

Friends of Town Branch Creek



Our mission is to preserve the biological integrity of the natural resource, promote the aesthetic value of the creek, and educate citizens about water quality issues. Our group is a public education component of the City of Tahlequah's Stormwater Program.

It is important to recognize that stormwater drains to Town Branch Creek, Ross Branch Creek, and Pecan Creek. Stormwater is not treated before it enters these waterbodies; it is important to keep stormwater free of trash, debris, and pollution.



Inhabitants of Town Branch Creek



Central Stoneroller
(Campostoma anomalum)

Written by Jon West / Photos by Brandon Brown
*Oklahoma Department of Wildlife,
Fisheries Biologists*

If you've spent any time looking into a clear gravel Ozark stream there's a chance you've seen a school of stonerollers. They're often noticed when your eye is drawn to the flash of a fish near the bottom of the creek. That flash is produced when the fish uses its' entire body to scrape algae off rocks using it's cartilaginous lower jaw. This is why they're so important, they control algae. Their maximum size is 8 in. but most hang around the 4-5 in. range. During spawning season the males develop bumps on their head called tubercles and their fins develop orange and black markings. While they're not really a beautiful fish we can forgive them of that since they are so important to our streams ecology. These fish are considered to be a keystone species.



MEETING DATE

**First Tuesday of the month
5:30 PM**

**Brookside House
124 N. Brookside Ave.
Tahlequah, OK**

*** Meeting dates that fall on or near a holiday will be held the 2nd Tuesday of the month.**



CONTACT US

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A Quest for Clean Water

Jahna Hill
City of Tahlequah
Stormwater Manager

Protection of Town Branch Creek, a tributary of the Illinois River, is important for conserving downstream water quality in the greater Illinois River watershed.

According to the 2014 Environmental Protection Agency 303(d) list of impaired waters, Town Branch Creek is impaired by *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*), which may pose health risks to people fishing and swimming in the creek.

E. coli is bacteria found in fecal matter of animals and humans. Sources include but are not limited to geese, raccoons, dogs, cats, leaking septic systems, and faulty sewer lines. Eliminating the impairment is a challenge for communities around the country; however, we can work together to improve water quality. Things we can do include picking up pet waste on lawns or creek banks and assure that fecal matter from your home enters into the municipal sewer system or a properly functioning septic tank.

The City continually works to ensure that sewer pipes are free of leaks and breaks.

The current status of *E. coli* is currently being researched by Friends of Town Branch Creek and the City of Tahlequah Stormwater Program. If you are interested in numerical data, please visit our webpage and select the Water Quality section.

A Little Bit of History

Liz Cooper
A friend of Town Branch Creek

Almost beyond our notice Bear Creek, aka Town Branch Creek, makes its way through Tahlequah.

From the headwater at the Methodist Home, it skirts north of Spring Street which traverses a low water bridge to then join with College Avenue. Located south of the Northeastern State University presidential home is an important groundwater spring that helps create the creek.

As part of the many waterways in this area, it played a role in determining where the first settlers decided to establish the town. Because of this very proximity in a growing city, here and there accommodations are made to keep the water from rushing out of the creek banks during extreme storm events. Generally most of the effort to control rising creek water is utilitarian, such as, the aesthetically pleasing sample of rock masonry used to line the creek banks on the NSU campus (pictured on the cover page). Although not yet verified, it is believed that the masonry, a small bridge, and pump house were built by WPA workers under the Roosevelt administration in the mid 1930's or 1940's.

Town Branch Creek has helped shape Tahlequah for many generations. It serves as a feature of the city's parks, a backdrop for picnics and play. With conservation efforts, hopefully it will be enjoyed for many more generations to come.

2017 Recap

Christi McDonald
Tahlequah Public School Teacher

Hello Tahlequah! Are you wondering, "Just what does that group Friends of Town Branch Creek do?" Do you wonder how you could become involved?

First, we meet monthly at the Brookside House in Sequoyah City Park at 5:30 p.m. As a general rule, the meeting will be the first Tuesday of every month. We invite you to join us at the next meeting!

Second, we are consistently working on *E. coli* testing in Town Branch Creek. We currently have two places that are monitored on a monthly basis.

Third, our group participated in several functions throughout the previous year, since forming in September of 2016. We were featured in the Tahlequah Daily Press and The Northeasterner. We were also involved with the Red Fern Festival, Tahlequah Farmer's Market, Tahlequah H2O Celebration, and the GRDA Indian Summer Festival. For all of these events, we provided literature and information relating to the waters in our area. We also had fun things for kids.

Come make a difference for Tahlequah!
Join us at our next scheduled monthly meeting, ready to help!!!!