

# Ripples

The Quarterly Newsletter of Friends of Sugar Creek, Inc.

## FSC Hires Watershed Projects Coordinator

FSC took its first major step towards initiating a watershed inventory by hiring a watershed projects coordinator on September 1. Nathan Mullendore, a former board member, has already begun networking and forming partnerships with relevant state agencies and other stakeholders in preparation for the coordinated effort we envision.

Mullendore has been provided office space on the campus of Wabash College, his alma mater. For years, FSC has lacked an official physical location, relying on public spaces and members' homes to conduct business and store materials. With the new office space, all of our files, water testing equipment, and other resources will be centrally located. Friends has also been granted internet and phone access as well as the use of a conference room. The move highlights the growing relationship between the College and our organization.

Mullendore is currently recruiting volunteers for water monitoring



Nathan Mullendore, the new Watershed Projects Coordinator, gives a presentation at Wabash College. Photo credit: Steve Charles

through the Hoosier Riverwatch program. He attended a training event in late September and is looking for additional volunteers to help starting this spring. Hoosier Riverwatch provides equipment and training workshops to individuals and groups looking to implement a water quality monitoring program in their area.

Mullendore will also assist FSC

with administrative tasks including maintenance of the website, publication of a quarterly newsletter, and preparation for our fall fundraising campaign.

For more information about the planned watershed inventory, see the full story on the inside cover. Mullendore can be reached with any ideas, questions, or concerns at [nathan@friendsofsugarcreek.org](mailto:nathan@friendsofsugarcreek.org).

Winter 2009

### Mark Your Calendar:

- **Feb. 3:** February Board Meeting
- **March 3:** March Board Meeting
- **April 21:** Annual Meeting
- **April 25:** Access Site Dedication

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## Fall Creek Cleanup a Success

Friends of Sugar Creek, in partnership with Mayor Coons and the City of Crawfordsville, hosted its annual fall creek cleanup on Saturday, November 1. The cleanup was highly successful, as several club members and local officials joined the effort. A handful of area business donated coffee and food for the volunteer cookout afterwards.

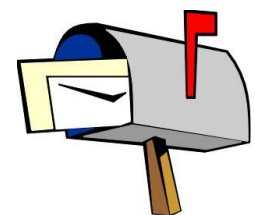
While past cleanups have concentrated on the area surrounding the old coke plant, this event covered

much of the 60+ acres owned by the city that will be included in the developing Sugar Creek Nature Park. This area is also part of FSC's 2-mile Adopt A River section.

A group of around 25 volunteers convened at the Elston Softball Diamonds Saturday morning and spread out along the banks of Sugar Creek, collecting more than 960 pounds of trash and a small number of tires from the water. Following three hours of work, the volunteers

met at a picnic shelter for lunch and an informal discussion about the future of the park. The event was covered by the Journal Review, which featured a front-page article the following Monday.

We would like to thank everyone who helped as well as the following sponsors for their generous donations: **Good to Go Espresso, County Market, Kroger, Skelgas, Crawfords, and Surb's Tires.**



FSC has moved. Please send all mail to:  
Friends of Sugar Creek  
PO Box 291  
Crawfordsville, IN  
47933

# Watershed Inventory Planned

In twenty-one years of existence FSC has fought hard to pursue our mission of protecting, restoring, and promoting appreciation of Sugar Creek and its watershed. Some of our successes include developing public access points, marking city storm drains, bi-annual community creek cleanups, increased public awareness through education programs, building partnerships within the community, and working with local, state, and federal agencies to make sure polluters are held accountable for their actions.

Currently, a central focus of FSC is completing a watershed inventory and a watershed action plan. A watershed inventory is a big picture look at the health and wellbeing of the watershed. It is a commonly used tool that unites stakeholders throughout the watershed with straight forward data and observations. The action plan provides a prioritized list of achievable goals that stakeholders can engage in to improve the health and wellbeing of the watershed. Time and money are precious commodities, especially for a not for profit group. The watershed inventory and subse-

quent action plan will give the Friends of Sugar Creek and various community partners a road map of how to allocate future resources.

The watershed inventory has several benefits beyond understanding the health and wellbeing of the watershed. It will also empower the local community to create change, provide a tangible success story to partner organizations, serve as a spring board to grants and other funding opportunities, and, most importantly, improve the quality of life for people in the watershed by helping to ensure clean water and healthy natural resources.

The watershed inventory and action plan are significant undertakings for FSC, so we need your help. We are currently developing an active volunteer base to help make the inventory a reality. If you would like to donate some of your time and talents to the cause we would love to have you on board. We could use your help taking water samples, documenting points of significance along the creek, conducting surveys of flora and fauna, and

other exciting out-doorsy activities. Please contact our watershed coordinator Nathan Mullendore ([nathan@friendsofsugarcreek.org](mailto:nathan@friendsofsugarcreek.org)) to be a part of this important project.

A watershed inventory is a big picture look at the health and wellbeing of the watershed. It includes a variety of data collection including widespread water testing, habitat assessment, land use analysis, and social indicator surveys. Ultimately a watershed plan is developed to address the problems identified by the inventory.



Need a gift idea? Consider giving an honorarium to Friends of Sugar Creek. Donations can be made online at <http://www.friendsofsugarcreek.org> or sent via mail to Friends of Sugar Creek, PO BOX 291, Crawfordsville, IN, 47933.

# FSC Helps Develop Sugar Creek Nature Park

In the early nineties, an ambitious plan was announced for a city park on the banks of Sugar Creek in downtown Crawfordsville. Purdue graduate students drew up a plan, meetings were held, and articles were written in the local paper. Unfortunately, the project eventually stalled.

Charlie Coons, the mayor of Crawfordsville, along with others including Shannon Hudson, a science teacher at Tuttle Middle School, announced their plans to revive the project earlier this summer. Since that time, the group has formed a planning commission that meets monthly and hired an outside consultant to start seeking funding. The project will receive no tax payer-funding—instead, all SCNP developments will be grant funded.

Friends of Sugar Creek was invited at the beginning to help with the planning process. President



The shaded area represents the 63 acres that will form the planned Sugar Creek Nature Park. Potential trails and shelter sites are marked by lines and dots, respectively.

Zach Cain started attending meetings in June and now shares those duties with Nathan Mullendore,

our Watershed Projects Coordinator.

One of the most exciting aspects of the project is the potential for an outdoor classroom where area students can learn about creek and wetland ecology. The Montgomery County Community Foundation has already pledged nearly \$20,000 for the construction of the first few shelters. A larger, four-season structure is eventually possible if funding is secured.

Gary Welliever, the city's MS4 (Municipal Separate Stormwater Sewage System) supervisor, also plans to create a drainage demonstration area

featuring native plants and rain gardens, tools that can divert rainwater from entering the storm drainage system.



## FSC Gives Away Canoe, Information at 4-H Fair

For the second consecutive year FSC had an informational display at the Montgomery County 4-H Fair. This year we teamed up with Montgomery County Soil and Water Conservation District, the Natural Resource Conservation Service and the Montgomery County Drainage Board to create a "Conservation Coalition" tent where people could get information about environmental and land-use issues. We had an excellent flow of traffic through our display, thanks in part to a canoe raffle sponsored by FSC.

Gene Fouty of Lake Holliday was our grand prize winner; taking home a new canoe, two pad-

dles, and two life jackets along with an assortment of FSC gear. Gene and his grandson plan on using the canoe to fish along Sugar Creek.

We gained a considerable amount of new members and reconnected with some old ones during the fair.

FSC would like to thank our partner agencies for making this year's fair booth a great success. We would also like to commend the local 4-H members for their recycling efforts; they all deserve a blue ribbon for environmental protection.



A group of young fair-goers tests the canoe

*Ripples is online. Direct your friends to the "publication" section of our website <http://www.friendsofsugarcreek.org>*

## Hunting the Indiana Bronzeback

Indiana offers more than meets the eye when it comes to river fishing, as dozens of productive rivers and creeks stretch the length and width of the state. Like fine wines they all have their sweet, savory, sour, and sometimes intoxicating qualities. If an angler starts to sample the state's numerous flows of water, he will also find many opportunities to sample that ferocious bronze fish of river and stream—the smallmouth bass!

Why fish for smallmouth? Their aggressiveness and fight are as legendary as their finickiness. They will smash large topwater lures with reckless aggression one day, shunning the tinniest offering the next. Therein lies the sport in the hunt. One day reaction time is called for, the next patient endurance, always testing the angler's skills of observation, timing, and presentation.

Almost all Indiana ditches, creeks, and rivers contain smallmouth, including Sugar Creek. Few people know it takes a smallmouth 10-12 years to reach 20" in length. Unfortunately, smallmouth bass rarely live long enough to grow so large. Floods, angler harvest, loss of habitat, disease, and pollution all impede fish survival. Such fish are one in 500 or greater depending on the body of water, and should be treated as too rare a treasure to be caught just once; catch and release is advocated for all of these bass.

In growing so large, these fish have obviously developed a system of avoiding us! Smallmouth bass in clear water can be very spooky, scattering at the sound of an angler's footsteps or simply becoming unwilling to bite.

When water is clear and skies are sunny, the

larger bass often feed at dusk, dawn, or at nighttime. Most anglers dare not wade a creek at dark, but that is often when the monsters feed on unwary shad or roaming crayfish, using their lateral lines to sense the vibrations of injured prey or using moonlight to outline the dying struggles of a potential meal. Another time to land large river bass is when the water level rises, pushing them out from cover and forcing them to seek bait fish clinging to micro eddies along the shore.

These large fish survive, often right under our very noses, clinging under an undercut rootwad,



The author with a giant Indiana smallmouth bass

wedged under a rock, or in tangles of the largest logjams. These hiding places allow the fish to survive from year to year and often totally avoid the novice angler. That is just where an angler must go to catch them—down in the dankest, snaggiest, darkest lure trap.

Water conservation groups such as Friends of

Few know it takes a smallmouth bass 10-12 years to reach 20" in length. Unfortunately, they rarely live long enough to grow so large.

Sugar Creek and the Indiana Smallmouth Alliance need your help to keep Indiana's streams clean and healthy. Indiana's number #1 pollutant is silt. Silt fills in the hiding places for macroinvertebrates and fishes, severely reducing the potential to hold life. Silt often originates from eroded banks where tree and plant buffer strips have been removed by land owners. Floods and other high water events eventually push the silt into deeper holes, depriving fish places to hide from predators.

We can help ensure a smallmouth bass fishery for future generations by practicing catch and release of riverine basses, educating ourselves about good land practices near our waterways, reporting poachers, and donating time and money to help preserve our streams.

*Brenden Terrill is a board member of the Indiana Smallmouth Alliance, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the conservation of Indiana's smallmouth bass fishery. For more information about the Alliance, please visit their website at: <http://www.indianasmallmouthalliance.org>.*

## Friends of Sugar Creek, Inc.

PO Box 291  
Crawfordsville, IN  
47933

Return Service Requested



Phone: 765-366-6682  
E-mail: [info@friendsofsugarcreek.org](mailto:info@friendsofsugarcreek.org)

Friends of Sugar Creek, Inc. (FSC) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit grassroots environmental organization located in west-central Indiana. FSC was founded by a group of concerned citizens in 1987 after a fish kill along Sugar Creek was disregarded by local and state government officials. Since that time the mission of FSC has been to *protect, restore, and promote appreciation of Sugar Creek and its watershed.*

### Board of Directors

Executive Members:	At-Large Members:
Zach Cain — President	Angie Williams
Matt Williams — Vice President	Marc Hudson
Doug Miller — Secretary	Lali Hess
Doug Calisch — Treasurer	Jim Suren

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## FSC Receives Grants for Inventory and Sign Projects

Friends of Sugar Creek recently received local grant funding for two upcoming projects.

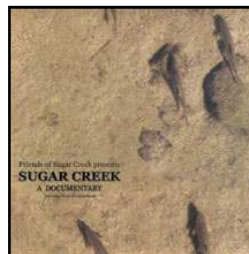
The Montgomery County Community Foundation will help fund the production and installation of three interpretive signs near the bridge section of the Sugar Creek Trail in Crawfordsville. Two of these signs will describe the surrounding creek ecosystem using a combination of photographs, illustrations, and textual information. The third sign will highlight issues affecting the health of Sugar Creek, including agricultural runoff, erosion, and industrial waste.

Each 2' by 4' sign is constructed of a high-quality laminate composite and is guaranteed for 10 years. This project will add an engaging educational component to a high-traffic recreational area. Total expenses for the project, including in-kind contributions of time and labor, are estimated at \$7,950. MCCF will provide \$4,650, with the balance coming from in-kind contributions.

Tipmont REMC's Envirowatts fund is contribut-

ing \$5,000 to our watershed inventory project. These dollars will be used to purchase necessary equipment including a GPS unit, digital camera, and testing supplies.

This grant funding will also pay for a second production run of the popular Sugar Creek DVD. Envirowatts provided the original funding for the first DVD run of 1000, almost all of which have now been distributed.



A portion of the Envirowatts funds will pay for a second production run of the Sugar Creek Documentary DVD



Using grant funds given by the Montgomery County Community Foundation, Friends of Sugar Creek will install three educational interpretive signs at this section of Crawfordsville's Sugar Creek Trail

Friends of Sugar Creek would like to thank the Montgomery County Community Foundation and Tipmont REMC Envirowatts for their generosity.