

July 17, 2015

Dear Neighbor:

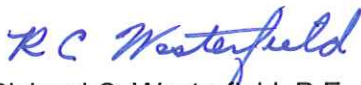
An amendment to the recently passed state budget (Sec. 743.50) contains a provision affecting city of Columbus-owned property around a drinking water reservoir. This provision is currently set to take effect in 90 days, or around the end of September. We have asked our City Attorney's Office to review all legal options to stop the implementation of the provision.

The city owns the land around our three in-stream reservoirs, which is primarily used as riparian corridors to filter pollutants to protect water quality for our 1.1 million central Ohio water customers. Vegetated buffers along waterways are commonly used by water agencies as a best management practice to not only filter pollutants and excess nutrients carried in stormwater, but to also prevent land erosion through deeper rooted trees and plants. Erosion not only causes a loss of valuable land, but is in itself another pollutant through the sedimentation it causes. Recent impacts to Columbus' drinking water, such as excessive nitrates and algae blooms that cause taste and odor issues, only reinforce the city's need to protect its reservoirs.

While some cities and states opt to simply fence off their water reservoirs and not allow recreational access for the public, Columbus struck a balance to offer some access to our reservoirs with water quality protection remaining the primary goal. Boat docks and stake permits with valid land stewardship agreements have been allowed for many years through the City's Recreation and Parks Department, along with access paths. Additionally, an expanded land stewardship program began this year to allow access paths without a boat dock or stake permit along with view corridors where possible. An invasive species program began last year.

While the legal review is underway, please remember that the provision is currently not in effect. Before making any modifications to city property, you should continue to work through the City's land stewardship program by calling the Watershed Management Office at (614) 645-1721 or emailing watershed@columbus.gov. In the case of wetlands and other sensitive natural areas, please also be aware that there is regulatory oversight by the Ohio EPA and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. We welcome the opportunity to work with you. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Richard C. Westerfield, P.E., Ph.D.
Administrator
Columbus Division of Water

