

# Voice of the Mill Creek

Eleventh Year

First Quarter

## New direction for Conservancy District

A unanimous vote of the Millcreek Valley Conservancy District (MVCD) Board of Directors on February 10th moved the District one step closer towards a new format - a continuation plan that proposes a streamlined district with new directors; an advisory committee comprised of representatives from District communities and former District Board members; and no staff.

The plan, developed by District stakeholders and spearheaded by Sharonville Mayor Virgil Lovitt, was first presented at the December 2005 MVCD Board meeting as an alternative to the District's proposed dissolution. The new directors will represent the City of Cincin-

nati Stormwater Management Utility of Hamilton County (CSMU), the Hamilton County Engineers Office (HCEO) and the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities (MCWCC). Administrative and technical activities will be performed by these entities.

The new MVCD leadership will focus their efforts on

*The MVCD resolution states: "the Board of Directors ... recognizes the Continuation Plan as a fourth option that would, if conditions ... are met, be in the best interests of the District's constituents and the public at large and therefore preferable to the Staff Report recommendation of dissolution of the District..."*

gathering public support for flood damage reduction in the Mill Creek valley and performance of on-going maintenance activities.

The final hurdles to District restructuring include conditions attached to the February 10th MVCD resolution. These relate to new Board member eligibility, liability insurance, funding sources for District expenses, and a final audit of District finances. Since February 10th, the MCWCC Executive Director has been working with the District Board, staff and legal counsel; the proposed new Board members; and the listed municipalities to ensure these conditions are met.

*Continued on page 3*

## Watershed plan endorsed by state agencies

On February 14th, officials with the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (OEPA) Division of Surface Water and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Division of Soil and Water Conservation signed a letter officially endorsing the Upper Mill Creek Watershed Management Plan. A formal kick-off ceremony for Upper Mill Creek communities is planned for this spring.

Endorsement increases the likelihood that state grants will be awarded for projects that address plan-identified watershed impairments.

The Upper Mill Creek sub-watershed covers roughly 40 square miles and encompasses portions of 11 local municipalities and townships in southeastern Butler County and northern Hamilton County. The watershed plan addresses water quality and habitat impairments identified along the main stem of the Mill Creek, the East Fork Mill Creek and their tributaries.

Plan implementation has already begun on several fronts. Work started in late 2005 on the Mill Creek Headwaters TMDL Implementation Project

funded through a state grant under Section 319 of the Clean Water Act. This project will address water quality and habitat impairments on the main stem and East Fork Mill Creek in West Chester Township.

Nonpoint source pollution related to illicit discharges and construction activities which affect water quality are being addressed by the Hamilton and Butler County Storm Water Districts, Fairfield, Forest Park, Hamilton, Springdale and West Chester Township through implementation of their Phase II Storm Water Permits.



### Serving:

Amberley Village  
Arlington Heights  
Blue Ash  
Butler County  
Cincinnati  
Elmwood Place  
Evendale  
Fairfield  
Forest Park  
Glendale  
Greenhills  
Hamilton County  
Liberty Township  
Lincoln Heights  
Lockland  
Montgomery  
Mount Healthy  
Millcreek Valley  
Conservancy District  
North College Hill  
Norwood  
Reading  
St. Bernard  
Sharonville  
Springdale  
Springfield Township  
Sycamore Township  
West Chester Township  
Woodlawn  
Wyoming

### Inside this issue:

CANOE TOUR OF UPPER MILL CREEK	2
NEW COUNCIL COMMITTEES	2
FISH & HABITAT STUDY	3
NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR	3
COUNCIL MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT	4

## Mill Creek yacht club rides again

On a snowy day in the dead of winter, the Mill Creek Yacht Club explored project sites for a federal grant.

Six guys with more enthusiasm than common sense got their hands cold and feet wet in the upper Mill Creek on Saturday, February 5<sup>th</sup>. With University of Cincinnati Professor Michael C. Miller leading the way, they paddled past places where streambanks need stabilization, the riparian corridor could use more vegetation, or low-lying properties can be converted into floodplain wetlands.

The canoe trip took place in Butler County's rapidly developing West Chester Township. Along a deeply channelized, two-mile stretch of stream between State Road 747 and Windisch Road, the canoeists identified a

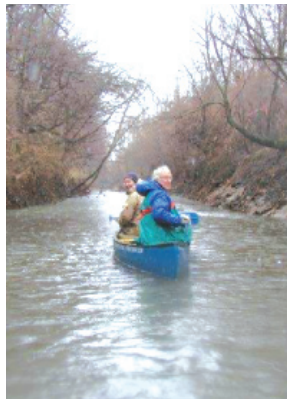
variety of opportunities for the \$970,000 Mill Creek Headwaters Project. As project sponsor, the Ohio-Kentucky-Indiana Regional Council of Governments (OKI), is collaborating with the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities and eight other project partners to reduce sediment and nutrient pollution to the upper Mill Creek. Flood mitigation and ecological restoration can also be achieved.

Dr. Miller and his companions also spotted wildlife or signs of it. They encountered an owl, great blue heron, white-shouldered hawk, red-tailed hawk, mallard ducks and several other bird species. They saw a beaver lodge and trees felled by beavers, a streamside trail made by mink, and several muskrat slides. A late-morning snowfall sent

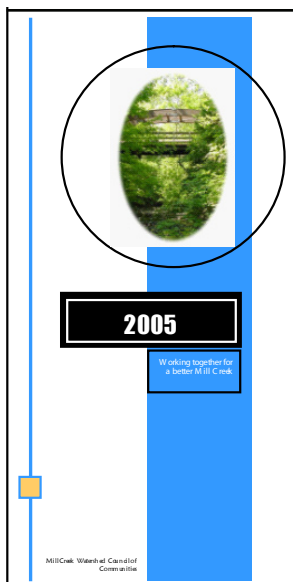
down flakes that sometimes looked like cotton balls.

The Mill Creek Yacht Club consists of anyone who paddles on the long-abused, but resurgent urban stream. The loose-knit group's maiden voyage was in April 1994 as an antidote to all the board room meetings that devote hours to Mill Creek discussion but nary a minute to Mill Creek experience. To date, the Yacht Club has taken 55 trips and has paddled 26 of the Mill Creek's 28 miles. Twelve trips have been cleanups and another one is planned on April 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Mark Dicken, a water quality intern at OKI, became the Yacht Club's 300<sup>th</sup> member on February 5<sup>th</sup>. For more information about the Yacht Club or Headwaters Project, contact Bruce Koehler of OKI at 513.621.6300, ext.112.



OKI intern Mark Dicken at the bow and Commodore Koehler at the stern on a winter canoe trip on Upper Mill Creek.  
Mike Miller photo



Download the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities 2005 Summary at our website: [www.millcreekwatershed.org](http://www.millcreekwatershed.org)

## New Watershed Council committees being formed

An ambitious work plan adopted at the Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities annual meeting in January contains several new projects for 2006. Each project will be completed by year's end.

Site Mitigation Database  
In anticipation of the upcoming I-75 expansion

projects and the expected wetland and stream impacts, the Council will develop a mitigation site database.

Website Update  
The Council's website, created in 1999, is in need of an overhaul. Among the proposed changes are a new format, updated content, and interactive features.

Carp Run Fundraiser  
The 2nd Annual 5K run and walk event will be this year's only Council fundraiser. The event will take place this fall - the date has yet to be determined.

Ad hoc committees will be formed for each project. Volunteers should call our office at 513.563.8800.

## Notes from the Director

In our eleventh year of existence, the Council is taking a big step. With the Board's blessing, we are adding a professional Program Director who will be responsible for a number of our pro-

grams and projects - particularly those dealing with flooding, stormwater management and water quality. He or she will also work on expanding our communications network. This move

will permit me to become more involved in meeting the needs of our 36 watershed jurisdictions.

Now all we have to do is find the perfect candidate.

## Does habitat improvement enhance fish biodiversity?

On May 27, 2005, a consortium of Mill Creek water quality stakeholders gathered to monitor the composition of fish in the Army Corps of Engineers restoration of a portion of the Mill Creek channel. The soft channel biorestation included placement of three sets of V-weirs (cross vanes) in the mainstem channel in the upper half of the section between Clifton Ave and Ludlow Ave along Salway Park.

The plunge pools and habitat, completed in 2004, were sampled using boat electrofishing by representatives from the University of Cincinnati (Michael C. Miller, Richard Fuller, Melissa Meyers and Bernard Moller), Mill

Creek Watershed Council of Communities (Bruce Koehler and Michael Miller, Gerald Robertson), Cincinnati Nature Center (Michael Millcox) and Mill Creek Restoration Project (Dave Gosse).

The fish community was neither diverse (eight species) nor abundant (catch per unit effort of 2.5 fish per minute or 148 fish per hour). The vegetation was not large enough to shade the restored reach; but the habitat was deeper with plunge pools and attracted much larger fish than would have been found there previously. However, those large fish were all carp moving upriver to spawn. (By comparison, habitat enhancement in the East Fork of the Mill Creek

below the Butler County Regional WWTP was more diverse (10-14 species) in a much smaller reach dominated by effluent.) The water quality, likely compromised by combined sewer overflows (CSO's) and NPDES permitted discharges, still limits fish biodiversity in this reach.

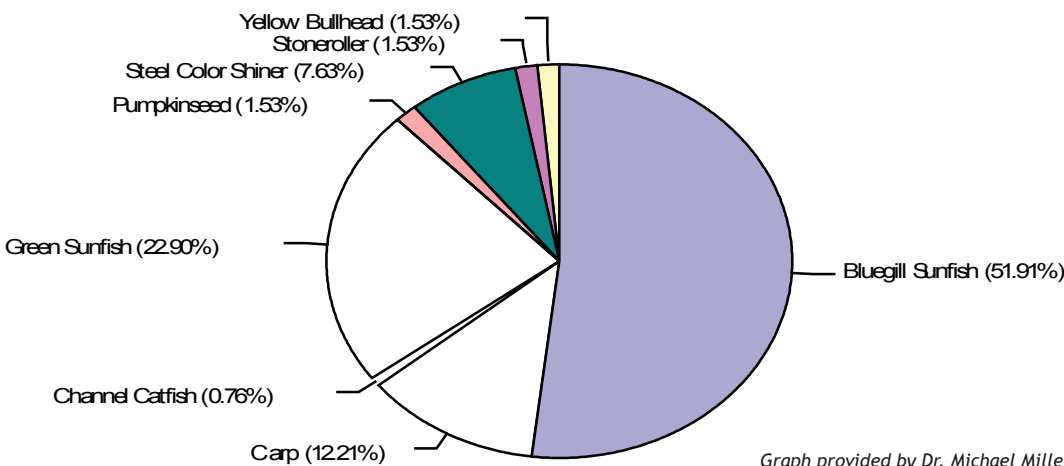
As MSD works towards an 85% reduction of sanitary sewer overflow (SSO) and CSO discharges into area waters in compliance with the US Department of Justice consent decree, we might expect improvements in fish community commensurate with the habitat quality.

Article submitted by Dr. Michael Miller, Biology Dept., University of Cincinnati



Bluegill Sunfish  
Courtesy of New York  
Dept of Environmental  
Conservation

### Fish community composition Mill Creek 26 May 2005



Graph provided by Dr. Michael Miller,  
University of Cincinnati

*“The fish community was neither diverse nor abundant ... but the habitat was deeper with plunge pools and attracted much larger fish than would have been there previously ...”*

MVCD, continued from page 1

On March 1st, the names of Mr. Robert Campbell (CSMU), Mr. Theodore Hubbard (HCEO) and Ms. Nancy Ellwood (MCWCC) were presented to the District as the candidates for Board positions. Final appointment

will be made by the Conservancy Court after the current Board members step down. The deadline for the remaining conditions is March 31st.

If everything goes as expected, the newly restructured

District would begin operation on April 1st. Shortly thereafter the new Board will meet to discuss MVCD operational details.

For additional information call Ms. Nancy Ellwood at 513.563.8800.



**Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities**

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To:

***Our annual membership drive starts in March***  
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*Membership applications are available online at*  
*[www.millcreekwatershed.org](http://www.millcreekwatershed.org)*

*or*

*by calling our office at 513.563.8800*

**Mill Creek Watershed Council of Communities**  
**Spring 2006 Council Meeting**

Tuesday, April 11, 2006

2:00 - 4:00 pm

Sharonville Council Chambers

10900 Reading Road

Sharonville Ohio

All Council meetings are open to the public.  
For more information, call the Council office at 513.563.8800.