation Center and Sligo Creek Parkway.
- Section 9** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am: at Kemp Mill Shopping Center at the intersection of Annapolis Ave. and Lambert Dr.
- Section 10 Upper Long Branch** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at the corner of Wayne Ave. and Long Branch Parkway (the northwest corner of Long Branch Wayne Local Park)
- [Section 10 Upper Long Branch Delayed until mid-October at the Community Center]
- Section 10 Middle Long Branch** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at Rolling Terrace Elementary School.
- Section 10 Lower Long Branch** Saturday, Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at Becca Lilly Park.
- Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds** Saturday Sept 23, 9-11:00 am at Dennis Ave at Hemley Lane.

Please check the FOSC website for updates to this schedule: [www.friendsofsligocreek.org](http://www.friendsofsligocreek.org)

[Sweep Schedule](#)

### Sligo Creek

- Section 1:** Downstream of New Hampshire Ave
- Section 2:** Maple Ave to NH Ave
- Section 3:** Piney Branch to Maple Ave
- Section 4:** Wayne Ave to Piney Branch
- Section 5:** Colesville Rd to Wayne Ave
- Section 6:** Forest Glen Rd to Colesville Rd
- Sections 7 & 8:** University Blvd to Forest Glen Rd
- Section 9:** Upstream from University Blvd

### Long Branch

- Section 10 Upper Long Branch:** Upstream of Wayne
- Section 10 Middle Long Branch:** Carroll Ave to Piney Branch
- Section 10 Lower Long Branch:** Downstream from Carroll Ave

### Wheaton Branch

- Wheaton Branch Stormwater Ponds** on Dennis Ave at Hemley Lane

See the Section Map on the next page

[Section Areas](#)

## LITTER

# Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging

As you may have read, [SB222](#) - the MD Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging - was passed in May. It calls for studies to assess the need for new recycling collection and processing infrastructure to accommodate extended recycling and the costs to create it, by late 2024. The MD Dept. of the Environment is to



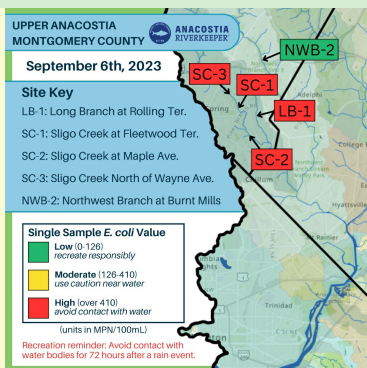
Plastic "packaging pollution" in Sligo  
(FOSC photo)

create an advisory council to recommend how to establish a producer responsibility program statewide.

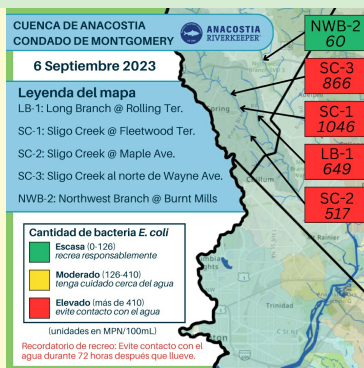
Though it stops short of requiring full producer responsibility for packaging, it is a major step forward. Our Sweep the Creek results reporting was a small part of the effort to get SB222 passed.

## WATER QUALITY

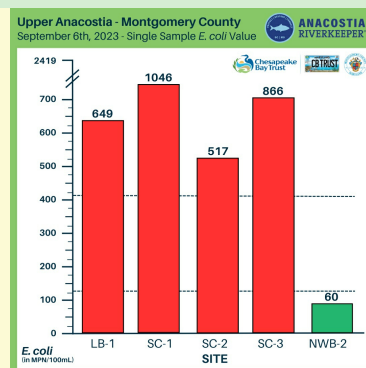
# A Glance at Sligo Water Quality Spotlight on *E. coli* levels



in English



in Spanish



in chart form

Above: *E. coli* testing results for Sept 6 at three sites in Sligo Creek, one in Long Branch, and one in NW Branch. The results reflect the heavily paved, urbanized environment through which Sligo Creek and Long Branch travel. Click each item to see a larger version. (ARK graphics)

Every summer since 2020, FOOSC has partnered with Anacostia Riverkeeper (ARK) to test *E. coli* levels at four sites in the Sligo watershed - three in Sligo Creek and one in Long Branch. ARK's specialized *E. coli* testing supplements FOOSC's own year-round testing for *E. coli* and many other, chemical parameters.

The effect of the drought-like conditions of the past few months is reflected in the *E. coli* readings on Sept 6th. On that date, every test site in Sligo/Long Branch was well over the 410 unit\* *E. coli* safety threshold for human contact with the water. In contrast, the single test site in Northwest Branch came in at 60 units that day.

Sligo Creek/Long Branches water quality is affected by the heavily paved, urbanized area through which they travel. Sligo Creek and Long Branch drain downtown and surrounding areas of Wheaton, Silver Spring, Long Branch, and Takoma Park. NW Branch runs largely through residential areas.

You can see more summer results on the FOOSC website on the [ARK/FOOSC Summer Volunteer Water Quality Monitoring and Data](#) page. If you're interested in joining the FOOSC year-round WQ testing team, email [wq@fosc.org](mailto:wq@fosc.org).

\*In Most Probable Number or MPN/100mL.

# Sligo gets \$7.4 million

Great news for Sligo Creek park and park users! Montgomery Parks has been awarded an \$11 million federal grant, of which \$7.4 million will be devoted to Sligo Creek Park for trail improvements and other work.

Friends of Sligo Creek and Parks will be meeting to discuss priorities for the grant expenditures such as improving the habitat, various sources of pollution, and non-native invasive plants. Stay tuned.

FOSC

## In memoriam: Clair Garman

1939-2023



*Bruce Sidwell presenting FOSC's gift to Clair for all his work as Ann Hoffnar looks on. (FOSC photo)*



*Clair (with pickaxe) at the Eastern Middle School garden project. (FOSC photo)*

### Memories of Clair Garman by Bruce Sidwell

In August, Friends of Sligo Creek lost a beloved creative force in our community. Clair Garman passed away after a long illness. Many of us worked with him on a broad spectrum of projects from vegetation management to park exploration and outreach, to his invaluable expertise in design and management of our original website and related computer needs.

A way to get a sense of Clair's intriguing character and skills was from a visit to his habitat. The small gem-like house he occupied with Michele Morgan on steep Sherman Avenue in Takoma Park immediately caught one's eye, starting with two bowling balls. One hung from a maple tree like an ornament; the other appeared to be embedded in a tree in the back like an errant cannonball. The front yard was sculpted with artistically laid walls and walks, landscaped with all manner of plants, but excluding turf.

The backyard was equally fascinating with twisting walks and overhanging trees. A perfectly round circle of moss was designed by Michele. Clair subjected it to loving maintenance so he could have it for energy-gathering sprawls after a tough day.

Off to one side of the flagstone patio was Clair's wood shop. It was designed to his exacting needs and was only large enough inside for his skilled movements. Anyone visiting could only peer in and had to be outside, exposed to the elements. It was admirably shipshape with lumber meticulously placed overhead, each piece labeled with the length of the item.

In that shop were crafted many items for use in Sligo Park. These included boxes for outreach postings (the original "kiosks"), as well as clever temporary folding signs that advertised "Friends of Sligo Creek at work" for use during litter pickups, etc. He also crafted a bamboo fence for use in American Elm Park. For the use of the feral cat feeding group he belonged to, he crafted sturdy wooden cat shelters. And for outdoor posting of poems in Takoma Park, he designed and assembled

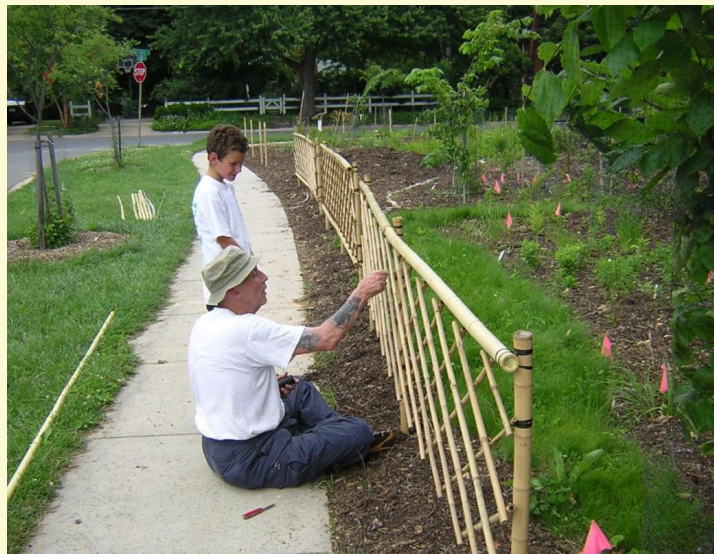
weather-tight frames. If you needed some custom structure he was the person to consult. Out in the park, he helped build deer exclosures, managed erosion, built gardens, etc., etc.



*Clair and a volunteer moving the Sligo Creek poster into Sligo Creek Elementary School in 2005, where it still graces the entrance way. (Marty Ittner photo)*



*Building a deer exclosure in the park. (Sally Gagne photo)*



*Clair installing the fence at American Elm Park as a young friend looks on. (Ed Murtagh photo)*

If the desired project had to do with the website, you would follow him into his computer den. It was compact and carefully laid-out like his wood shop, but at least there was room enough for one or possibly two guests, if on friendly terms.

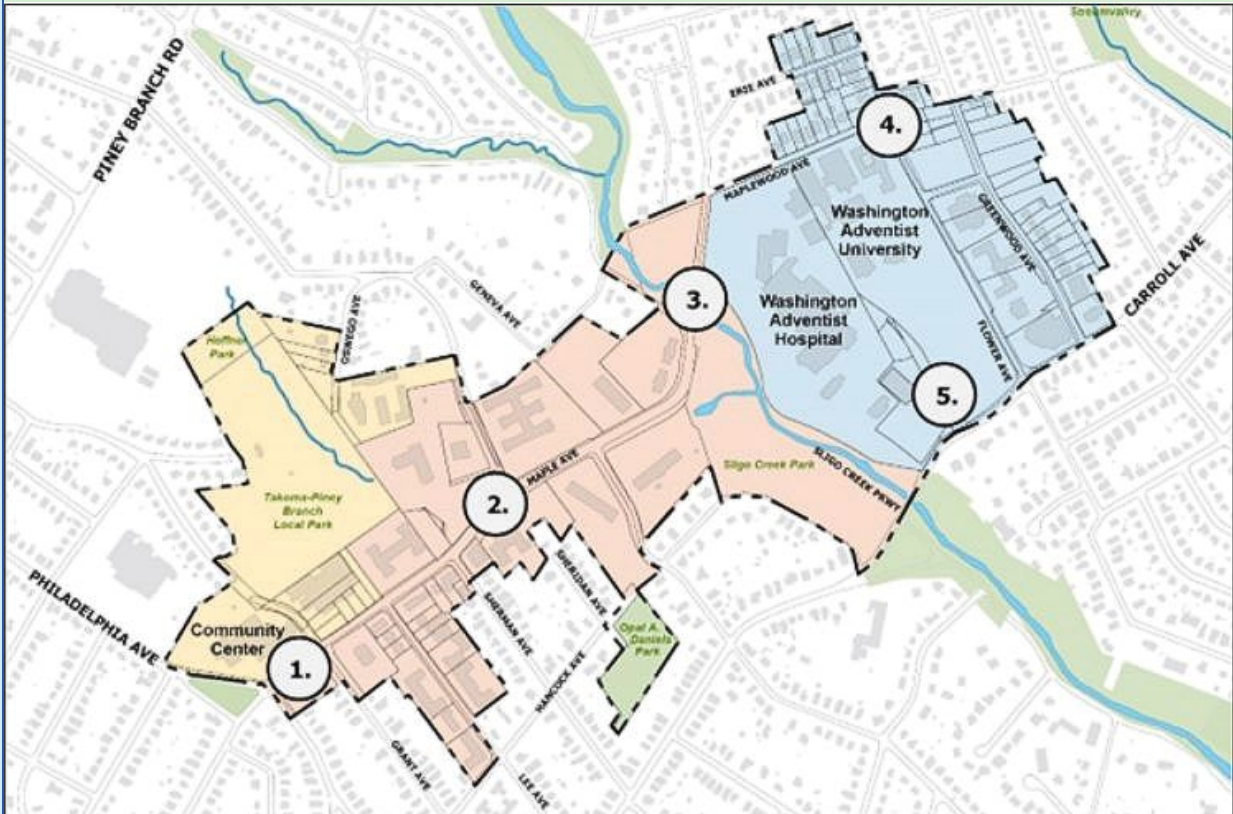
His computer work for FOSC covered all aspects, from the original design of the website to each and every one of its components. As Rob Gibbs, who managed natural areas for the Montgomery County Parks for many years, often remarked, when his thoughts turned to Sligo Creek, he'd start by consulting our website. The Trail Guide that Clair and I developed was loaded with maps and links to historical and geologic features. Other examples include the valuable online version of the 2003 native plant inventory.

Lots more could and should be said about this complex and interesting fellow, but I'll end by noting that the good name of Friend of Sligo Creek owes much to his efforts. And how about that sense of fun!

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**ADVOCACY/STORMWATER/WATER QUALITY**

## **Proposed Redevelopment in Takoma Park**



The Minor Master Plan Amendment area. The 5 numbers correspond to the areas highlighted in the [Take a Tour of the Takoma Park Minor Masterplan Area](#) brochure. (M-NCPPC photo)

The Montgomery County Planning Board and County Council are considering a proposed Takoma Park Minor Masterplan Amendment (TPMMA) for an area that includes the Washington Adventist University and former Adventist Hospital site as well as the Maple Avenue corridor that's mostly mid-high rise apartments and condominiums from Philadelphia Ave to Sligo Creek. The Takoma Park City Council is also considering how to respond to the proposed TPMMA. It is a fairly contentious issue in the area. See the [Draft TPMMA here](#).

The Planning Dept a public hearing on Thursday, Sept. 14. FOSC submitted detailed written testimony on the environmental concerns we have to the Planning Board. [You can see FOSC's testimony here](#). Paul Chrostowski, water quality expert and member of the FOSC Advocacy Committee (and former FOSC Board member) has submitted [a letter with more technical concerns](#) to the County Council.

## WEED WARRIORS

### Pope Farm

**Correction:** In the July/August newsletter, we misstated the founder of the Native Plant program at Pope Farm. The founder is [Rochelle Bartolomei](#), who is the current director of the program. We regret the error. Thanks for all you do, Rochelle!

## INVASIVE PLANTS/WEED WARRIORS

### Newly Arrived Invasives in Sligo Early Detection, Rapid Response (EDRR)

As you walk, run, or play in Sligo and in your neighborhood/yard, keep an eye out for the emerging invasives pictured below. FOSC Weed Warriors are actively working to stop their spread, especially as these plants go to seed around now.

All three of the plants below are identified as non-native invasives and Early Detection, Rapid

### Narrowleaf bittercress



*A basal rosette of Narrowleaf bittercress - Cardamine impatiens.*

*(Photos: E. Murtagh)*

*Narrowleaf bittercress with long narrow seed pods, or silques, on the left; these pop open and fling seeds many feet away, maximizing their chance of success spreading in all directions. The red glove shows the relative size of the plant.*

Narrowleaf bittercress was first reported in the DMV in 2018. It was first reported in Sligo in the Sligo headlands in 2022, likely from a patch in Wheaton Regional Park. It is important to find and pull other stands of this plant before it spreads widely into Sligo Creek Park.

### Incised Fumewort



*Incised Fumewort - Corydalis incisa  
Emerging invasive  
Recently spotted in Section 5*

*(Nat'l Capital Region PRISM photo)*

*Maturing seed pods of Corydalis incisa*

*(Gary Fleming, VA Dept. of Natural Resources, Bugwood.org photo)*

Corydalis incisa grows in floodplains and along small streams. It can form dense stands that crowd out other understory plants much as lesser celandine has done in Sligo Creek. Like all Corydalis, when mature, the seed capsules explode, sending the small black seeds up to 10 feet.

The invasive *C. incisa* looks like natives *Corydalis flavula* (yellow-flowered fumewort) and *Corydalis sempervirens* (rock harlequin, a native species with similar leaves and pink/yellow flowers found growing only in dry, rocky areas.)

The invasive *C. incisa* has reddish stems; the native Corydalis has green stems.

With little food value, deer and other animals leave the invasive alone, so it has no trouble crowding out native plants.

### Asian Jumpseed

Often sold or traded as a Maryland native, *Persicaria filiformis* is an asian cousin of Virginia knotweed (*Persicaria virginiana*). It is

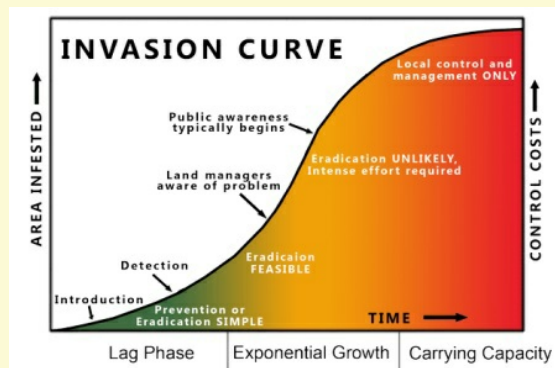


Flowering Asian Jumpseed Judy Fulton

*Asian jumpseed - Persicaria filiformis*  
*Emerging invasive*  
(Judy Fulton photo)

a prolific spreader in part shade in very moist to medium-dry soil. Rarely eaten by animals, it can form dense mats that shade out natives. The [Maryland Invasive Species Council](#) has excellent photos and information on distinguishing the two plants. Please remove it from your yard, as its seeds are carried by animals and water into the park.

These three Early Detection, Rapid Response plants are in the lag phase of the Invasion Curve. With some vigilance, we hope we can stop their progression into the exponential growth phase, when eradication is still feasible though significantly harder to attain.



*Click to see a larger version*  
(Graphic courtesy of NCR-PRISM)

## FOSC's goal

FOSC's goal is to prevent these plants from getting established in the Sligo watershed. **Your observations are key!**

### What to do:

Take photos of these plants, noting date and location, even if you're not sure about its identity, then:

1. [Upload to this link for the National Capital Region's Invaders Detectives project on iNaturalist.](#)
2. If you observe it in Sligo Creek/Long Branch, email the photos to [Invasives@fosc.org](mailto:Invasives@fosc.org) with the date/location of your observation.
3. If it's on your property, verify the plant's identity and remove it!

Notably, National Capital Region-PRISM reports that removing non-native invasives from your yard and planting native plants instead does make a difference in limiting the spread of invasive plants in our region.

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

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

# Upcoming Events

**Wednesday, Sept 20: Organic Lawn Care for You and the Environment - with Mary Travaglini of the MoCo Dept. of Environmental Protection.**  
7:30pm [via Zoom](#)



Fall is almost upon us. If you have a lawn, it's the best time to improve the grass and soils. This Wednesday, Mary Travaglini with the Dept. of Environmental Protection will discuss organic lawn care and other yard care tips like how to handle all those leaves from our beautiful trees. The Zoom link is also available on the [FOSC homepage](#) and the [Calendar of Events page](#). Bring your questions and lawn and leaf challenges!



Photo courtesy of DEP

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### **Saturday, Sept 23 and Sunday, Sept 24: Sweep the Creek!**

#### **Various times**

The Sweep the Creek is a twice yearly litter removal bonanza in Sligo Creek, Long Branch and Wheaton Branch at various times during the weekend.

**Important:** Check the [Sweep the Creek page](#) for the schedule. FOOSC will distribute bags and gloves for volunteers at locations throughout the watershed. All ages are welcome. No pre-registration is required; please register at the FOOSC table when you arrive.



Retrieving a hoverboard at the Spring 2021 Sweep (D.Marcin photo)

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### **Saturday, Sept 30: Section 1 Hillwood Manor garden cleanup**

**9:00am - 12:00pm**

Come any time that's convenient for you. At the Lower Garden on the banks of Sligo Creek where the trail meets New Hampshire Ave. Bring a trowel or shovel, if you can, and water bottle and gardening gloves. SSL hours available.



(Pamela Sparr photo)

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### **Friday, October 13: Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration in Wheaton - 5:00pm - 8:00pm**

**A FOOSC volunteer opportunity**

FOOSC is looking for Spanish-speaking volunteers to talk about the Creek, FOOSC programs, and show a photo "story" about trash in Wheaton Branch and Sligo. This is the last of 5 celebrations taking place from 5:00pm- 8:00pm on Friday evenings from Sept. 15 through October 13.

(Westfield Wheaton photo)

## Monthly at various times

In Section 1, FOSC Board member Kristin Zimmer and birder John Stith lead walks every month or so in the Pepco powerline meadow, known as Kestrel Meadow for the kestrels nesting there. Check the FOSC website [Calendar of Events page](#) for dates and directions.



American Kestrel on the powerline structure (K. Zimmer photo)

*Please support FOSC*

*Your gift funds FOSC programs*

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

**Donate**



Or if you prefer, send a check to the address at the very bottom of this email.

**Thank you!**

## FOSC STORE

**Long Sleeve T-shirts are back!  
Ballcaps are in!**



The new FOSC ballcaps in a classic low profile style in slate blue and dark green. 100% cotton with the FOSC logo embroidered on the front. (S. Deford photo)



Sligo resident Zia models the FOSC organic cotton T-shirt.

(J. Kassovic photo)

Celebrate fall with a FOSC T-shirt and ballcap for yourself, family, and friends. These are the ones you will wear all the time - comfortable and with a great message!

- The tees are made of organic cotton.
- Short-sleeved tees are available in 5 sizes, small to XXL; from \$22 to \$25.
- Long-sleeved are back in stock in S - XXXL; from \$26 to \$29.
- Ballcaps are 100% cotton and adjustable. They are available for \$18 - an introductory price!

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

## 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 (Tanya DeKona / 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 (Pat Ratkowski): [waterquality@fosc.org](mailto:waterquality@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.*



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