



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 – March 19, 2019

Next Meeting: April 16, 2019 (Third Tuesday of each month)
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

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Present:

Dave Lincoln, Anastasios Galatis, Sandy Collins, Philip Latasa, Julie Chang (via conference call), Kris Unger, Suzy Foster, Beverley Rivera

Upcoming events

- Daniels Run Invasives Workday, March 30, 2019
- Patriot Park Vernal Pool Walk, April 12, 2019
- Lake Accotink Vernal Pool Walk, April 14, 2019
- NVCC Green Festival, April 25, 2019
- Fairfax City Earth Day & Daniels Run Invasives, April 28, 2019
- Fairhill Elementary 3R Planting, April 30, 2019
- Mantua Earth Day, April 30, 2019
- Mason Neck Eagle Festival, May 16, 2019

FACC Subjects Discussed –

• Represent FACC:

- *Plant NOVA Natives Partnership Feb. 26, 2019*
Kris attended and reported the event went well and was well attended. The focus was on social media and advocacy. Attendees were urged to 'fight for every project'.
- *Vernal Pool Program Mar. 3, 2019*
Dave, Anastasios, and Sandy were there tabling for FACC. Sandy felt the display space was tight, but it was overall a good program. Dave mentioned getting good circulation at our display and that he had the opportunity to speak to Senator Surovell regarding the SaMS (salt management strategy) and found a willing ear. Anastasios was inspired to begin working on ideas to update our display materials.
- *NVCT 25th Anniversary Luncheon Mar. 21, 2019*
Kris will attend for the networking possibilities, and managed to score a waiver of the \$85 ticket.
- *Planning Commission Environment Committee Mar. 21, 2019*
The Planning Commission Environment Committee will meet on March 21, Philip advised. The meeting will focus on a Policy Plan amendment proposal to support natural landscaping at county facilities. The proposal is still in the process of being developed, and no public hearing dates have been scheduled yet.

- *Save the Dandelions Mar. 23 & 24, 2019*
Kris and Anastasios will attend this annual event at MOM's Organic Market in Merrifield. Kris observed this is a bit of a networking thing and wryly noted it is where 'People walking by explain why they drink bottled water.'
- *Joint Environmental Meeting Apr. 2, 2019*
Philip mentioned that he had seen information from Faith Action for Climate Solutions advising the school board and board of supervisors will hold a meeting to develop a joint sustainability and environmental stewardship plan. FACS plans to have some people attend and encouraged others to do so.

The FACS information also described the Environmental Improvement Program, which funds projects such as the Invasive Management Area, [Conservation Assistance](#), stream restoration, etc. The EIP had been funded at a level of \$535,000 for many years, but will be increased to \$916,615 in FY 2020.

- [Student Environmental Action Showcase Apr. 23, 2019](#)
Philip enquired if anyone was interested in representing FACC. There were no commitments.
- *NVCC Green Festival Apr. 25, 2019*
Philip lamented the lack of results from our attendance in previous years. The theme for the 2019 event is "Biodiversity and Urbanization." There was discussion of previous poor results.
- *Mason Neck Eagle Festival, May 16, 2019*
Sandy discussed this event with a contact made at the March 3 vernal pool program, and believes it will be well attended. Sandy will table for FACC. Philip worried about the challenge of competing for attention with the live raptor and live reptile displays.

- TMDL:

Kris noted the Long Branch (central) salt management community listening session had been pushed back to a date uncertain.

Dave reported a good SaMS work session last week, including a report from Fairfax County on various localities' efforts at improved salt management. The Community Associations Institute is interested and will be a good vehicle for spreading the message. The Pentagon's Washington Headquarters Services is using magnesium chloride, a less toxic alternative, at the Mark Center.

- Lake Accotink Park Master Plan:

Philip recapped a March 4 meeting with DPWES for representatives of Save Lake Accotink, FLAP, and FACC. Salient points:

- Dredging target date is now 2025.
- The preferred dewatering site is north of Braddock Road, in Wakefield Park.
- There will be considerable tree loss for the dewatering site and the permanent pipeline leading from the lake to the site.
- A sediment forebay is not worthwhile, because it would fill so rapidly.
- Cost estimates for dredging are ballooning.
- The county will seek Commonwealth funding @ 3% interest, rather than a higher-cost bond.
- Public meetings will resume in spring 2019.
- If the dam should be removed, sediment can be washed away due to a standard 88% of sediment ending up in floodplains and by doing a bit more stream restoration to satisfy the

[TMDL](#).



- Stream restoration can be reduced even further because the standard calculation of 248 pounds of sediment captured per linear foot of stream restoration can be doubled by studies of specific conditions in Accotink Creek.
- The sense of the room seemed to be that the smaller lake option is looking better.
- [More detailed meeting notes here](#) [Meeting Presentation](#)

If the smaller lake option is chosen, it will take 300 years for the smaller lake to need dredging even without restoration of Flag Run, but restoration of the entire length of Flag Run is planned soon.

Kris felt we need to follow up with DEQ on sediment reduction. Kris will meet with Save Lake Accotink to discuss the path forward.

Philip has arranged with GMU's PEREC to extend its study of migratory fish in Accotink Creek farther upstream to help answer questions about the benefits of fish passage. FACC will be expected to aid in funding the eDNA sampling @ \$40 per test, total to be clarified. There are currently believed to be no migratory shad swimming as far upstream as the dam, due to low populations in the Potomac.

Suzy observed there may be some resistance to a fish ladder due to cost and maintenance concerns. In discussion, Kris offered the sage saying, *'Until the problem is made obvious, people are unaware.'* Sandy observed the obvious issue of the future of the lake offers a way to that wider public awareness of the problems afflicting the lake.



Accotink Ark?

Accotink Creek's freshwater mussels face certain doom if the dam is removed. Philip pondered the possibility of an Ark for mussels that might be like the mussel baskets used by the Anacostia Watershed Society. This mussel Ark would need to last, not for 40 days, but for 100 years until sediment is controlled.

• Conservation Leadership Project:

Julie informed us Katie will return to do more invasives control at Daniels Run Elementary School on March 30, (11 am - 2 pm). Katie is looking for more volunteers this time, so all are invited.

On Sunday, April 28, from 2:30 - 5 pm, the City of Fairfax has its Earth Day event at Daniels Run. There will be various tables and talks about Earth Day-related topics at the park behind the school. Katie will have a simultaneous workday with an education component.

• 4104 Woodlark Drive:

The applicant has proceeded with work on the site, clearing away the construction spoils that had been dumped there, and apparently spreading them over the lot. They have also installed a sewer hookup. Apparently, the original building permit issued for a 35' setback was never revoked. It is not clear what the applicant's strategy is, pending hearing of their appeal to the Board of Supervisors.

• Clean Water Rule:

Kris is talking with the Southern Environmental Law Center about commenting on the proposed WOTUS changes. Philip noted the SELC has offered to support us in doing an op-ed on vernal pools and also noted that the SELC website has a page for submitting official comments on the rule change.

<https://www.southernenvironment.org/protect-southern-water>

- Vernal Pools:

- *Patriot Park Walk*

Kris announced a planned vernal pool awareness walk with Mike Hayslett on April 12. It seems the Park Authority got “cold feet” and is asking for a \$25 activity fee. The vernal pools in Patriot Park maybe threatened by athletic field construction, depending on VDOT’s completion of a Shirleygate Road extension. Kris hopes to get more eyes on the threat.

- *Lake Accotink Park Walk*

Kris and Dave are also organizing a vernal pool walk at Lake Accotink, like last year, but without Michael Hayslett this time. In discussion, we settled on April 14th, 2:00 – 4:00 pm.

- *Lake Accotink Park Sediment*

During a watershed walk March 11, Kris observed a vernal pool that was severely contaminated with sediment. The source was a blown out drain pipe from a stormwater pond in the neighboring industrial park. DPWES inspectors are following up on Kris’ report, but status is unclear.

Kris also observed excessive green algae in the vernal pool, possibly fertilized by the extra sediment input. Dave queried if sediment had escaped into the chain of vernal pools downhill, but Kris has observed none so far.

Suzy explained that DPWES stormwater pond inspections do not typically include the end of outlet pipes, nor would the escaped sediment typically be seen as a concern. Incredulous discussion of these facts followed.

- INOVA/Fairview Park:

Philip brought up the issue of Fairview Park (east of the Beltway just north of Route 50), outside our watershed, but connected to the [INOVA](#) saga and resembling the recent conflict on [Dogue Creek](#). The applicant is requesting to build multi-story housing in the floodplain, but can already build multi-story office buildings by right. Kris mentioned he has met with leaders of the downstream Raymondale Civic Association interested in protecting Fairview Lake and limiting traffic. Their situation is complicated by being in Mason District, while the Fairview area is in Providence. Kris will continue to work with Raymondale. [NOTE: Another demerit for INOVA – a [March 21 oil spill](#)]

- *EQAC April agenda*

Philip pointed out INOVA may be on the EQAC April agenda and we may want to attend.

- Fairfax Healthy Communities Coalition:

The issue was whether or not to join the coalition. Kris praised the concept of a coalition approach to environmental issues. He pointed to our coalition on the I-66 project as having prevented conflict between competing environmental goals. Philip questioned the effort required to participate in this group only marginally connected to watersheds, but advocated getting our questions included in any planned candidate forum. There was a mild consensus to join. Kris will follow up.

- Elections:

- *Sierra Club*

Sierra Club is putting together a questionnaire for supervisor candidates. Philip submitted several suggested questions, a couple of which were used, but mixed with what others had submitted until the result resembled something between sausage-making and the story of a camel being a horse designed by a committee.



- *350 Fairfax*

350 Fairfax will partner with other groups to host three Supervisor Candidate Forums on the Environment; May 2 for north county districts, May 9 for south county, and June 6 for chair candidates. Philip asked if we want to be one of the partners and the consensus was in favor.

- *Fairfax League of Conservation Voters*

Philip expressed the concern that this group may have fallen off the radar.

- *Providence District Council*

April 10 is the date for the Providence District Council Candidates' Forum for Providence supervisor candidates - 7:30 p.m. - 9:00 p.m., Providence District Community Center

- *FACC Questionnaire*

Since other environmental groups getting involved in elections have little watershed focus, Philip asked if we want to send our own questionnaire to the Accotink supervisor candidates, with an apology for questionnaire fatigue. The consensus was in favor and Philip will pursue.

- 495 Express Lanes/I-66 Tour:

Kris is working with Fairfax County Restoration Project to arrange a reprise of previous years' tours of erosion problems on the 495 Express Lanes. The tour may include post-cleanup [Americana Drive](#). Philip mentioned that one lingering problem area, the natural spring north of 236, has recently had the outfall portion repaired, accomplished by passing materials over the soundwall with a crane. Suzy commented on the need to get a positive response from FCDOT on the Americana North trail/ meadow project.

- Air Quality Permits:

Philip passed on some information Flint had shared about local air quality permits up for renewal. Admitting air quality may not be a typical watershed issue, Philip noted there are some interesting ones in our watershed – INOVA, Fort Belvoir, part of the Newington tank farm, and the natural gas storage caverns next to Lake Accotink Park ([1](#) , [2](#)). The gas caverns are a distinct case, 400 feet deep in granite, but the gas being held in place less by the rock and more by the aquifer above. Philip shared Flint's suggestion we contact the Permitting Engineer to signal that the public is interested. Discussion followed, but there was no enthusiasm to take action.

- Long Branch central Conservation Project:

Kris advised DPWES is considering a conservation project along the length of Long Branch central. Suzy added that the concept is moving slowly toward a comprehensive look at all aspects of the watershed.

- GIS Conservation Strategy:

Northern Virginia Conservation Trust is looking to shift into a different strategy, having already protected much of the readily available parcels. Kris is in discussions with NVCT to find mutually beneficial applications for their GIS resources.

- Potomac Watershed Cleanup:

Philip confirmed cleanups will still begin on April 6 at Lake Accotink Park. Our own sites will start April 20. We will be joined at Pickett Road by a new group, the Fairfax County Public Safety Cadets.

- Friends of Parks:

- Insurance

Beverley reported the best quote was about \$1400 per year for general liability with directors and officers coverage. This would be through same agency used by Friends of Huntley Meadows (who somehow are getting a much lower rate). Sandy and Philip confirmed their own inquiries had yielded similar quotes. Beverley proposed we dip into our \$5500 bank balance to fund one year of coverage, then reevaluate after seeing the results of our expected fundraising newsletter. Much discussion followed, including expressions of relief that the Americana Drive cleanup went off without injury despite the hazards.

Decisions were deferred until our next meeting. In the meanwhile, Sandy will enquire at the March 23rd Friends of Friends meeting how other groups are dealing with insurance, while Beverley will check again on matching Friends of Huntley Meadows' rates.

- Long Branch north:

Suzy let us know this stream restoration project is going into pre-concept discussions. The location is in the huge Porcelainberry patch at Route 50 and Prosperity Avenue.

- Donations:

- FLAP

Beverley confirmed the \$1,048 donation we had been holding for FLAP has now been transferred to the new FLAP bank account.

- Amazon Smile

We received a \$11.46 donation from the [AmazonSmile](#) Foundation as a result of activity between October 1 and December 31, 2018. Philip encouraged anyone shopping on Amazon to log on through AmazonSmile to support FACC at no cost.

- Towers Park Path:

VDOT is planning to connect segments of the shared use path along the south side of Lee Hwy where it crosses Hunter Branch, just west of Nutley Street. The path is just a couple hundred feet over largely cleared ground, but it will cover a small bit of Hunter Branch. Philip attended a public meeting where he advocated for mitigation in the same stream.

At the same meeting Philip also learned from VDOT staff that the [Frontier Drive](#) extension is unfunded, so this tributary of Long Branch south has a reprieve for now.

- *Flag Run Plant Rescues:*

Suzy announced plant rescues planned for Flag Run in advance of stream restoration, [March 31](#) and [April 7](#).

- *Mantua Earth Day:*

April 30th is the Mantua Earth Day event. Suzy will be among the speakers on several environmental topics.
