

Emerald Run Creek
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Last February I spoke of working to save a stream in Green Township where I live. Well there is more to this story.

Here are two photographs of the area. One looks into the stream valley of the planned development site, in late fall. The other shows the stream in the summer (with two neighbors) ½ mile downstream from the development site. A third figure is a 3-dimensional view of the site showing its terrain, streams and forest cover. Smaller images show aerial views of the site and a diagram of the streams to be destroyed.

You know, we live on a water planet. We love our environment, the land and the water. Water is a precious resource. Our terrain is sculptured by water but the Pleistocene glaciers originally shaped it. Rainwater and streams further formed the land.

Upon reflection we are presented with many layers of meaning. Our stream system laces across a sculptured landscape. There is a mile and one-half of high-quality streams on this 100-acre site. For the proposed development almost a mile of them will be smothered with earth. The developer proposes a man-made channel behind the development.

About this water system: The headwater streams on this site flow into a 3-1/2 mile long stream. Streams and wetlands are the kidneys of the earth. This stream flows into Taylor Creek, then the Great Miami River, the Ohio River, the Mississippi River and the Gulf of Mexico. It is a hydrological system, a climatic system, and a life system.

We have a spectrum of Life, mediated by water, microscopic bacteria, larvae, invertebrates, insects, crustaceans, fish, herps, rodents, grazers, raptors, predators, carnivores and humans — all of life's creatures.

Water is integral to our habitat. Water is Spiritual, together with Air, Earth and Fire. It is within us and within our Spirituality. It suffuses us with the wonder of nature — its infinite mystery — the essence of our Souls — the fountain of Life.

Now, along comes this verdant 100-acre piece of property. It contains pesky old hillsides, forests and streams. Our technology can rearrange 1-1/2 million cubic yards of earth — bend it to our wills — pave it over, erect half a million square feet of retail to supply the convenience and vanity of our population. The development is massive — the size of Northgate Mall and all of its parking lots. Sixty-three acres of asphalt replacing streams and forest. This is truly a case of paving paradise and putting up a parking lot.

Look at these photographs! Paving this stream valley will raise the ground level about four stories to here — at the top of the image. Contemplating the image of the 3-dimensional model intensified my insight into the area as a **unitary organism**. The earth and the forest have a **product**. The product is **water** and **life**. Wading the stream last week with my biologist friend, we collected “inverts”, observed the crawdads, fish and two stripe salamanders. The stream was deemed remarkably healthy, despite the drought.

There are those who believe the red fox and the possum and all the water creatures don't matter. They don't pay any rent! Trees and shrubs that stabilize hillsides and absorb storm-water runoff really don't count according to some. Nature has no value.

Others claim that significant environmental harm being done by the heavy hand of man is disputable and highly overrated and that global warming is just a fiction!

Here in Green Township concerned citizens lost the zoning battle last year. Our fellow citizens voted **for** a zone change to allow retail development in a residential neighborhood.

There is a glimmer of hope. Before the developer can touch a stream on the site he must apply for Clean Water Act permits. In this process he must describe the assault to the streams and propose solutions.

The developer proposes to *mitigate* the loss of the streams. As if anything could replace a natural stream. Mitigation means replacing the lost functions of this stream by repairing a stream in another part of the watershed.

We have assembled a multidisciplinary and talented group of experts to weigh in. Passionate and concerned citizens have kept up a barrage of letters during the public comment period held by the Ohio EPA. We insisted on a public hearing that is expected to happen in October. And we are asking the OEPA to deny the permits to destroy the stream.

In addition we made phone calls, and wrote Internet blogs and letters to the editor. One neighbor wrote, “Heaven forbid if we have to drive 20 miles farther to shop. What does this say about us as a community and the future of our township? I will do without fancy coffee and designer sweaters if it saves and protects what little green space we have in our township.”

Another neighbor wrote, “This is the 21st century. We need to start protecting our environment for future generations.”

Because the stream is considered “an unnamed tributary,” we held a contest to “Name that Stream.” The contest winner was “Emerald Run”, suggested by a former resident of the area and chosen from many submissions from the public.

Here is a bottle of water from Emerald Run creek collected last week. This has flowed above and below the surface of the earth, through its kidneys, from the springs between rock layers, through vegetated layers and collected into our stream to start its journey to the Gulf of Mexico.

Our water and our land must be managed in a thoughtful way locally, nationally, and worldwide. This highlights the confrontation between Public and Private Use. You know, we don't own the property. But we can have a say about its USE. The public has a strong interest. It should be preserved as a park — and we are working on that!

The public has taken great interest in the environment and clean water. We fear the loss of our natural environment.

Deforestation plus paving over and channelizing the headwater streams will exaggerate the swings between flood and drought. This effect propagates downstream, flooding and fouling downstream wetlands and neighborhoods.

Remember that the devastation of a Category 3 hurricane on New Orleans was in part due to the systematic elimination of protective wetlands. This was in a futile attempt to mess with Mother Nature.

What gives me hope?

“The Seventh Principle”

“We covenant to have respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.”

We are at a critical juncture, looking at the tip of an iceberg. The problem goes far beyond our tiny local issue. We can clearly see the far-reaching [“interconnected web of existence.”](#)

The Environmental Ethic and the Seventh Principle can be seen as extremely **critical** and **practical** guides to the future of the planet. It is intertwined with everyone's quality of life and our **personal** and **national** security. Who speaks for the stream? Our individual contributions can add up to something significant.

