

Reservoir Reflections

Watershed Management News

Spring 2019

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC UTILITIES

Judge Renders Decision on Land Rights Dispute

Franklin County Court of Common Pleas Judge Holbrook filed a long-awaited decision on the City of Columbus et al v. State of Ohio case this past winter, which dated back to summer of 2015. Section 743.50 of a state budget bill would have removed the rights of cities who own land along water reservoirs for the purpose of natural filtration through vegetated buffers. After reviewing briefs, arguments (including an oral arguments hearing in September 2018), evidence and law, the judge ruled that the state violated three separate clauses of Ohio's constitution with the amendment. This was a win for Columbus and all cities that have a need to protect the quality of drinking water for millions of consumers across the state. The State of Ohio had the right to appeal the decision within a certain time period but opted to not appeal. To view the official court decision, please visit <https://www.columbus.gov/watershed> and then click on Reservoir Neighbor Communications, where past newsletters and other communications are also available.

Throughout the legal process, Columbus continued to pursue resolution of encroachments on city-owned land since the law never went into effect. As a reminder, if you are interested in making any modifications to the city-owned land adjacent to your property, please work with the Division of Water's Watershed Management staff through the Land Stewardship Program. They can be reached by calling 614-645-1721 or by email at watershed@columbus.gov.

Land Stewardship Program Updates Moving Ahead

Public meetings were held last November in both the Scioto (O'Shaughnessy and Griggs reservoirs) and Big Walnut (Hoover Reservoir) watersheds. Adjacent landowners and others in attendance received updates on the city's progress to review and revise elements of the Land Stewardship Program. We thank the many residents who came out to learn about the review process, several of whom stayed after to talk with city staff and consultants involved in the project. If you missed the meetings, a presentation can be viewed from our website at <https://www.columbus.gov/watershed>.

Among the program updates are changes affecting the design of access paths and filtered view maintenance, as well as modified boat dock eligibility rules which will expand the number of dock-eligible properties. The city has evaluated best practices for reservoir shoreline management in an effort to sustain a healthy water supply and protect habitat, while supporting recreational access. Later this summer, information will be available on the city's watershed management website that will outline the new land stewardship design standards. The city will provide a comment period at that time to accept feedback from adjacent residents and other stakeholders. Two public open houses will be held in the fall to provide more information and answer questions regarding the updated Land Stewardship Program.

O'Shaughnessy Dam Maintenance Project

The construction project at the O'Shaughnessy Dam, which began last year, is progressing despite the wetter-than-normal conditions. Along with minor erosion repairs and other routine dam maintenance, the city will be installing a new boat safety barrier and replacing the flashboards that provide additional water storage. The work also presents the opportunity to address an area of the dam's spillway prone to unauthorized swimming.

Though recent rains have kept the reservoir nearly full, the water elevation in O'Shaughnessy will be lower than normal during the 2019 boating season to complete this work. Boaters are advised to use additional caution as shallow water conditions may present hazards, especially in the northern portions of the reservoir. Park areas and fishing access around the dam will remain closed to facilitate a safe worksite and expedite progress. Work is anticipated to be finished by spring of 2020. Construction activity will not affect vehicle traffic across Glick Road during the 2019 Memorial Tournament.

Site Clearing of Home Road Property Begins

In 2015, the City of Columbus purchased a large parcel of land on the west side of the Scioto River, immediately south of the Home Road Bridge. The site, which most recently had served as a youth detention facility owned by the State of Ohio, will one day serve as the location for Columbus' fourth water plant. Though several of the existing buildings might have appeared to be in good condition, the city thoroughly evaluated each building and determined that it was neither cost-effective nor practical to convert existing structures to the future use. The city has hired 2K General Construction to demolish structures and restore the grounds until the water plant is designed and built. The city and 2K are committed to recycle at least 50% of the construction materials removed from the site. Following the current project schedule, the site should be cleared and disturbed ground reseeded in native vegetation by the end of 2019.

New Entrance to Hoover Dam Recreation Area

Many popular park amenities are located in the reservoir parkland just east of Hoover Dam including the free Brent Hambrick Memorial Disc Golf Course, several reservable shelterhouses, and a walking trail. To provide better vehicular access to these areas the city has opened a new park entrance. Visitors to the upper east dam area should now use the Cabbage Road entrance. The existing Central College entrance will serve the lower dam parking lots, and the pedestrian-only hill will separate the two areas and prevent cut-through traffic.

Scouts Volunteer at O'Shaughnessy Litter Cleanup; Hoover Set for 9/28

In celebration of Earth Day, Scout Troop 284 from Bellpoint volunteered their efforts to pick up litter along the O'Shaughnessy Reservoir shoreline. The city is very appreciative of the dedicated leaders and energetic scouts from this troop who have participated in the spring river cleanup for many years.

Watershed Management will host a fall cleanup at Hoover Reservoir on **Saturday, September 28th** from 9:00 AM to noon. If interested in volunteering, please contact the Watershed Management Office at watershed@columbus.gov for more information.

Lost and Found

Watershed Rangers recently found an adrift paddleboard floating on Hoover Reservoir. If you might be the owner, please contact the rangers at 614-645-1721.



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