



Ulao Whistler

The Official Newsletter of the
Ulao Creek Partnership, Inc.



Spring 2015



Hello Ulao Creek Partners and Friends,

It may be hard to imagine, but 2015 marks the 20th anniversary of the Ulao Creek Partnership! Over the years our organization has accomplished a lot, while continuing to full fill our mission of protecting and improving the quality of natural habitats in the Ulao Creek Watershed. Our accomplishments include, thousands of trees planted within the watershed, countless hours of invasive species removal, water quality monitoring, and lots of education to land owners and the general public on the importance of our waterways and the Ulao Creek in particular.

2014 was a banner year for the Ulao Creek. We started with a garlic mustard pull in Grafton at the Colder's furniture property. Our group was diverse, including volunteers young and old, some experiencing the pleasures of the Ulao Creek for their very first time. We pulled hundreds of pounds of garlic mustard, but our battle against garlic mustard and other invasive species creeping into our watershed continues. Stay tuned for our next invasive species removal day upcoming this spring!



Events

**Invasive Species Removal
at the Gateway Property**
May 9th, 2015
9:00am - 12:00pm
(SE corner of the I-43 and
HWY 60 exit in Grafton)

Treasures of Oz
June 20th, 2015
9:00am - 3:00pm

**Summer - Planting
Maintenance**
TBD

Fall Tree Planting
TBD

2014 ended with a big bang. The Ozaukee County Fish Passage program was responsible for a wonderful project of restoring the creek to a more natural meandering path. This project lasted all summer and culminated in a major tree and shrub planting in October. This tree planting event was one of our most successful events to date. Over 60 volunteers from 5 different organizations spent a day planting trees and shrubs along the freshly dug banks of the new creek. Our great group of volunteers and a little bit of donated equipment made this event truly special.

We look forward to 2015. Our organization is committed to strengthening our community and our creek. Please take time to fill out our annual appeal envelop located within this newsletter. If you are reading this newsletter for the first time, please consider becoming active in our organization. It is a great way to get real hands on experience with the wonderful little creek that flows through our neck of the woods.

Thanks,

August Hoppe
President
Ulao Creek Partnership

Land Trust Launches Land Protection Initiative

The Ozaukee Washington Land Trust is gearing up for an ambitious land protection effort to protect critical natural areas and productive working lands in the region. “Great Rivers, Great Lakes” is a four-year strategic effort to protect 2,000 acres of sensitive lands in the Milwaukee River Watershed and along the shore of Lake Michigan. OWLT will partner with local organizations, municipalities and government agencies to identify focus areas and work with willing landowners to protect wetlands, shoreline, farmland and natural areas within the project area.

This effort includes protecting land within the Ulao Creek Watershed, which is a sub-watershed of the Milwaukee River. Ulao Creek is a local ecologically significant resource that provides habitat for numerous rare wildlife and plant species. The wetlands associated with the creek store and filter storm water and allow for ground water recharge. The natural qualities, along with the support and interest of the local community, make the Ulao Creek watershed a priority conservation area for OWLT.



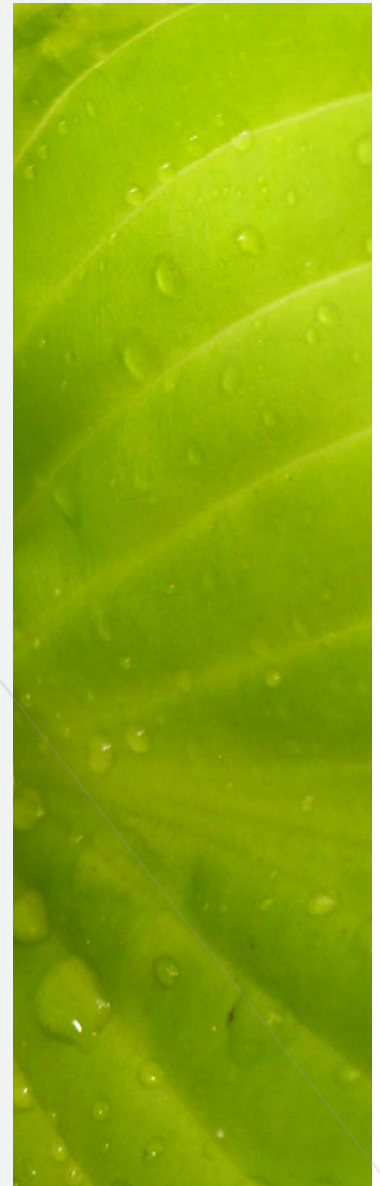
OWLT has been working with the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, the Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District and other regional and local partners to identify and protect critical parcels within the watersheds. Total investment for the initiative will be roughly \$12 million.

OWLT has identified roughly \$10 million that will come from various government agencies and

partners toward the four year goal. The Land Trust Board of Directors has committed the organization to raising \$2 million in matching and acquisition related funds.

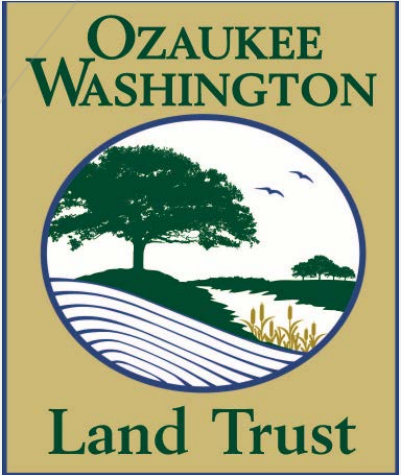
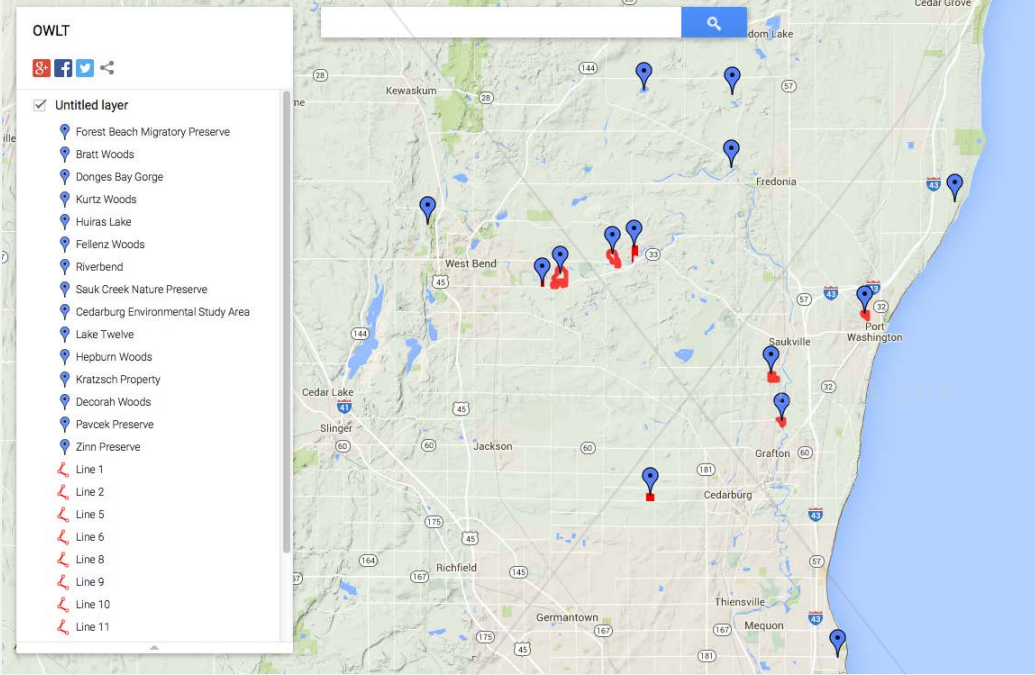
The impacts will be far reaching. The project outcomes will improve the quality of water flowing into the Milwaukee River and Lake Michigan through implementing land management practices in the basin that, for example, expand wetland buffers, restore wildlife habitat, increase surface water infiltration, and preserve productive farmland. This project will also provide area residents with additional opportunities to enjoy nature-based recreational activities such as hiking, bird watching, hunting, and fishing, and increased access to our regional freshwater resources.

Thanks to the overwhelming support of our local community, this effort is off to a strong start. OWLT acquired five properties in the last five months, totalling over 200 acres, in Ozaukee and Washington counties. The properties are within OWLT’s Milwaukee River Watershed project area and contribute to the protection of our areas freshwater resources and wildlife habitat. The success of every one of these projects required the support of our “conservation partners”: individuals, corporations, or public entities with the foresight and desire to preserve a piece of our natural heritage to share with future generations.





The “Great Rivers, Great Lakes” initiative will provide additional opportunities for our communities to enjoy our region’s rich natural resources. Since 1998, OWLT has protected over 5,800 acres across the two counties through conservation easements, fee land acquisitions and partnerships. For more information on OWLT’s land protection efforts or for a map of our preserves, please visit our website www.OWLT.org or call us at (262)338-1794.



Big Changes for a Little Creek



Big changes are happening to a little creek that runs through the heart of the Town of Grafton and what was once the Ulao Settlement.

Once upon a time Ulao Creek's headwaters bubbled up in the Ulao Swamp beginning in an area that is now covered by the WeEnergies fly ash dump. Watercress grew in abundance along the banks. Children swam and people fished in this clear and meandering stream. Wildlife was diverse and abundant.

Then, in the early 1900's, things began to change. Much of this lovely creek was channeled for progress - mostly for the railroad. Later, in the 1950's, Dutch Elm Disease spread through the swamp and many stately trees along the bank fell into and over the creek, bringing tons of debris down with them. In the years following, flooding increased and the need to protect farm fields brought local residents together. The Kaul, Hoppe and Helms families and other creek-side landowners joined forces to create The Ulao Creek Partnership with a mission to improve the creek and adjacent impacted land.



Over the years, The Ulao Creek Partnership, with much support from Ozaukee County, has made vast improvements to the creek, clearing the channel, planting trees for flood control and removing invasive vegetation. The creek, however, has remained confined in its dug channel along the side of the railroad tracks, and that is how most everyone thought it would always be.

But then something very surprising happened!

Ozaukee County Planning & Parks Department, through its Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program added Ulao Creek to its rivers restoration plan for Ozaukee. They obtained grant funding and hired Solutions 101 LLC, a project management company that goes to great lengths in limiting its footprint on a site, disturbing only areas necessary for the completion of a project. Solutions 101 owner, Jim Sykes, says "We work closely with our clients to create a plan that best fits the owner's vision for the property and to provide a legacy for future generations of land stewards."

Inspired by the conservation focus of the project, Wacker Neuson, a multi-national German based manufacturer of compact construction equipment, selected this project to field-test its newest equipment. Solutions 101 and the Wacker Neuson development team chose the equipment being used for its compact size, versatility, agility, and efficiency. Working with equipment that offers a smaller turning radius and the option to add attachments means less impact is made to the surrounding landscape.

There are 2 areas of reconstruction underway on Ulao Creek, one east of Arrowhead Road and the Gateway site, south of Hwy 60 behind the BP station. This project will work to revitalize the watershed by re-creating conditions similar to pre-settlement times in the project-area parts of Ulao Creek.



The new stream channel, designed to be similar to the original, is being cleared of all brush, small trees, tall grasses and debris using hand tools and mowing equipment. Any man-made garbage that is encountered is properly disposed of and removed from the site. Great care is taken with erosion control during the project to prevent sediment from the area of restoration to move into an unapproved area.



Wetland scrapes are being added to improve spawning and breeding habitat in the Arrowhead Road project area. Ponds will go in where appropriate. Fish, waterfowl, herptiles and other wildlife have been considered in the planning. The entire project is being done with the existing soils – no new soil is being brought in and no existing soil is being taken out. Things are just moved around. Once the new waterway has been constructed and water diverted into the new stream, the existing ditch will be

filled and covered with vegetation as a form of natural long-term erosion control. Native trees and understory vegetation will be planted once the groundwork is complete. Ulao Creek Partnership will work with Ozaukee County and many local volunteers in this effort.

Sometimes things happen that no one expects and outcomes exceed hopes. This is one of those stories. Ulao Creek will have a new and improved stream bed in two places, much like it had many years ago. Watershed vegetation will be greatly improved with the planting of native species. Fish and wildlife will have richer and more diverse habitat. The Ulao Creek Partnership and many Town of Grafton residents are already celebrating a restoration of great importance, and one they never expected.

Note:

Ulao Creek runs south of the Ulao Swamp through private lands east of I-43. It flows through the Colder's property, under Hwy. 60 and behind the BP station, the Waterstreet Brewery and the Hampton Inn & Suites. From there it flows south, east of I-43 and the railroad. Near Lakefield Road it vanishes, buried underground so I-43 could come through. It re-emerges alongside of the Family Farm on the west border of I-43 and from there meanders south until it joins the Milwaukee River near Highland Road.

*Treasures of Oz in collaboration with Samantha Gehl of Solutions 101 LLC
Photos courtesy of Solutions 101 LLC*



The Fish Passage Program It All Started With UCP Members



The Ulao Creek restoration is happening because of the Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program. The MRWFFP is not something the “government,” or the ever-referred to “they” made happen. It started with two of our UCP members, Dale Buser and Andrew Struck - and not because they were hired to do it. It happened because they really love and understand the watershed in Ozaukee County.

Dale Buser is a hydrogeologist and was the founder and Principal Hydrogeologist for Northern Environmental Technologies.

He loves fish and he loves Ozaukee County. He spent much of his childhood outdoors, always observing the natural things that made up his playground. Over time, he became disturbed that the waterways were damaged, the fish were unable to get upstream to spawn in many areas. Dams, poorly designed culverts, and stream obstructions were fragmenting the natural flow and cutting off spawning areas and habitat. He began to envision reconnecting the streams and rivers all the way from Lake Michigan to the wetlands of upper Ozaukee County, all within the Milwaukee River Watershed.

Andrew Struck, Ozaukee County Director of Planning and Parks, makes things happen for the environment in Ozaukee. He is the force behind the expanding park system, the force behind the Interurban Trail, the force behind Farmland Preservation in Ozaukee. As stated in Treasures of Oz’s tribute to Andrew, “he is everywhere that is connected to environment in Ozaukee.” (February 2012 – Wizard of Oz – Andrew Struck)

Dale shared his vision with Andrew, and with Andy Holschbach, Ozaukee County Director of Land and Water Management, over and over and over again, until everyone was seeing not only the same thing, but feeling the passion to make things right and get the waters reconnected. Thus, in fish terms, the Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program was hatched.

The program in brief: This project enhances watershed habitat along the Milwaukee River and throughout the watershed by removing dams, installing nature-like fishways, culvert replacements and by removing logjams and debris obstructions. It seeks to reestablish migratory fish passage between 11,149 wetland acres and 215 stream miles. Data is collected 24/7 in many ways, including an underwater fish camera at the fishway at Village Park in Thiensville. You can watch the fish (once the ice is gone), see photos and videos of fish that have passed through and even help with counting and identification of fish from your computer. (Great way to “fish” from the comfort of your home.)

The link is: <http://www.co.ozaukee.wi.us/1248/Fishway-Camera>

The process – a mini-version: The fish passage program began with inventories in 2006 through a Wisconsin Coastal Management grant. This was followed by intensive work with all the Ozaukee communities connected to the project. (Because of the shape of the county, that meant every single community was involved.)

The county received a NOAA grant in 2009 for the program. For the first six months, Dale and Andrew were the entire program. By 2010, they had hired a director, Matt Aho, and two interns. More and more grants followed, leveraging well over eight and a half million dollars in federal,



state, local and private funding programs to develop, refine and implement of the Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program. The program restores natural stream functions to reconnect and enhance high quality habitat for native fish, birds and wildlife. To date, 224 impediments have been removed, restoring access to over 129 miles of in-stream habitat and thousands of acres of wetland habitat.

What simply cannot be described in dollars, miles and acres is the passion, energy, time and dedication that Dale, Andrew and Matt have put into this program. It is priceless. Today Ozaukee County has a world recognized fish passage system that is still in the making, and already the fish are coming home.

For their efforts and this program, Dale and Andrew were honored as Conservationists of the Year in 2013 by Gathering Waters in Madison. Dale and Andrew were invited to the World Rivers Conference on Vienna to talk about this program. Dale did the presentation.



Ulao Creek Stars in Treasures of Oz June 20th



Every year on the Saturday before father's Day, Treasures of Oz presents their popular free Eco-Tour of exceptional natural sites in Ozaukee County. Each site is staffed with a team that includes science and environmental professionals who are knowledgeable about that treasure site.

Treasure sites are places that are open to the public and the hope is that visitors will return to the site again and again. There is an exception this year.

The restoration of our loved Ulao Creek is truly something that is very unique and seeing it is a great opportunity for people to learn about waterway restoration and to get excited about what is happening in Ozaukee. Ulao Creek Partnership members, several of whom are also on the Treasures of Oz Steering Team decided to make an exception and showcase a part of Ulao Creek for this event. West Bend Mayor Kraig Sadownikow, owner of the Gateway property, graciously agreed to provide access on the day of the event. The manager of the Waterstreet Brewery, has offered visitor parking in the restaurant's lot.

In case you don't know, the Gateway property is at the northbound I-43 exit in Grafton. It contains a BP gas station, the Waterstreet Brewery and the Hampton Inn & Suites. Ulao Creek runs through the east side of that property and then turns east and enters Karin's Manley's farm.

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Ulao Creek had been trenched in that area and ran along the side of the railroad tracks. If you have been part of the Ulao Creek Partnership garlic mustard pulls at the Gateway, you will remember that the land up to the creek was a bit of an environmental mess. There was plenty of record-sized garlic mustard for awhile (UCP did a pretty decent job with that!) along with lots of reed canary grass and random trees and shrubs.

That area today is nothing short of beautiful. Ulao Creek meanders through diverse native trees, and there are well-placed upturned tree roots here and there as if nature has been at work creating the ideal environment for fish and wildlife. Because the restoration is brand new, it is easy to stroll along the banks and experience the beauty of this very special Treasures Site.

The restoration project is yet another part of the extensive Milwaukee River Watershed Fish Passage Program. The program has been recognized internationally at the World Rivers Conference in Vienna and at several conferences here in the USA.

Be sure to mark your calendars for June 20th for Treasures of Oz.



Plan to see what magic has happened to Ulao Creek. That site will be open from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. Along with fish passage program experts and Ulao Creek Partnership members, Solutions 101, the engineering firm that carried out the plans so well, will be on hand. If you might like to volunteer at the site that day, you can sign up right from the Treasures of Oz website under “volunteer.” It will be fun to share Ulao Creek with visitors and tell them a bit about the Partnership at the same time..

You may well want to do the entire Treasures Eco-Tour event - 6 other treasures sites plus the exhibits, food, music and silent auction that go with it. You can download a passport, get stamps the sites and trade your passport stamps for free raffle tickets. It is a wonderful, free event for the entire family. Go to treasuresofoz.org for details, passports and maps - all available there after May 1st.



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2015 Sponsors

**Junior Woman’s Club of Mequon-Thiensville
WUWM
and a Besadney Conservation Foundation Grant through
the Natural Resources Foundation of Wisconsin**



2015 Treasure Sites

Mequon Nature Preserve

Blue Wing WPA

Cedarburg Bog

Ulao Creek Restoration

Waubedonia Park

Covered Bridge Park

Forest Beach Migratory Preserve



The Ulao Creek Watershed

We are very fortunate to have a precious resource like the Ulao Creek watershed in our area. As a group, we would like nothing more than to pass this resource on to future generations in better condition than we originally found it. Great strides are being made through the work of the UCP and its affiliates in restoring the health of the creek and surrounding wetlands and watershed areas.

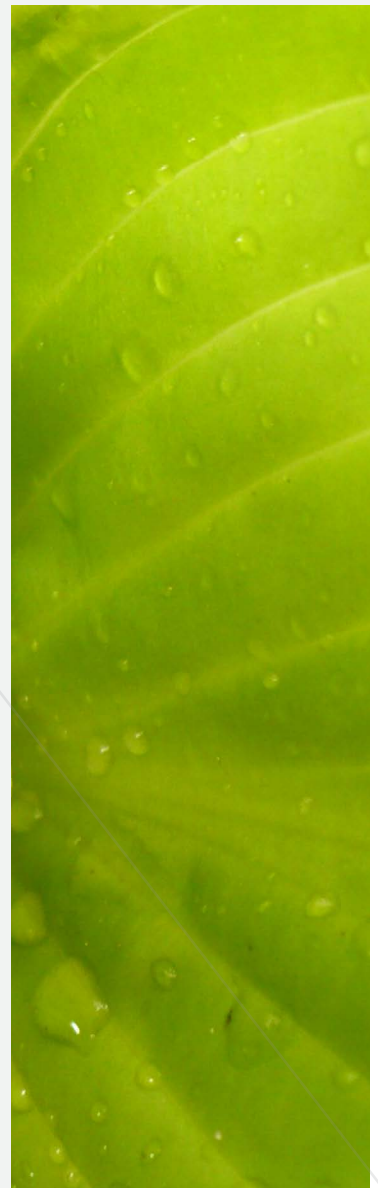
One way you can help is by planting trees and shrubs that were once more prevalent in the area. By doing so, we encourage the local ecosystem to work the way it had prior to the time it was disturbed through several decades of development. Planting additional species than what is currently standing protects the landscape through diversification. We realize the importance of diversification now more than ever as we see highway crews start to remove trees affected by the Emerald Ash Borer. The majority of trees in the watershed are ash and unfortunately it's a matter of time before these trees are no longer standing.

Planting a more diverse landscape comes with the added benefit of improving habitat for a host of birds, mammals and reptiles that call the watershed home. Forested areas slow the flow of storm water runoff to the creek and shade out invasive species such as the reed canary grass that has become somewhat invasive. Proper vegetation planted along the bank of the creek acts as natural erosion control and moderates the temperature of the water in the creek. It is hard to stress the importance of doing more planting to support, expand and diversify the makeup of area trees and shrubs.

The Ulao Creek watershed formerly supported a number of trees that are now more rare to find. Tamarack and White Cedar were once a dominant conifer species in the area. Red Maple, Silver Maple, Paper Birch, Yellow Birch, Swamp White Oak and Bur Oak were once dominant among the hardwoods. Dogwoods, Elderberry and Serviceberry are still around but in more limited numbers.

At Chief River Nursery, we sell a very large volume of tree and shrub seedlings to customers across the country each year. As a result, I am able to provide area residents with low cost, bare root tree and shrub seedlings for the purpose of reforestation. These seedlings are inexpensive, easy to plant and will grow into something large and beautiful over time. Many species grow faster than you would think, and it is extremely fun to watch the progress year to year. Helping the area ecosystem and knowing you are planting something that will remain for future generations should give you a source of pride. Take an afternoon and spend it with your spouse, kids or grandkids and pass on the great tradition of planting. I can't imagine a scenario where you would regret it.

I have put together 3 recommended packages of trees and shrubs that were once commonly found in the watershed.





UCP Pack 1 - Contains (10) each of the following: 10-20" American Tamarack and 12-18" Northern White Cedar

UCP Pack 2 - Contains (5) each of the following: 12-18" Red Maple, 12-24" Paper Birch, 6-12+" Silver Maple, 6-12" Swamp White Oak and 6-12" Bur Oak

UCP Pack 3 – Contains (5) of each of the following: 12-24" Red Osier Dogwood, 12-24" Silky Dogwood, 12-18" Juneberry Serviceberry, 6-12" American Elderberry and 12-18" Red Elderberry

The cost for these packs are all the same at \$15.00 each. If you purchase trees or shrubs, we also have planting bars that can be checked out for the day at no extra charge. I encourage you to visit the UCP page on our website at www.chiefrivernursery.com/UCP for more information. We are always happy to give deep discounts on our stock to area residents who plan to plant them in the watershed. If you want something else than is being offered, please contact us. We can be reached at info@chiefrivernursery.com or 262.377.5330 with questions or to place an order.

Dean A. Koch
Owner, Chief River Nursery
UCP Technical Advisor

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Chief River Since 1973
NURSERY COMPANY

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ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The Ulao Creek Partnership, Inc. (UCP) is a grassroots, community-based 501 (c)(3) nonprofit organization comprised of concerned citizens, landowners, and public and private organizations aligned to protect and improve the water quality and natural habitats in the Ulao Creek Watershed.

*Ulao Creek Partnership is now on Facebook!
Check us out and become a fan.*

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