

Earhtones

Autumn 2018

Sunlight: Not Just for Plants

Eat right and be active. These are the basics to staying healthy. We see it on commercials. We are taught it in schools. But....

If we stop and think, we already know we need more than basic nutrition and exercise. We just don't usually put those different thoughts together. For example, we know we need fluoride for strong teeth but toothpaste is not considered a food.

Study after study has supported the concept that time outdoors improves our lives in many diverse ways. Increasing attention, lowering stress, and aiding in friendship building are just a few ways nature keeps us healthy. Another essential requirement is a little more distant but not less important: the sun.

Our sun is the driving force behind life on Earth. It kick starts weather systems and the food chain. It also provides us with vital elements for our personal health.

Visual sunlight does more than help us see. It also helps regulate our daily cycles. If we travel close to the poles, our bodies can become confused about when to sleep and when to wake during the long winter night and even the long summer day, disrupting healthy sleep patterns.

We are told to not use electronic devices, including TV and computers, right before bedtime as their artificial light confuses our bodies' preparation for sleep. Obviously, the amount of visual light, not too much or too little, is required for health.

Some of us are also fully aware of sunlight's effect on our mood and ability to function well. SAD, or Seasonal Affective Disorder, affects millions of Americans every winter. A real medical condition, not merely the "winter blues," sufferers can face lack of energy and depressed mood. This condition may be caused by low serotonin, which increases with exposure to sunlight, and more melatonin, a brain chemical connected to sleep and influenced by changes in daylight.

Vitamin D deficiency, with the high level of indoor lifestyles, has increased in recent years. A few specific foods contain this vitamin, but the best source for our intake is sunlight. Vitamin D builds stronger bones, strengthens the immune system, and boosts mood.

Unfortunately, Vitamin D intake has a couple complications. First, UV-B light is needed for its formation. You can not get Vitamin D through visible light or even UV-A. UV-B is the light to blame for skin cancer. So, like many other medicines and nutrients, you need a certain amount but more than that can cause serious harm.

The other issue, which may also play a role in SAD, is we hardly receive any UV-B light in winter. In other words, our bodies cannot make vitamin D when the days are short.

As our days become shorter, we need to keep aware of not just our bodies' needs for diet and exercise, but remember that complete health includes time in the sun.

By Pamela Holz, Naturalist

Projects Update

Since I started working here in 1984, the Washington County Conservation Board has always made a strong effort to balance the needs and wants of our public against the costs of our services. One of the primary ways that we accomplish this is doing projects only when the self-generated revenues permit. IE: Property tax dollars pay for the cost of operations, but rarely, if ever, do they pay for developments. We also have never started a project without knowing where the funds to complete it are coming from.

Therefore, after several years of planning and saving, we are excited about the two major projects that are ongoing in 2018! Both of these projects are progressing as this is being written, but here is a brief synopsis and current status of each of them:

1. *Kewash Nature Trail Expansion Project:* We started planning and applying for funds to do this project in 2016. The community support and funding has been incredible! We are hugely excited to say our local company Delong Construction will actually start building this as soon as the weather permits. More details are provided on the back page.

2. *Foster Woods Upgrade:* Also in 2016, the WCCB started garnering public input as to how to make this park work better for our public and for our own environmental education program. We have been busy up there and are very pleased with the results. These include rebuilding the pond and taking numerous measures to keep it from winter-killing again, cleaning up and opening up the nine acres of timber to the west, and even adding a really nice new shelter there. As of now, the project is complete with the exception of some landscaping around the new shelter.

As always, we also have a multitude of other projects, varying from small and short term to very

large and ongoing forever. Perhaps the one I am most proud of is our Sockum Ridge Forest Management. Most of our public have trusted and supported us on this. Over the past two decades, we have used a multitude of proven biological tools on approximately 28 acres of this 215-acre forest. Our management efforts have included hand labor of all sorts (a labor of love for each of our dedicated staff), fire, and even carefully orchestrated commercial harvest. We now consider this to be a showcase example of forest management. Finally this year, nature responded to all of the stimuli we provided and there are tens of thousands of acorns falling to the ground as this is written. We are both confident and hopeful that many of them will start to grow, moving our primary management objective forward. Every one of us loves this forest, and our only agenda is doing all that we can to make sure that future generations get to enjoy this diverse oak-hickory forest.

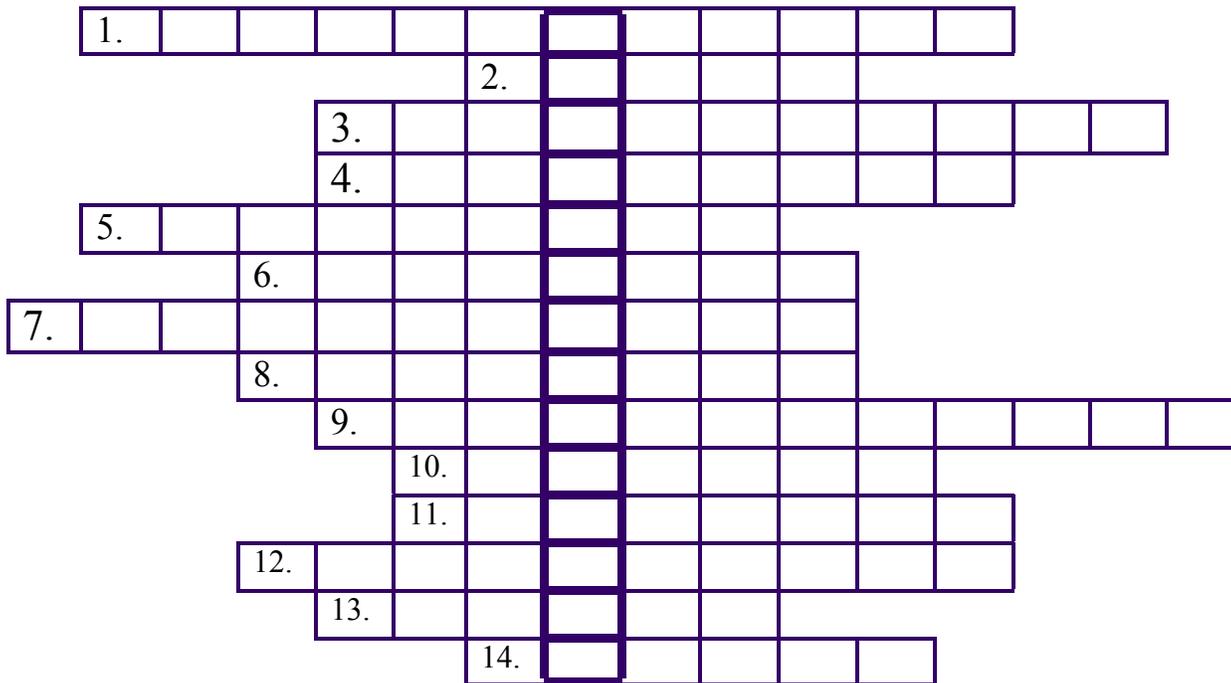
We appreciate the many partnerships and friendships that have developed along with our management and improvement activities. Unlimited potential exists for their expansion, and we look forward to and invite you to join!

By Steve Anderson, Director



Foster Woods, in progress

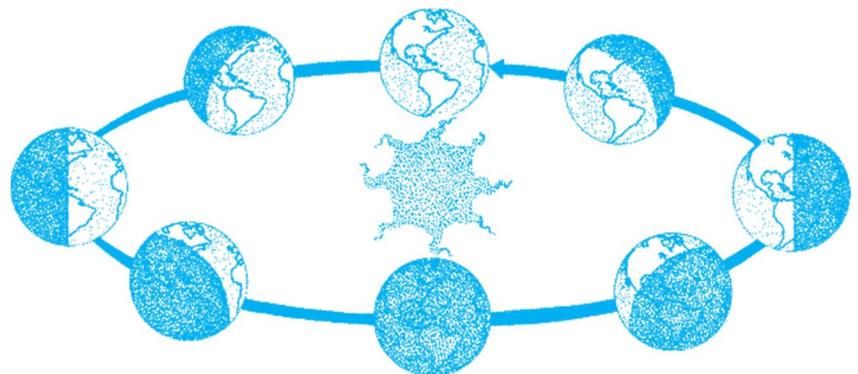
Sun Smart



What is the sun-driven process by which all life is able to live on Earth? Find the hidden answer in the middle column of the puzzle by filling in the answers to the clues below. Answer on page 5.

Clues:

1. The scientific name for the amount of sunlight we have each day.
2. The sun gives off _____ and light.
3. This part of the upper atmosphere protects us from too much ultraviolet light.
4. What ultraviolet light provides for us.
5. Too much ultraviolet light can cause this serious medical condition.
6. The amount of heat and light we receive from the sun causes our _____.
7. The sun causes evaporation, which is one station in the _____.
8. Sunlight that has been divided into the different colors of light, usually seen after a rain.
9. The type of light we receive from the sun but cannot see.
10. You have one only on sunny days.
11. The sun is the driving force behind our _____ as a result of different places receiving different amounts of heat and light.
12. Protect yourself from UV light by using this.
13. The actual color of the sun's light.
14. The type of energy we can use from the sun.



Autumn Calendar

The Washington County Conservation Board meets the second Thursday of each month. Meetings are held at the Conservation Education Center in Marr Park at 4:30 p.m. The Center will be closed on Nov. 22 and 23, Dec. 25 and Jan. 1.

Sat., Oct. 6 6:45 p.m. Marr Park



Halloween Hike: The Nocturnal Olympics

Fun for the whole family, this year's event will focus on adaptations animals have for being active at night. Test your hearing, sight, navigation skills and other abilities against what nocturnal animals can do. Enter the Hike anytime between 6:45 and 8:00 p.m. End at the Center for crafts and refreshments. Free.

Fri., Nov. 23 1:00 p.m. Marr Park

#OptOutside Hike

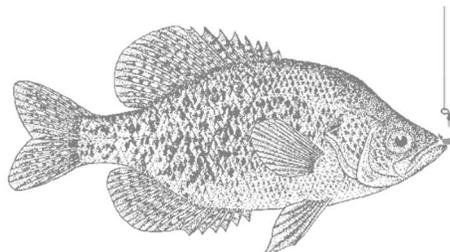
Join the recent trend and choose the option of heading outdoors instead of into the stores on Black Friday. Refresh or renew your connection to the natural world as we tour Marr Park's ecosystems and watch fall turn into winter. Take a breather from the intensity the holiday season can be and find comfort in the wind and the trees.



Sat., Jan. 19 1:00 p.m. Marr Park

Ice Fishing Clinic

Discover a new way to get outside in winter or learn some new tricks during this family-oriented clinic. We'll help you with gear, bait, holes, and advice. You just need to dress warmly. We may even feature ways to see what is happening below your feet. Hot cocoa will be served in the Center when any are in need of warming up.



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Washington County Conservation Board meetings are held the second Thursday of each month at 4:30 p.m. at the Conservation Education Center. Visitors are welcome.

The WCCB is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

If you would like a copy of this newsletter in larger print, please contact our office.

This newsletter is printed on recycled paper.

WASHINGTON COUNTY CONSERVATION BOARD
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Electronic Service Requested

Winter Center Hours

Tuesday—Saturday
8:00 a.m. — 4:30 p.m.

Closed
Sunday—Monday

Kewash Trail Closed for Remainder of Year

We are finally paving the Kewash! After years of dreaming, months of writing and hoping, and another year of planning, we are finally moving forward with our first phase of paving the Kewash Nature Trail. By the time you see this, contractors should have already begun.

The section from Highway 1 west to just past Willow Pond will be paved. In addition, a spur will be added, joining the trail to the Kirkwood Regional Center. The trail within the city limits of Washington will undergo a new overlay of asphalt. Problem areas will also be taken care of at that time.

While this work will improve the trail immensely, it does require the trail be closed to users during construction. Our planned date of re-opening is the beginning of next year. However, we hope that

weather permits construction to move forward quickly and we can re-open the trail much sooner.

This project has been made possible through Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP) grant, Washington County Riverboat Grant, Resource Enhancement and Protection (REAP) grant, and the City of Washington.

