



Bulletin of the Proceedings of the Friends of Accotink Creek

Our meeting notes serve as bulletins of our activities, interests, and discussions, supplemented by your submissions.

Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – May 17, 2016

Next Meeting: June 21, 2016 (Third Tuesday of each month)
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

[DONATE/SUPPORT](#)

Present:

Sue Kovach Schuman
Dave Lincoln
Beverley Rivera
Kris Unger
Ted Welch
Suzy Foster
Flint Webb
Philip Latasa
Susan Long – Welcome, Susan!
Roger Hill – Welcome Roger!
Thomas Lee – Welcome, Thomas!

Upcoming events:

- Daniels Run Stream Monitoring, May 24, 2016
- I-66 Meetings, May 23, 24, 25, 2016
- Long Branch Stream Valley Trail Meeting, May 26, 2016
- Lake Accotink Park Stream Monitoring, June 4, 2016
- Mantua Community Parade, June 11, 2016
- Inspiring Connections Outdoors, June 11, 2016
- Water Chestnut Control Workdays, June 14 & 15, 2016

Action Items:

- *Everyone – Brainstorm grant application ideas*
- *Kris – Solicit NVATU contribution to mussel survey*
- *Kris – Contact Choose Clean Water on plastic bag bill*
- *Ted - Contact Scout Store*
- *Sue/Dave/Ted – Plan for Mantua Parade*
- *Dave – Consult with Friends of Little Hunting Creek on Litter Initiatives*
- *Philip – Schedule al fresco meeting*

FACC Subjects Discussed –

• Coon Branch Restoration:

Susan described the deterioration of Coon Branch in her neighborhood off Estabrook Drive in Annandale, near Hidden Oaks Nature Center. Residing in the neighborhood for 15 years, she has been calling County attention to erosion on Coon Branch for over a decade. Erosion has worsened recently following infill development upstream. The County is now looking into the initial steps of stream

restoration, for which there is much community support. Kris has been corresponding with Susan and the County on this issue.

- Potomac Watershed Cleanup:

Philip reported cleanups concluded May 14th. We had 252 volunteers, a decline from last year's 371. We removed 279 bags of trash and 33 tires. Unusual items included a bowling ball, a barbecue grill, three jugs of weed killer, a fire extinguisher, and two tricycles. One of our volunteers shared his observation of his time living in Rwanda and the marked difference he saw in public spaces when plastic bags were banned there.

We may hope for a stipend of about \$500 from Project Clean Stream. But here is another fundraising opportunity arising from the cleanup – turning lemons into lemonade by filling all the discarded water bottles with creek water and marketing the miraculous healing power of that water, of which this photo provides proof. Lourdes on the Accotink!



- NVATU:

The group worked together to redraft the appeal to NVATU for a mussel survey donation. Kris will send.

- Braddock Road Debris:

Philip described how Friends of Oak Hill Park had cleaned debris from the sidewalk on the Braddock Road bridge. FOHP could team up with FACC to remove the remaining debris if there is interest. Thomas noted VDOT had not been forthcoming with assistance. Kris suggested we could post any workday online and that the Braddock supervisor's office might be helpful.

Phillip asked if anyone had attended the Braddock Road widening meeting April 25, but no one had.

- Represent FACC:

- Lake Royal Mussel Rescue 5/19
Philip announced the Lake Royal mussel rescue will be May 19th. There do not appear to be as many mussels as found in previous lake drainings. Permits and official caution will not allow any mussels to leave the Pohick watershed, but perhaps some flexibility may develop.
- Long Branch Stream Valley Trail meeting 5/26
Philip noted this meeting will cover trail paving and possible connection across Olley Lane. Roger mentioned there are three options: leave trail as-is, add concrete shoulders, or pave with asphalt.
- Chesapeake Bay Awareness Week 6/4-12
Philip shared information on the first Chesapeake Bay Awareness Day, promoted by our ally, Chante Coleman of Choose Clean Water. It happens we have stream monitoring scheduled in that period, but this seemed perhaps too insignificant compared with events already listed. The group consensus was to list.
- Mantua Parade 6/11

Sue explained the Mantua Parade covers one mile, runs 1:15 – 1:30, will have a theme of volunteers, and free Baskins-Robbins ice cream will be available afterwards. Representative Connolly and Supervisor Smyth will attend. We can set up a display table. The discussion covered various options for floats – auto, bike, canoe, or kayak. A bike-towed kayak or canoe seems most likely. Philip displayed the FACC vests and wildlife hats participants may wish to wear. Sue, Ted, and Dave will coordinate.

- *Inspiring Connections Outdoors 6/11*

Kris announced he will lead this youth outing at Lake Accotink Park, involving picnics, fishing, and experiences in nature. co-leaders would be welcome.

- *Nutley Pond Water Chestnut 6/14*

Philip mentioned that Nutley Pond [Water chestnut](#) control will be on June 14th. This aquatic invasive was discovered last year in this pond near Vienna Metro along the Hunter Branch tributary. VDGIF is leading the effort to eradicate it before it spreads further. On June 15th a similar effort will take place against an earlier infestation at Pohick Regional Park, adjacent to Accotink Bay. There was discussion of the barbed seeds of this plant, giving it another name, Water caltrop, a reference to a medieval weapon.

- *[Accotink Gorge:](#)*

Kris shared a description of the first Accotink Gorge [Wisteria Workday](#) on April 26th. He, Beverley, and Philip were the sole participants in this first test. The steep slopes in this particular spot present an extra challenge. Kris stated our next goal is to declare victory and get publicity. Several dates were proposed for awareness walks in June and July, but no satisfactory date was found. Philip brought up again the need for funding to pay for professional removal efforts. Discussion covered temporary effects of cutting alone and the need for herbicide application.

- *[Creek Critters:](#)*

Kris talked about this May 7th cooperative activity at Wakefield Park with Audubon Naturalist Society using Creek Critters, an app designed to lure kids into creeks via their iPhones. Turnout was good, including a number of Girl Scouts. The day included talks to the participants on stream impacts. Kris observed the partnership with Audubon was good and we should endeavor to do more with them.

- *[Master Plan:](#)*

Philip shared observations from the [May 16th Lake Accotink Park meeting](#) focused on the future of the lake.

There were about 70 attendees, including: Supervisor Herrity, Park Authority board members for Braddock, Lee, & Springfield, and At-large, and representatives of FLAP & Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley.

There were five basic options put forward at the meeting, along with some pros and cons of each:

- A. Continued dredging every 15 years or so
- B. Installation of a forebay to capture most sediment as it enters the lake, with annual or biennial dredging
- C. Installation of a series of steel barriers upstream to provide a “beaver dam” type function, but with little reduction in lake dredging
- D. Dam breaching with stream channel reinforcement – no lake
- E. Dam breaching with stream channel reinforcement – plus a berm on the north bank to create a smaller lake

What little consensus there was among meeting attendees leaned toward retention of the lake, with some interest in the smaller lake. The point was made often that the TMDL study results may leave little choice to retaining the dam. The master plan seems to be on hold again until TMDL results are in, probably the end of 2016.

Dave proposed a sixth option for the lake – retaining the dam for flood control, while allowing the lake to convert to wetland while also providing a fish passage.

Our discussion covered the impact on freshwater mussels below the dam, the value of reducing sediment entering the lake, the question of connecting lake options with the rest of the Master Plan, and the need for a watershed-friendly Master Plan. There was talk of real beaver dams vs. steel ones.

Kris suggested we focus on what's best without selecting one option so that we may be in the position of being a good partner and advocate of best practices. Flint proposed we should advocate for biodiversity and water quality.

Ted discoursed on the lake already being a focal point for nature observation, where a boardwalk through enhanced wetlands resulting from changes to the lake could be an alternative to other forms of recreation. Suzy made the comparison to the Huntley Meadows wetland boardwalk. Philip noted that during the Master Plan meeting there had been many similar references to Huntley Meadows.

Thomas expressed how significant the lake is for the community, acting as a big lure for those not already focused on nature.

- [Americana Meadow:](#)

Suzy thanked all for a tremendous volunteer effort that planted 1000 plugs of native plants over two days. Flint remarked on the value of a thank you email to volunteers with link to our photos. Susan suggested an article for the Annandale Blog. Suzy observed that Supervisor Cook had a mention in his newsletter. Suzy and Philip discussed arrangements to add mulch to protect one section.

- [Wakefield Park Plant Rescues:](#)

Suzy and Philip reviewed the situation for return of rescued plants to their original location. Legal obstacles seem to prevent this, but the Wakefield Run stream restoration site is an alternative. Philip will arrange a time very soon. Dave and Thomas are willing to join.

- [Grant at Little Run Elementary:](#)

Kris summarized his application for a \$10,000 Fairfax Water [education and outreach grant](#), completed with “hours to spare” before the deadline.

- [495 Express Lanes:](#)

Kris recounted how, following our documentation of leftover erosion and sediment control issues from the 495 Express Lanes project, Amy Gould of Fairfax County Restoration Project had “rattled the right cages” to result in a [group visit to survey the situation](#) on the ground. Kris and Philip mentioned the attendees included Sen. Dave Marsden, Del. Vivian Watts, Nick Donohue, Deputy Commissioner of Transportation from Richmond and several others representing VDOT, Mark Thomas from Chairman Bulova’s office, Fairfax County Dept. of Transportation, Stormwater Planning Division, Express lanes operator Transurban, and Fairfax County Restoration Project.

Kris observed how Sen. Marsden and Del. Watts has spoken well of the issues we raised. Kris explained that another significant issue surveyed was the landscaping contract, which had been “basically thrown away”; with the responsible VDOT landscaper pushed out while the contractor installed substandard plants which received poor care, resulting in poor survival rates.

Kris also recapped our original 495 Express Lanes erosion and sediment fight and lawsuit. It had been, Kris opined, a good day for “rubbing noses”. Philip passed around the briefing book of photos VDOT had brought to the survey. The next step Kris suggests is more meetings to secure gains, hopefully pushing things forward on I-66 widening and even an update to the VDOT stormwater manual.

Philip grumbled about the many noises regarding “lessons learned” heard from VDOT on the day of the survey, but was skeptical. Roger pondered how the lessons might be made available to public scrutiny.

- *I-66 Project:*

The 495 discussion flowed into the topic of I-66 widening and how any “lessons learned” might apply there. Discussion covered how late it is, with the request for proposal already completed and how political-level influence might apply. Thomas noted the upcoming 2017 campaign for governor is an opportunity for momentum if we act now.

Philip read some notes provided by Vivian Morgan-Mendez of Friends of Nottoway on the I-66 meeting held by Supervisor Smyth on May 16th:

Fluor dropped out of the bidding, leaving only Transurban and a Spanish group.

Fairfax County taxpayers will be stuck with a huge stormwater bill no matter which is chosen.

A Dunn Loring/Merrifield resident said that they are already experiencing unprecedented flooding from 495. VDOT said soil conditions made stormwater control vaults unfeasible.

Mass transit consists of limited commuter buses.

Philip informed that additional public meetings are on May 23rd, 24th, & 25th.

- *Solidarity with Huntley Meadows:*

Philip shared that Friends of Huntley Meadows is seeking support regarding proposed Dominion power lines, and although not exactly our issue, we might wish to support them. A draft of proposed comments was approved with minor edits.

- *Al Fresco Meeting:*

Philip passed along the suggestion from Donald Pless, champion of Flag Run, for an outdoor meeting, likely at a Lake Accotink Park pavilion. The idea was well-received. Philip will schedule.

- *Kena Temple Developments:*

Sue remarked that the former Kena Temple site developer will have a public meeting May 18th to present new plans to the community.

- Litter Initiatives:

Dave reported he had reviewed the [Mt. Vernon Citizens' Association Trash Action Plan](#) and recommends FACC again give its support. Dave did have some concerns about previously-unnoticed mention of wasp and bat nests as hazards. [NOTE – Close examination shows this to be merely a quote from the Virginia Code Section 46-1-1, on various health hazards of trash.] Dave will coordinate with Betsy Martin.
