

Reservoir Reflections

Watershed Management News

Winter 2020

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS

ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
PUBLIC UTILITIES

Land Stewardship Program Update

Continued work on the updates to the Land Stewardship Program these past several months included external stakeholder and adjacent landowner input on the draft design standards, which were put out for public comment last summer. A summary of changes and the final Land Stewardship Design Standards are now available at: <https://www.columbus.gov/watershed>. Other elements of the program updates are in the process of being developed and will eventually include online access to view approved Land Stewardship Plans. Once implemented, the new stewardship program will replace the former program in place since the 1990s for Columbus' three in-stream reservoirs, Hoover (on Big Walnut Creek), and Griggs and O'Shaughnessy (on the Scioto River). The city's reservoirs, and vegetated land buffers that help filter pollutants carried in overland stormwater, exist primarily for providing high quality drinking water to 1.2 million customers in central Ohio. The updated stewardship program will continue to protect water quality while also permitting eligible contiguous landowners to perform stewardship activities on city property.

We thank all of the stakeholders who participated in the process. For more information, please visit <https://www.columbus.gov/watershed>, call 614-645-1721 or email LandStewardship@columbus.gov.

The Ups and Downs of Reservoir Elevation

The elevation, or water level, in the reservoirs constantly varies. Flow from tributary streams and precipitation (rainfall or snow melt) adds to the water level, while evaporation and water released to meet water demand at downstream water treatment plants reduces the stored volume. Columbus' reservoirs are managed to optimize safe and adequate storage of water, with fall usually being the period of lowest elevation, following summer when water consumption is highest. When possible, Columbus' drinking water supply reservoirs are kept full and managed to retain water flow in times of drought. By contrast, flood-control reservoirs managed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers such as Alum Creek and Delaware Reservoir (not Columbus-owned) release water to lessen flows and reduce the potential for downstream flooding.

This past year, as you may have noticed, all three in-stream reservoirs experienced periods of low water elevation due to scant rainfall from August to November. Water levels at O'Shaughnessy Reservoir were uncharacteristically low this year due to a lack of precipitation combined with the planned lowering of the reservoir to accommodate necessary maintenance of the dam. Water levels can rebound quickly and recent precipitation is helping to fill the reservoirs.

Community Support of Shoreline Cleanups Appreciated

The lower water levels at the reservoirs last year provided increased opportunity to collect litter from the expanded shorelines. Nowhere was this more evident than O'Shaughnessy, where long-lost lures and a bounty of bottles were exposed with every receding foot. Many reservoir visitors collected litter while walking the shore,



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and the Columbus Watershed Management staff helped to collect and properly dispose of several truckloads, including many assorted tires.

The Columbus Division of Water is very appreciative of the efforts shown by caring citizens, neighbors, scouts and other volunteers who regularly help to keep the reservoir shorelines clean and enjoyable. Whether participating in a planned cleanup event, or carrying a litter bag while out on a daily walk, volunteers have a big impact on litter. This past fall, a local citizen suggested a community cleanup at O'Shaughnessy to take advantage of the unusually low water levels. With support from Keep Delaware County Beautiful, the citizen, Columbus and the Del-Co Water Company were recently recognized by the Delaware General Health District with a 2019 Partnership Award for Scioto River cleanup efforts.

For details of upcoming reservoir cleanup events, or to inquire about holding a group cleanup, please contact the Watershed Management office at watershed@columbus.gov or call 614-645-1721.

O'Shaughnessy Dam Construction Update

The large-scale maintenance project on the O'Shaughnessy Reservoir's dam is nearly complete as contractors place and secure the orange safety cable across the reservoir, and observe the performance of the flashboards replaced along the crest of the dam. The new orange cable deflects floating debris and serves as a safety barrier. Water elevations are expected to return to normal this year, depending on precipitation. Following this project, repairs are scheduled for interior components of the hydroelectric plant inside the dam. The hydroelectric plant project, led by the Columbus Division of Power, should not affect reservoir elevations, but will periodically impact public access to the western park areas accessed from Glick Road immediately north and south of the dam.

Major Renovations Planned for Griggs Boat Launches

Planning and design is underway to update two public boat launches located at Griggs Reservoir. The existing Trabue-Murphy and Nottingham boat ramps are being redesigned with improved ramps, courtesy docks, and other site improvements. The planned updates will replace the old ramps and add features designed to improve accessibility for both power boats and paddle craft. This cooperative project between the city's Department of Public Utilities and the Recreation and Parks Department also involves working with the Ohio Department of Natural Resources in anticipation of using grant funds to offset construction costs. More information, including project timelines, will be available soon.

Hoover Improvements Planned

Improvements are planned to begin this fall at the Hoover Reservoir dam involving mechanical and electrical upgrades within the dam. The work will also include some improvements to the eastern covered overlook. Access to the area around the dam, as well as parking and pedestrian access, will likely be restricted during portions of the project for safety reasons. More specifics will be available at a later date.

For questions, please contact Watershed Management at watershed@columbus.gov or call 614-645-1721.