

## ***Update from the Preserve***

***August 2011***

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the Friends of Lower Howard's Creek (FLHC) for your support of the Preserve—and to welcome you to my new blog. As Preserve manager, I need a way to keep all of our Friends informed about what's happening at the Preserve. So, encouraged by the FLHC Executive Committee, I am starting this blog to serve that purpose. I won't be telling you what I had for lunch every day, but I will try to keep you up to date on all our projects, grants, hikes and other events at the Creek.

We were delighted to be asked by the Sekisui Corporation to host their first environmental day camp on August 2. The purpose of the camp was to serve young people and help educate them about our local environment. Thanks to Michelle Stevens for allowing us to introduce these teenagers to our Preserve. Environmental scientist Karis Day Pumphrey (white T-shirt in top photo) donated her time to speak to campers about the effects of development on stream water quality. She told them about the impacts storm water can have on streams such as Lower Howard's Creek. I took our group of 18 campers to the Jonathan Bush house and mill sites. On the way we stopped at the creek crossing, where we were joined by Zeb Weese of the Kentucky Heritage Lands Board. One of Zeb's areas of expertise is the eradication of exotic invasive plant species. He is working on a regional approach to controlling these plants which have become a major issue with every natural area manager in the state. We stayed at the creek for quite awhile, demonstrating water sampling techniques and examining macro-invertebrates and other aquatic animal species.



As many of you may recall, on Derby Day of 2010 torrential storms swept across the Bluegrass. This event of six-plus inches of rain washed out the Bush Mill Road into the central valley of the Preserve. It also washed up gravel bars in the creek that made crossing with the Gator difficult, and at times impossible. We applied to FEMA for funds to repair this critical access road into the Preserve. In June we were notified that we would receive \$6,000 for this badly needed project. Local contractor David Stafford and Allen Gonyer were hired to make the repairs, and did an excellent job. The road is now smooth, and the creek crossing is now passable on the Gator.



**Derby Day 2010**



**Road after repairs & grading**



**David Stafford and Allen Gonyer**

I was able to spend a few hours this month getting ready for an exciting new project at the lower end of the Preserve near Hall's Restaurant. We have received permission from the State Nature Preserve to open this end of the Preserve for public access. For the first time, we will be permitted to allow unescorted visitors to hike in this area of the Preserve. You will be hearing much more about this effort in coming months. To help us prepare for opening a trail beginning at Hall's Restaurant, I applied for and received a grant of \$8,175 from Bluegrass PRIDE. This grant will pay for clearing all the exotic invasive plants from a heavily infested 5 acre site near the trailhead. The project is needed in order to prevent hikers from carrying seeds from these invasive plants farther into the Preserve. We have hired an outstanding project team of recognized experts, including

Dr. Julian Campbell, Will Overbeck and Gary Libby. We need volunteers to help with this project during the last week of September. If you would like to join us, please call our office (859) 744-4888 so we can coordinate with our contractors.

I spent much of this month mowing Johnson grass, spraying herbicide and clearing trails. Volunteers continue to work on eradicating honeysuckle throughout the Preserve. Bill Crankshaw and Harry Enoch worked 24 hours during the month of August whacking away and treating stumps with herbicide. Harry also helped open up the “old road” through the Colonel Strong property all the way to the creek. Volunteers have been working on this particular road for months. In spite of the fact that the Gator broke down (and had to be taken in for repairs), we finally got the trail cleared in time for our first hike of the season. I also started to work on getting rid of the Johnson grass in our pastures. This invasive weed is spreading rapidly in Clark County. We have seen Johnson grass beginning to establish in the front fields (Molly Allen and Colonel Strong tracts). This problem may get worse at the Preserve as this weed spreads to neighboring farms and road right-of-ways.

Saturday, August 27, was a perfect day for the hike from the Preserve parking lot to Kitt’s Hole. The trail follows an old roadway across the Colonel Strong tract (Holder’s



Road) and then out Thompson Ridge to the creek (we have seen this called the Old Athens-Boonesboro Turnpike). 14 people turned out for the hike. The water was low at the creek crossing, so everyone made it over easily. The kids really enjoyed playing in

the water at Kitt's Hole. We had several new visitors, who were all amazed at the many cultural and natural features they experienced.

I took a group of environmental scientists from Palmer Engineering down to several sites on Lower Howard's Creek to conduct macro-invertebrate sampling of the creek. This is part of the monitoring process for water quality studies Palmer is conducting. For those of you who may not be aware, earlier this year WMU agreed to set aside \$213,000 to develop a Watershed Management Plan for Lower Howard's Creek as part of their environmental compliance agreement with U.S. EPA. Palmer Engineering was awarded the contract to prepare the Plan. Getting this Plan completed is one of the Preserve's key management objectives.

*M. Clare Sipple*