

BW Trail extension being studied

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Big Walnut Creek just below Hoover Reservoir near Central College Road.

WESTERVILLE — Delaware County residents may know the Big Walnut Creek flows through the city of Sunbury, but some may not know the creek is 75 miles long.

In addition, there is a Big Walnut Trail along parts of the stream, and a major connector south of Hoover Reservoir Park, 7701 Sunbury Road, Westerville, is currently being studied. The creek flows into the reservoir, which serves and is owned by the City of Columbus.

Currently, the Big Walnut Trail exists in segments. For example, there is a 2.2-mile section along Sunbury Road and the reservoir that goes from Smothers Road to Central College Road, where the creek continues south. The next segment is at Morse Road, going 4 miles through Gahanna.

“From Little Turtle south to Sunbury Road, no trail or connectivity exists for several thousand residents living nearby,” said the City of Columbus Recreation and Parks Department. “In 2021, Columbus received funding for construction of the trail, and has begun a study of the route, including natural resources, destinations, possible connections and existing topography and floodplain.”

The study is looking at connecting trails from two creeks — Alum and Big Walnut — which run parallel. The existing Alum Creek Trail is well established. The study is looking at starting a 2.5-mile connection from Mount Hood Court along Sugarbush Boulevard to Sunbury Road over Interstate 270. The trail would then go along Big Walnut Creek by Cherry Bottom parkland and Blendon Woods Columbus Metro Park up to state Route 161. The connection would end at Turtle Station Way in the Little Turtle subdivision.

Also, part of the Big Walnut North section would be a connection from Hoover Park at Central College Road following the creek down to Little Turtle.

The city said this would serve 15,000 people living in the surrounding neighborhoods and 40,000 jobs in the surrounding area.

Plans have also been drawn to add 10.7 more miles to the Big Walnut Trail from Gahanna through Whitehall to Three Creeks Metro Park at Williams Road. Of that, a 1.5-mile section through Elk Run Park in Columbus, is complete. The Alum Creek Trail also goes into Three Creeks Park (the third creek is Blacklick Creek) near Obetz.

The capital improvement project is part of Columbus' 2019-2024 5-year Greenways Plan for six regional trails: Alum Creek, Big Walnut, Blacklick Big Darby, Camp Chase, Olentangy and Scioto, more than 135 miles in all.

For more information about the study, visit columbusrecreparks.com.