



## 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 – January 17, 2017

Next Meeting: February 21, 2017 (Third Tuesday of each month)  
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

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#### **Present:**

Dave Lincoln  
Ted Welch  
Beverley Rivera  
Philip Latasa  
Julie Chang  
Kris Unger  
Joe Hirz - guest

#### **Upcoming events**

- Conservation Lobby Day, January 23, 2017
- Day of Action meeting, January 24, 2017
- Lake Accotink Park Master Plan Natural Resources workshop, January TBD, 2017
- Friends of Friends meeting, January 28, 2017
- Lake Accotink Park Stream Monitoring, March 11, 2017

#### **Action Items:**

- *Everyone – Brainstorm grant application ideas*
- *Ted - Contact Scout Store*
- *Kris – Request M.O.M.S. donation day*
- *Kris & Julie – Discuss Accotink Gorge with FROGS*
- *Kris – Develop new community grant application*
- *Kris – Send letter of support for legislation*
- *Philip send letter of support for Conservation Assistance*
- *Kris & Philip – Prepare Accotink Gorge recommendations for Dominion*

#### **FACC Subjects Discussed –**

- *Fairhill Elementary:*

Joe Hirz made a slideshow presentation of the extensive plans for stormwater runoff management at Fairhill Elementary he has prepared as part of his master's thesis in landscape management.

Presentation highlights:

- The school is off Cedar lane, between Lee Hwy and Rt. 50.
- The site is on a bit of a hill, right on the subwatershed divide between Long Branch north and Bear Branch.
- Meetings with students, teachers, and parents indicated desire for more shade, more playground activities, more butterflies, less standing water and less mud.
- Envisioned enhancements include:
  - Planting the back slope of the school, but a previous planting effort there failed

- Artificial turf play field with enhanced stormwater detention
  - Outdoor amphitheater
  - Future “wow” factor - the swale along the back fence with outdoor classrooms
- Budget is an issue limiting how much of the plan might be accomplished.
  - Initial focus will be enhancements to the bare ground near the back drain area, such as rain garden, filter socks, and new seating.
  - All features need an eye to educational value.
  - PTA, teachers, and principal are “Gung Ho!”
  - Labor is the biggest factor.
  - Partners with expertise and labor resources are needed.
  - Ongoing maintenance is a challenge.
  - Redevelopment is reducing pervious surfaces nearby.
  - Storm drain markers incorrectly indicating Cameron Run will be replaced with Accotink Creek.

Ted noted redevelopment going on at the nearby Kena Temple and Cravens Nursery sites.

Kris observed the support of the community is an excellent foundation. Lands & Waters’ education grant may tie in.

Dave advised seeking low hanging fruit and guaranteeing early success. Ted added the fruit should be highly visible.

Joe offered the thought of an FACC booth at the school Spring Fling.

● Grant at Little Run Elementary:

Kris will meet Jeanette Stewart of Lands & Waters regarding planning for spring education and outreach activities. The school is pursuing an FSNG grant for plantings in spring, which the Fairfax Water grant did not cover. Audubon naturalist Society may do a Creek Critters outing at the school.

● Represent FACC:

○ Long Branch Falls Park Deer Fencing 12/31

Philip advised representatives of Public Works and Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley met in the park and discussed new native plantings, surrounded by 10 foot fencing. Neighbors will monitor the fences for breaks. Stream restoration design in the park is likely to begin this year.

○ Mt. Vernon TMDL Meeting 1/3

Philip stated Supervisor Storck arranged this meeting, prompted by Glenda Booth. Turnout far exceeded that at the Government Center on the same topic of Countywide TMDL’s. Almost an environmental Who’s Who, the meeting included Friends of Dyke Marsh, Friends of Huntley Meadows, Friends of Little Hunting Creek, Audubon Naturalist Society, Sierra Club, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, and freelancer Joe Chudzik. Philip took the opportunity to discuss the Accotink Gorge with Supervisor Storck and our hopes for the Park Authority to acquire the 10-acre parcel for sale there

○ EQAC Public Hearing 1/11

Kris reported he spoke at the meeting, giving a status report on FACC, focusing on the Accotink Gorge, TMDL, and trash.

- *Braddock District Friends Federation Meeting 1/21*  
Philip noted Tony Vellucci has postponed his Braddock District get-together to sometime in either late February or March.
- *Conservation Lobby Day 1/23*  
Dave and Julie plan to attend. They will meet in a group with the Lt. Governor and individually with their district legislators. The language below\* will serve as a guide for supporting bills of interest to you. Julie mentioned NOVA Natives may be there.
- *Plant NOVA Natives Steering Committee 1/24*  
Julie is still planning to attend. She remarked on the native plant speakers series at Green Springs Garden Park.
- *Our Land, Our Water, Our Food 1/26*  
Kris will speak, at the invitation of Audubon Naturalist Society. Some of our I-66 Corridor Coalition partners will also be there. Kris noted Audubon is headquartered in Bethesda, but plans increased advocacy in Northern Virginia.
- *Lee District Meeting Marathon 1/28*  
Philip described the Lee District noontime Open House, bookended by morning and afternoon town halls with opportunities to meet District staff and General Assembly members. All are welcome to attend.
- *Friends of Friends Meeting 1/28*  
Kris and Beverley plan to attend on behalf of FACC.
- *Invasive Management Area Appreciation Event 3/5*  
Philip inquired if anyone would care to attend to represent FACC.
- *NOVA's Annual Green Festival 4/25*  
Kris will attend representing FACC and will speak on the topic of ocean trash. Alice Ferguson Foundation will also have a speaker.
- *Springfest*  
Julie brought up the topic of FACC participation in Fairfax County's Springfest. There was discussion of our participation last year, but no decision about 2017. Julie may participate with Clean Fairfax.

- [Stream Restoration Discussion:](#)

Philip opened the topic of this different perspective calling into question the value of stream restorations. He noted the Reedy Creek Coalition in Richmond, in a watershed similar to ours, recently persuaded city council to not proceed with a restoration. There was discussion, but no conclusions.

- PayPal Donation:

Philip reported we have continued to receive donations, including \$150.00 from Mary Cortina and \$50.00 meant for FLAP, but mistakenly given to us, designated for the dog bag stands in Lake Accotink Park. Philip will contact FLAP.

- Hostek Payment:

Philip provided invoices for payments out of pocket for our domain name and website hosting. Beverley issued a check for \$132.45.

- Virginia Conservation Network Membership:

Dave advocated membership for FACC at the \$100 "Dogwood" level for non-profits without staff. Kris concurred with the value of membership. Action was postponed until after the Virginia Conservation Network's Lobby Day.

- Stormwater Local Assistance Fund:

At the request of Audubon Naturalist Society, Kris wrote to Delegate Marcus Simon requesting his support for the Stormwater Local Assistance Fund, which provides funds to localities for stormwater mitigation projects.

- 495 Express Lanes:

Philip talked about his visit with Asah Rouhi of Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation district, to assess one particular issue left over from the 495 Express Lane. This was a natural spring first protected during construction, then trashed, and now left in a mess. VDOT approached NVSWCD for assistance and hopes the Park Authority will contribute funding. Asad will prepare proposals that attempt to avoid use of heavy equipment in natural areas.

- Conservator-at-Large:

Philip passed on the information that Sue wishes to step down from the Board due to a number of conflicting obligations. Discussion led to a consensus to deal with the issue in February.

- Litter Initiatives:

- Day of Action

Dave confirmed the Day of Action meeting is January 24<sup>th</sup>, and that we have interest from several groups.

- SB925 & HJ626

Philip described two litter bills in the General Assembly which need our support. SB925, introduced by Senator Chap Petersen, representing part of our watershed, would provide for a 5-cent fee on plastic bags. HJ626, introduced by Delegate Paul Krizek, also representing part of our watershed, would mandate a study of the negative effects of litter in Virginia.

Philip suggested that in solidarity with Friends of Little Hunting Creek and other fellow groups, we will also want to consider support for SB898, introduced by Senator Richard Stuart, requiring Alexandria to clean up its combined sewage outfalls.

Without objection, the proposed letter of support (text below\*) was approved. Kris will send to legislators in our watershed.

- *Virginia Conservation Network*  
Julie let us know she had reached out to the VCN regarding the Day of Action, but had no response yet. Julie also mentioned she had distributed flyers at the Clean Energy Career Fair and Conference, including to the Virginia Secretary of Energy.

• Accotink Gorge:

- *Friends Agreement*  
Philip advised he had forwarded our new version to the Park Authority, with no word on when they will respond.
- *Dominion Power*  
Kris related the news of a recent site visit to the Gorge with Drew Cooney, Dominion Power Forestry Coordinator, and Ed Richardson, Park Authority Area Manager. Drew offered cooperation, at least to the extent of supplying herbicide, and asked for our recommendations on how Dominion may alter practices to address wisteria in its right-of-way. Kris will follow up with the Grass Bunch for input regarding those recommendations. Dave and Ted expressed interest in herbicide certification.
- *Outreach to FROGS*  
Julie discussed gradual, but definite progress establishing a relationship with FROGS that may lead to cooperation in the Accotink Gorge.

• Community Grant:

Kris had no action to report toward submission of a new grant application. Group discussion urged action forthwith, with ominous rumblings of a “Pay cut”.

• Americana Drive Cleanup:

Philip conveyed the topic of an Americana Drive cleanup, discussed at the Fairfax County Restoration Project meeting. At that meeting, Amy suggested a grant to engage a contractor. A possible model is work Lily Whitesell Of Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District is doing with youth groups in the Little Hunting Creek area. Kris opined that the homeowners associations should take the lead. Kris also mentioned that Annandale is a possible nexus of the Audubon Naturalist Society’s focus on environmental justice, possibly with school tie-ins.

• MOM’s.:

Kris will make a renewed approach to the Merrifield MOM’s store, proposing a 5% donation day benefitting FACC. Kris mused about possibly connecting MOM’s with Fairhill Elementary.

• Conservation Assistance Articles:

Philip noted promotion of the [Conservation Assistance Program](#) in Supervisor Stork’s Mount Vernon Advisor and Supervisor Cook’s Braddock Beacon. He proposed language applauding them for doing so and encouraging continuing promotion. Philip will send the letter, as edited during discussion.

Dave remarked that he is presenting the idea of Conservation Assistance Program projects to his civic association board.

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\*The Friends of Accotink Creek support **SB925**, to control the sale of disposable plastic bags. We strongly endorse and support efforts like this one to reduce trash in local watersheds. As a Virginia legislator, we encourage you to support the work of your many constituents who participate in our stream cleanups, by voting for SB925, imposing a five-cent cost on disposable plastic bags.

The Friends of Accotink Creek also support **HJ636**, to conduct a study the economic impacts of litter on fishing, farming, and water quality in urban streams. The data produced will inform ongoing efforts to control trash in the Commonwealth.

Each year Friends of Accotink Creek and other civic groups mobilize volunteers who clean tons of plastic bags and containers, as well as trash and debris including tires and metal, from streams that feed into the Chesapeake Bay. Across the United States, millions of tons of plastic waste are dumped into waterways, fouling waters for both marine life and human usage.

The Friends of Accotink Creek also support **SB898**, requiring all Potomac River watershed combined sewer overflow outfalls to be brought into compliance with law by 2020. 70 million gallons of raw sewage and polluted stormwater flow into the Potomac River each year from systems that combine polluted stormwater with household sewage, violating federal Clean Water Act requirements and posing a serious risk to public health and natural habitats.