

STARKWEATHER CREEK COMMENTS – TOUYENG XIONG

The Starkweather Creek watershed, once dominated by wetlands, has been affected by urbanization so much that now more than 33% of the watershed is impervious cover. With the majority of the watershed's wetlands now drained or filled, and more than a third of the pervious cover gone, the creek has continued to accumulate both toxins and junk, leading Lake Monona to be one of the most polluted lakes in Dane County. Some toxins that are draining into the creek are PCBs, metals, PFAS and petroleum compounds. Although direct discharge of industrial sewage and organic wastes into Starkweather Creek no longer happens, chemicals can still be found throughout the creek from past industrial airport, and military operations, and contaminants from these operations still enter the creek via stormwater runoff. In an article written by the Dane County Regional Planning Commission, in 1983 "the Dane County Regional Airport composes 19% of the total watershed area, has impacted the creek as well. Pollution from extensive petroleum usage, deicing agents and airplane maintenance has severely increased degradation of the creek." (p.26, Dane County Regional Planning Commission, 1983). This paragraph greatly backs up the results depicted in the Microtox testing graph done by UW graduate students in 2006 and confirmed again by a consultant in 2016.

As I bike along the Starkweather creek bike path, I see many access points that could potentially be used by the public to enjoy the creek, yet in all the times I have gone by, I have yet to see a single person interact with it. Trash and garbage litter the creek and are the most visible indicators of the creek's continuing degradation. Potentially another reason as to why there is no human interaction.

Dane County owns most of the airport and Truax Air National Guard land. As landowners who have direct impacts on the creek, it should fall upon these landowners to test Starkweather Creek for existing pollutants and share any existing data with the public. We must identify the source of the problems plaguing our watersheds and eliminate them. Focusing on smaller watersheds that feed larger water bodies such as Starkweather Creek is one large step that we can take in our continued efforts toward healthier lakes.

Thank you :)