The District’s work, through a collaborative effort between many organizations, focuses on protecting, preserving and enhancing our waterways for the benefit of citizens and our natural habitat throughout the region for today and future generations. We care about clean and safe waterways, water quality, and enhancing the ability to fish and recreate in our waterways for improved quality of life for all.

You are receiving this enewsletter because you expressed an interest in the Fountain Creek Watershed or Creek Week cleanup.

Riparian and wetland ecosystems: Essential to our wildlife and watershed

We may walk, drive or ride our bikes near wetlands month after month, barely noticing these peaceful ecosystems. They appear dormant, seemingly unchanging. But something wonderful happens in wetlands in autumn. We start noticing stands of cattails, bursting with fluffy seed heads. And now, with mating season over, striking red-winged blackbirds flit amidst the cattails in growing numbers.

To a certain degree, riparian areas (stream corridors) – and wetlands in particular – are unsung heroes in the West. According to the Strategic Plan for the Fountain Creek Watershed:

- Wetlands and stream corridors constitute only 1% of the landscape statewide. However, these areas support 80% of all wildlife!
- Most species within the Fountain Creek watershed require access to riparian areas in order to survive and reproduce.
Many species rely on Fountain Creek and its tributaries as natural corridors to move across the landscape for seasonal migrations.

Water gives life to everything.
The biodiversity of riparian zones (including wetlands) is surprisingly large. This ecosystem supports a vast array of amphibians, reptiles, fish, birds, mammals and plants. According to the Colorado Wetland Information Center, the Western Great Plains Floodplain system – which includes the Fountain Creek Watershed – provides migration routes and abundant nesting, foraging and resources for many wildlife species.

Wetlands work hard for humans too!
The Strategic Plan’s authors explain that wetlands provide a number of important benefits to both human and natural communities. Here’s how:

- Native plants stabilize stream banks, since their roots hold soil in place. This reduces erosion, which is a significant issue in a watershed that ranges from the top of Pikes Peak to Pueblo.
- Wetlands temporarily store and slowly release stormwater, which is incredibly useful in flood control. In fact, they reduce the velocity of water traveling through them and actually hold excess water like sponges!
- Because wetlands filter water through vegetation, they act as natural filters that remove sediment and pollutants from the water. This improves water quality.

How are we protecting our wetlands?
Since its founding in 2009, the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control & Greenway District has pursued projects that create and enhance stable riparian and wetland ecosystems. In fact, many of the District’s projects have involved some type of revegetation activity to:
1. Remove invasive species such as phragmites (aggressive wetland grasses), Russian olive and tamarisk.
2. Plant native plant species that support native wildlife.

How can YOU help to protect our precious wetlands?
First, if you participated in Creek Week, thank you! Your cleanup efforts directly contribute to a healthier habitat for our riparian residents. Second, remember to pick up litter – wherever you see it – since it could end up in our waterways. Third, take time to be an informed, engaged resident of our watershed. A good place to start is by reviewing the Strategic Plan for the Fountain Creek Watershed.

7th Annual Creek Week a Success
Despite numerous challenges, Creek Week 2020 was a great success and we had perfect fall weather all 9
days. Generous sponsors, dedicated Steering Committee members, and hard-working volunteers facilitated almost 90 cleanups, 3 forest health projects, a fishing derby, a Litter Letter art exhibit, and a virtual 5K.

Here are the numbers at a glance:

- 36 Steering Committee members contributed 1,047 hours ($26,000 value)
- $21,225 in cash sponsorships
- 1,422 citizens in 88 groups removed 10+ tons of litter in 9 communities from Palmer Lake to Trinidad
- 47 people participated in our first Virtual “Run Up to Creek Week” 5K
- The 3rd annual Pikes Peak Litter Letter – RESILIENT – installed at Cimarron Street through the end of October

- A Fishing Derby for 19 youth from Pueblo Boys and Girls Club at Anticline Pond
- 41 volunteers worked to remove non-native trees from Sondermann Park over 3 days. They removed 930 elms and 2,400 ash trees
- 2 Brewshed® Alliance fundraisers by Storybook and Local Relic

Our partners at Colorado Springs Utilities put together this short video on their two cleanups.

Who’s lurking in our wetlands?

Meet some of our watershed’s amphibians and reptiles
Take a close look at a wetland, and you will find that plants called sedges have edges and rushes are round. Now look more closely. Do you see anything hopping, crawling, slithering or sliding?

According to the Colorado Wetland Information Center, our region’s generally warm temperatures and robust insect population make our riparian ecosystems an important habitat for amphibians and reptiles. Plus, in the wake of Creek Week cleanups, our riparian residents might be healthier and happier!

Ready to take a close look at a wetland? Watch for these common critters and let us know what you find!
Look for these common amphibians:
- tiger salamander
- plains leopard frog
- striped chorus frog
- Woodhouse’s toad
- Great Plains toad

Can you spot these common reptiles?
- painted turtle
- snapping turtle
- plains garter snake
- red-sided garter snake
- bullsnake

District Projects Tour

A small group of Watershed District committee members and partners enjoyed a half-day tour of District projects this month. Viewing these projects in person provides an opportunity to discuss and view the state of the art techniques being used to protect and enhance Fountain Creek.

Staff from Matrix Engineering, USGS, and THK were on hand to share information about the design and effectiveness of their work, update the group on progress, and answer questions.

Projects on the tour included:
- Pueblo Levee Dredging and Maintenance
- Masciantonio Trust Bank Restoration
- Highway 47 Bridge Bank Restoration
- Pinon Bridge Bank Stabilization
- Pueblo Channel Project at 13th Street

Beyond Cleanups: Forest Health Project
Kicks off during Creek Week 2020

A partnership between the City of Colorado Springs, Watershed District, and Catamount Institute netted huge gains for the health of Sondermann Park. The City provided expertise, marked trees, trained and led volunteers in removing non-native vegetation along Mesa Creek.

41 volunteers signed up to help, and contributed 164 hours of work treating 3 acres of land, and removing over 3,300 elm and ash trees. This work helps to eliminate less desirable species that can crowd out natives and decrease biodiversity, making way for native species that will support wildlife and create a healthier ecosystem overall.
Additionally, students from the University of Colorado – Colorado Springs have embarked on a long-term study of this site to capture changes over time.

Stop by Sondermann Park sometime to see the results for yourself. We look forward to continuing this multi-year pilot project as a part of Creek Week going forward.

Conversations with Brewers on Water, the Environment and Beer

The Fountain Creek Brewshed® Alliance is a program of the Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District. The Alliance’s goal is to engage citizens in conversations and actions that will lead to water protection and enhancement.

The group consists of water resource and craft brewing industry professionals connecting our communities to the shared values of healthy watersheds and locally made beer through education and events.

We recently talked with Paul Vieira, Owner and Brewmaster, Peaks N Pines.

How and why did you get involved in the Fountain Creek Brewshed Alliance?

Beer is 90% water - it’s an essential resource and the correct chemistry drives many functions of the brewing process. It was easy for us to consider an alliance with an organization that aspires to protect this essential natural resource.

What's your brewing history or background? Why did you become a brewer, and why did you select Colorado Springs?

I have always been passionate about beer! I started homebrewing in 1978 when it became legal to do so domestically. I continued to brew on and off throughout my Air Force career, primarily as a hobby. I retired from the Air Force and settled here in Colorado Springs so it was an easy fit for my wife Teresa and I to consider opening a brewery here in Colorado where taxes and legal constraints for small businesses are minimal and natural resources are plentiful. Teresa has an abundance of business savvy and I have the technical savvy so we brought two partners on board and in 2015 opened our first brewery in Northeast Colorado Springs.

Are there any “best practices” in terms of conservation, water quality, or other “green” initiatives you have learned from other brewers or that you would like to share?

There are three brewing cycles where we conserve water resources – the mash cycle, transfer cycle and cleanup. We regularly reuse water in the Brewhouse, and when we’re cleaning, we only use the absolute minimum water volume to perform all of our cleaning effort.

We do carbon filter our water before it’s used in the brewing process, to ensure there are no residual chemicals or organisms that could impact beer quality. Our spent grains and spent hops are recycled, they are never thrown into the sanitation system; rather they are donated to two local ranchers who feed the spent grains to their animals, as well as compost it for their crops.

Finally, before we opened our doors we spent time with the Fountain sanitary director and arranged our water
waste product procedures to minimize impact on the fountain ecosystem by neutralizing all our cleaning and brewing chemicals before they are introduced to the public sanitation system. We also minimize the amount of chemicals we use to clean with by keeping with strict manufacturer dosage requirements.

What are the biggest challenges brewmasters face in regards to creating a quality product from quality ingredients?
The number one concern for me as a brewmaster is beer consistency. Often adjustments are necessary because grains, hops or other brewing materials have differing expirations or have underwent varied manufacturing conditions which can lead to stark changes in flavor profile or the introduction of off-flavors. In addition, when municipal water sources change (“well” water to “surface” water for instance) to reduce costs, water chemistry is likewise altered resulting in modified brew processes leading to inefficiencies and major beer character differences that are very noticeable to our customers.

You and your brewery have joined the Brewshed Alliance. Is it safe to assume you prioritize water conservation and water quality efforts? If so, what would you like your patrons to understand about these efforts?
Yes, we do prioritize our water to minimize waste, as well as emphasize the preservation of this extremely important natural resource; employing this practice also minimizes operational overhead costs.

What do you wish residents and visitors to the Fountain Creek Watershed knew about your challenges, successes or processes, especially in terms of the environment and water quality?
Not many industries rely on water as much as the brewing industry. Slight changes to the quality of our water means potentially severe impacts to our product and therefore our very business existence is in jeopardy. Water preservation is a team effort – businesses, community and residents alike must share in the responsibility of keeping our rivers, lakes and aquifers clean, safe and free of adverse chemical compounds.

Can you share any thoughts about Creek Week – past, present, or future?
Fountain water quality was a key factor in Peaks N Pine’s decision to open a new brewery in downtown fountain. In 2015 Fountain discovered contaminants in their well water and the city has been working hard to restore the confidence in their residents and businesses that their water is safe. The city leadership’s effort paid off - our ownership team evaluated the data, weighed the risks and decided Fountain’s water quality achieves the stature to brew great beers many years into the future. A recently released 4-minute video (link below) discusses the issue and efforts the city has employed to make their water quality the safest it can be. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=40JRd8uZrgM&feature=youtu.be

Do you know of a Colorado craft brewery or taphouse that wants to be a part of the Brewshed® Alliance? Interested in volunteering at events? Email us at: creekweeksoco@gmail.com

Stools and Ghouls Day - October 31

El Paso County, CO, October 31, 2020 – El Paso County Parks will host the annual Ghouls and Stools Day on Saturday, October 31, to cleanup Bear Creek Dog Park.

Ghouls and Stools Day offers park users and volunteers an opportunity
give back by picking up dog waste in Bear Creek Dog Park from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m. on Saturday, October 31. Pet waste that remains on trails is swept up in rainfall and snowmelt and if left untreated, it can contribute to the contamination of lakes, rivers, streams and wetlands. Bear Creek is especially vulnerable to non-point source pollution because of the increased use of the park by patrons playing with their pets. Plastic gloves, bags and buckets will be provided.

“We are excited to be a partner for this fun and important event,” said Dana Nordstrom, Community Outreach Coordinator with El Paso County Community Services. “Pet waste is rampant in our communities, and it has a real impact on water quality, in addition to being stinky and unsightly.

The simple everyday step of picking up that waste is critical for pet owners to take to keep our water safe and clean. This event does a great job of bringing attention to this issue, reminding pet owners and pet care-givers to make the responsible choice of scooping the poo every time, and the event is fun.”

The Bear Creek Dog Park was established in 1997 at the request of citizens who wanted a safe place to let their dogs off-leash. It is now the most heavily used facility in the County’s park system with over 90,000 visitors bringing their dogs to the park every year.

Bear Creek Dog Park is a 25-acre fenced area located in Bear Creek Regional Park at 21st Street and Rio Grande Street. The off-leash dog park also has a two-acre small and senior dog area and an agility training area. Other amenities include dog drinking fountains, dog wash facility, temporarily holding kennels and restrooms for humans. Our Costume Contest categories are:

- TV/Movie
- Scariest
- Most Original
- Best Matching Duo

For more information on Ghouls and Stools Day and Bear Creek Dog Park, please contact El Paso County Parks at 719-520-7529.

The event is sponsored by The Friends for Bear Creek Dog Park, InTouch Home Care, Heuberger Motors Subaru and El Paso County Parks.

Virtual Liquid Lecture: Pollinators
This month we were thrilled to work with Amy Yegar from the Butterfly Pavilion and Melody Daugherty from the Manitou Springs Pollinator Project to bring you this virtual program on pollinators.
Information about the benefits of pollinators and their ecosystem services was provided, along with practical information on how to encourage habitat for the bees, beetles, butterflies and more.

Here is a link so you can watch at your leisure.

Save the Date - Wild and Scenic Film Fest

Virtual Wild and Scenic Film Festival - December 3
The District is looking forward to co-hosting its first virtual film festival with our partners at the Trails and Open Space Coalition, with an evening of short films all about water! Prepare to be inspired and wowed at the films from the comfort of your own home while learning about local connections.

Details to come. Save the Date for Thursday December 3.

COVID-19 Message
Please continue to maintain social distancing and use common sense when engaging in outdoor recreation. Take advantage of the healing power of nature—in your own backyard or on a walk. Just remember to follow local public health guidance and keep six feet or more from others outside your family. Wash your hands with soap and water once you return from your adventure. Getting outdoors, being in nature, and moving our bodies is good for everyone!

UPCOMING MEETINGS
There will be opportunities to meet virtually with Fountain Creek Watershed Flood Control and Greenway District Committees. CLICK HERE for more information.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS - CLICK HERE

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