

Confluence

People getting together to enhance Salt Creek



Volume 9, Issue 1

Winter 2006

Mystery Oil Pollution Still Troubling Addison Creek and Salt Creek- Update

By Mark Peterson

In the Summer 2005 edition of Confluence, I reported that towards the end of June I had noticed oil slicks floating on Salt Creek in the La Grange Park, North Riverside area. I had investigated and found the oil to be coming from Addison Creek at the point where Addison Creek and Salt Creek merge, just a little west of the 17th Ave bridge. Further investigation revealed the oil to be entering Addison Creek from in and around a concrete storm sewer drainpipe located in an Industrial area in Broadview north of Cermak Road. I called the local Illinois EPA office and a representative came out and investigated the site but was unable to determine the source of the oil. He suggested that I call the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District of Greater Chicago (MWRD) since they have maps of the sewer lines available and would be able to investigate the matter further.

One of the staff members from the MWRD's Industrial Waste division came out and did an initial investigation, but was unable to confirm the source of the oil. His conclusion was that the oil pollution was possibly due to a one-time spill somewhere in the area that had found its way into the storm sewer system emptying into the creek. He thought it would probably clear up after a

couple of good rains. However, the problem didn't seem to clear up and oil again was seen floating down the creek and the MWRD was called.

The MWRD staff came out a number of times and walked up and down the creek in "waders" but they were still unable to identify the exact source of the oil. The conclusion was that the oil was perhaps due to a one-time parking lot spill that had gotten into the storm sewer line. They speculated that some of the oil had perhaps been caught behind a log and debris jam, and as the jam started to break up it was letting more oil flow down the creek and that it would eventually stop.

Unfortunately the problem didn't stop but continued throughout the summer and fall. Sometimes there would be little or no oil on the water, at other times there would be a fair amount. The MWRD staff continued to investigate, but the source of the oil could not be identified.

Then in November, while answering another complaint in the area, a MWRD staff member noticed a large amount of oil on Salt Creek near the 17th Ave. bridge.

Inside this issue:

Mystery Oil Pollution Still Troubling Addison Creek and Salt Creek- Update	1
Confluence goes Electronic	2
Creekside Caretaker Program Great Success	3
Salt Creek Pride	3
2005 Accomplishments	4
Music to our Ears: "Shadows in Salt Creek"	4
TMDL Workgroup Incorporated	5
Village of LaGrange Park Sewer Project Reaches Completion	5

Mystery Oil (continued)

He tracked the oil back up Addison Creek to the concrete drainpipe. Further investigation on his part revealed facts, which pointed to a nearby factory as the source of the problem. Oil was also found in their parking lot and inside the parking lot storm drain.

Although no intentional dumping of oil could be confirmed, the company was said to have "poor housekeeping" practices around their parking lot. This evidently allowed spilled or leaked oil to enter their storm sewers. Also, oil was found in and around a dumpster, which was located very close to one of their parking lot storm drains.

The company was asked to call in a remediation firm to have their parking lot drain cleaned out so that no further oil would leak into Addison Creek. The MWRD told me the company and Addison Creek would be monitored on a regular basis to make sure there would be no further problems, and I believed the problem to finally be solved.

However, on December 28th I decided to check again. Unfortunately, I was very disappointed to find a large slick of oil again floating on the surface of the water and covering a good portion of the creek. Even though the water was fast moving and churning up a bit due to the recent snowmelt, the oil could easily be seen. A strong fuel oil type of smell was present in the area of the drainpipe.

I called the local Illinois EPA office and also the MWRD and advised them of the situation. The MWRD again investigated the area but was not been able to identify the source of the new pollution. The company previously identified as causing the problem was checked, but no oil was found to be coming from their property. By January 4th and 5th the oil pollution had subsided and very little could be seen.

It was speculated that there might have been some residual oil left in the storm sewer pipes that had then been washed into the creek by the recent snowmelt and rain. Also, the possibility exists that there may be more than one source for the oil that has been showing up on the creek over the past six months. The MWRD indicated that they would check state records to see if there are any old underground storage tanks in the area." They will also continue to monitor the creek for any recurrence of the oil.



CONFLUENCE GOES ELECTRONIC

In an effort to decrease the cost of the newsletter printing and mailing, we are hoping to email the *Confluence* instead. If you would like to receive the newsletter by email instead of snail mail, we need your e-mail address.

Please contact Amy at ambodwel@brookfieldzoo.org and we'll make the changes. Of

course, if you prefer to keep getting *Confluence* via the mail - that's fine too, you don't need to respond.

Don't forget that the current newsletter, as well as past issues, are available on our website www.saltcreekwatershed.org.



CREEKSIDE CARETAKER PROGRAM GREAT SUCCESS

By Tom Richardson

The Creekside Caretakers pilot project was completed this fall. This project was developed to provide a design for encouraging riparian landowners to install native plants adjacent to the creek. These plants would help stabilize the top of the shore, help filter pollutants, provide habitat, and improve the beauty of the landscape. The project was funded by a grant from the DuPage Community Foundation.

A letter describing the project and requesting participation was sent to around fifty riparian landowners in Oak Brook and Elmhurst. Four landowners followed through

with selecting plants, having them installed, and caring for them through last summer's drought. Follow up with two of the Caretakers found the native plants in excellent shape and very pleased landowners.

Kudos to Amy Bodwell on much of the design of the project and on the content of the informative letters. Many thanks to Jeff Swano and his Dig Right In Landscaping company for selecting appropriate plants, meeting on site with the landowners, and installing the plants at a discount.



Before: Many residents often maintain turfgrass right up to the shoreline of the creek. (Photo Jeff Swano)



After: A participant in the Creekside Caretaker Program replaces turfgrass with native plantings to provide a buffer and reduce erosion. (Photos: Tom Richardson)

SALT CREEK PRIDE

We want everyone to show their support for the Salt Creek. Now you can let people know you care about the creek, water quality, and the wildlife the creek supports without having to say a word.

We are now offering a **free gift** with a donation of \$25 or higher (see back page to donate).

We have ordered 600-denier Polyester document bags, Royal Blue, with **Salt Creek Watershed Network** boldly printed on the front. They are a generous 11"x16"x3" with a zippered pouch inside. You'll find many uses for these bags at work, school, or home. They will be available by the end of January and a photo will be on our website at that time. We can't take donations on the website, so please keep using our mail address.

I've got mine! Better hurry—only 599 left!



2005 ACCOMPLISHMENTS by Christine Oszak



2005
was a
great
year

for the Salt Creek Watershed Network.

Our new website was launched in January. We've had hundreds of people learning more about the Salt Creek from the website and the SCWN board members have fielded a number of student questions as a result. We've received emails from people in other parts of the country that used to live in the area, found our website and were happy to hear about the Salt Creek again.

In spring and summer we held three 'Meet the Creek' events, in Elk Grove Village, in Busse Woods F.P., and in

Brookfield. We had interesting and educational displays and activities for all ages. They ranged from Springbrook Nature Center's raptor exhibit to NANFA's (North American Native Fish Association) fish tanks with minnows and other small aquatics caught right from the Salt Creek, and returned there after the event!

U.S. Fish and Wildlife participated in all the events with their watershed model and also identified some macro invertebrates from the creek. Of course we had the SCWN display about non point source pollution so we could all learn a little more about our own impact on the creek.

We also participated in the DuPage County Forest Preserve District's Earth Day event at Fullersburg Woods and in The Conservation Foundation's DuPage Rivers event at Springbrook Nature Preserve.

The Salt Creek Watershed Network is an active member of the TMDL workgroup, now incorporated as the DuPage River / Salt Creek Workgroup (DRSCW), working to find watershed solutions to improving water quality in the Salt Creek.

We held 6 Salt Creek cleanups last year. These cleanups are a nice way for anyone to spend a little time helping the creek and wildlife while meeting others interested in our waterways.

The Creekside Caretakers established native plant buffers in several yards.

And the Salt Creek Watershed Network board members have attended many seminars and conferences to keep informed of water quality issues and the progress other groups have made in their watersheds.

For an all volunteer organization we have done a lot. There's more to do!

MUSIC TO OUR EARS: "SHADOWS IN SALT CREEK"

By Ron Hursh

The Salt Creek Watershed Network (SCWN) organization was initiated in 1998 by environmentally conscience individuals with a multipurpose mission to enhance quality and increase awareness of the Salt Creek. We have reported many such accomplishments in previous editions of this newsletter.

These stories included such programs as educational fairs, land use, bank maintenance, awareness, cleanup projects, canoeing, flood control and water quality work group projects. Recognition and feed back of the SCWN effort has been very good.

Through personal responses and contact through the SCWN web site, we have learned how treasured our open

forest, trails, and creek areas are to the neighborhood residents.

Something more has happened which demonstrates the RECOGNITION and appreciation of our local natural resources.

We now have music written about Salt Creek. The composition named *River Rhythms* was composed by Kevin Olsen a music teacher at Elmhurst College. He was commissioned to write the music by the Salt Creek Music Teachers Association of piano teachers.

The first number in the suite named "Shadows in Salt Creek" was written for our own Salt Creek. Other rivers



in the remaining suites reflect on the Colorado, San Antonio, Hudson, and Mississippi rivers.

Kevin Olsen's music was featured at the annual SCMTA teacher's student festival October 23, 2005 at St Johns Lutheran Church in LaGrange. One hundred ten students played piano performing only Olsen's original music. Included in this recital local students performed the world premiere of *River Rhythms*. Mr. Olsen's music is widely used by piano teachers.

TMDL WORKGROUP HAS INCORPORATED

By Chris Oszak

The DuPage River / Salt Creek Workgroup (DRSCW) has incorporated and is seeking membership from municipalities in the two watersheds. This workgroup is a collaborative effort of sanitary districts, municipalities, counties, forest preserve districts, and non-profit environmental organizations, such as SCWN, to address the water quality impairments identified in the TMDL reports prepared by the IEPA. The goal of the workgroup is to improve water quality in the streams in a cost effective manner.

The workgroup has received a grant of \$597,000 from IEPA to assist local communities that are involved in water

quality protection to select best management practices to improve water quality. This grant depends on a 40% match from the watershed communities, sanitary districts and others bringing the total funds available for the workplan to \$995,000. Projects currently underway include long term monitoring of the streams for dissolved oxygen, and a plan and implementation strategy for improving the dissolved oxygen content of the streams.

Municipal leaders will be receiving a letter requesting their membership participation in this important workgroup.

Please get involved and call your village managers, trustees, or other local officials and encourage them to join the DuPage River / Salt Creek Workgroup.



VILLAGE OF LAGRANGE PARK SEWER PROJECT NEARS COMPLETION

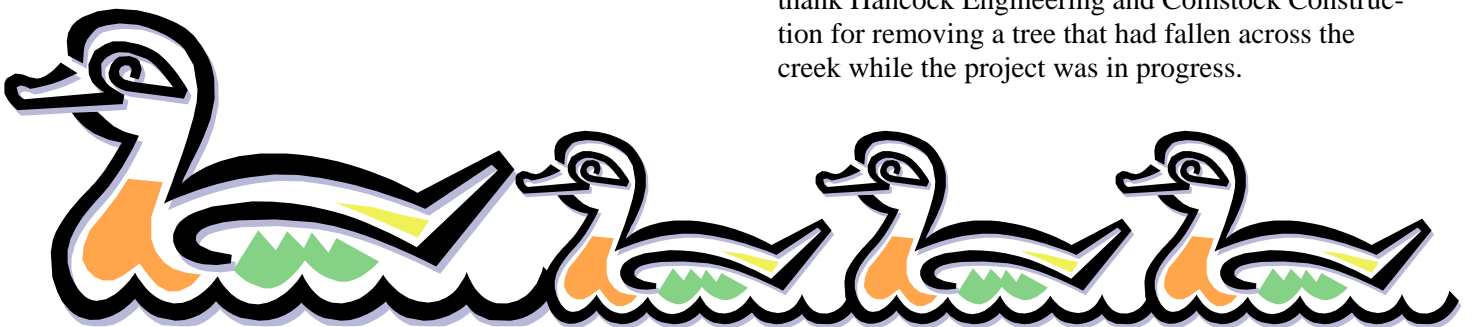
By Ron Hursh

A LaGrange Park village sewer project replacing the existing Woodlawn Avenue 24 inch combined sewer connection to the Metropolitan Water Reclamation District (MWRD), Deep Tunnel, and Salt Creek interceptor is near completion.

The first phase was done before the new Nazareth baseball field was graded in 2003. This new 54-inch diameter concrete sewer pipe replaced a 100-year-old brick combination sewer connecting the Woodlawn Avenue sewer to the interceptor combining some sewer lines from Western Springs and LaGrange at Salt Creek.

Operationally, the new configuration at the interceptor directs flow at normal daily levels to the MWRD facility at Summit. Under heavy flow conditions, stormwater is directed at a predetermined controlled level to enter the 10-foot diameter deep tunnel until that passage is at capacity. Then, under severe storm conditions, storm and sewer water flows into Salt Creek through a pipe-and-headwall outfall structure. Under ordinary conditions a check valve holds creek water out of the village systems and the deep tunnel.

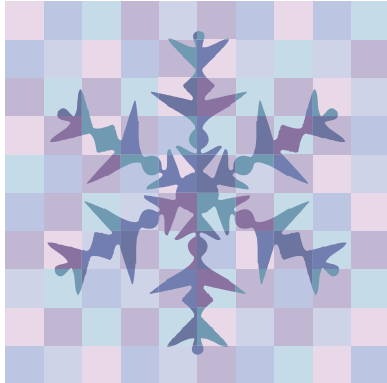
Our thanks to Paul Flood of Hancock Engineering commissioned by the Village of LaGrange Park for providing me with the project details. We can also thank Hancock Engineering and Comstock Construction for removing a tree that had fallen across the creek while the project was in progress.



Confluence

526 N. Edgewood Ave.,
LaGrange Park, IL 60526

www.saltcreekwatershed.org



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saltcreekwatershed.org

HELP US OUT! PLEASE DONATE

Indicate your donation amount and make check payable to: Salt Creek Watershed Network and send to:

SCWN

526 N. Edgewood Ave.,
LaGrange Park, IL 60526

- ☐ \$15 individual support
- ☐ \$30 family support (free bag)
- ☐ \$50 gift donation (free bag)
- ☐ \$ _____ other donation (free bag over \$25)

Thank you for your support!

SCWN Board of Directors:

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Nick Nikola	Elk Grove Village
Keith Olson	Elmhurst
Christine Oszak	Villa Park

River Stewards:

Tom Richardson	Oak Brook
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