



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 – February 16, 2021

Next Meeting: March 16, 2021 (Third Tuesday of each month via on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice)

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Present: Sandy Collins, Avril Garland, Joe Hirz, Philip Latasa, Edward Lee, Dave Lincoln, Beverly Rivera, Kim Schauer

Guests: Ellie Ashford, of the Annandale Blog;

All via on-line meeting, due to COVID 19 closures and precautions

Upcoming events

- Mike Hayslett's site visit and review of Vernal Pools & Wetlands opportunities in FCPA land, tentatively weekend of March 14, 2021
- Audubon Naturalist Society's [Community Action 101 workshop](#) at NoVA Annandale Campus, May 14 (\$20 registration)

FACC Subjects Discussed –

Represent FACC:

[Long Branch central Project](#), Feb 11. None of us attended, but with second-hand information, Philip noted the focus was on stream restoration projects. There was also talk of public education and upland stormwater control projects.

[Old Lee Hwy Project Meeting](#), Feb 17. Philip noted this meeting will provide updates on the status of the Old Lee Highway Multimodal Improvements Project. This project to make a street friendly to bicyclists and pedestrians; This is in contrast to the [George Snyder Trail](#) extension, a plan to make a forest friendly to asphalt. There should be little direct watershed impact to the Old Lee Hwy Project, but we should advocate for stormwater controls and native landscaping.

[Lake Accotink Dredge Coring](#), Feb 19. Philip noted that County staff and its contractors will be holding a public education session to explain more about sediment core sampling. It will be at the marina parking lot—look for the truck with a tent next to it. Channel 16 may film the event. The rain date is February 22nd. Reviewing the schedule of the plan: Alternative Analysis through Spring 2021; Start of Work 2023; Completion 2025.

Fighting gas-powered leaf blowers: Avril reported on a movement to get County and/or State legislation to ban gas-powered leaf blowers due to their air and noise pollution. Fairfax County Alliance to Regulate Gas Leaf Blowers meets Wed Feb 23rd, 7 PM. Gas leaf blowers contribute to air pollution, noise pollution, water pollution, fossil fuel use, harm to insect habitats, harm to birds, and environmental injustice. You are all welcome to tune into our first meeting. Action is needed on both County and state level. For Zoom link, please email lowyj@cox.net. Alternatives to gas blowers: battery/cord blowers, or, better still, rakes and tarps. Another good option is mulching leaves with a mulching attachment to a lawn mower.

Vernal Pools: We discussed planning for Mike Hayslett’s visit to further identify potential locations for vernal pools, produce an educational video, and reinforce Parks Department’s support for vernal pool enhancements. Philip will suggest Friday, March 12, through Monday, March 15 for Mike’s visit. Beverly reported that she has gained permission from Virginia Lakes and Watershed to apply a \$2000 grant for “Follow the Stream” to the vernal pools visit. Discussion followed about whom to contact in Parks to participate and ensure decision-makers are engaged. Joe Hirz proposed two locations in Eakin Park for investigation during the visit (outlined in map and pictured in photos).



Legislation: Avril reported good progress getting these bills through committees on which FACC has already sent messages in support:

[HB 1902](#) Expanded Polystyrene: Bans “Styrofoam” use by food vendors by 2025.

[HJR 527](#) / [SB 1100 Item 373 #4s](#) Invasives Study (Bulova): Funds a study to produce recommendations on limiting sale of invasive plant species. ***[late-breaking news from Avril: Both houses passed the bill, now awaiting the Governor’s signature.]***

[HB 2030](#) Neonicotinoid pesticides: Limits uses of neonicotinoid insecticides and permits localities to ban them.

[HB2042](#) Tree Replacement: Permits localities to strengthen their tree replacement standards, especially for stormwater control.

[HB1800 Item 377 #6h](#) / [SB 1100 Item 377#2s](#) Research to Reduce Salt in Water Resources. Funds a DEQ research project to test using native, salt-tolerant plants growing in biochar soil to remove salt from stormwater runoff.

[SB1274](#) Wildlife Corridors: Incorporates wildlife corridors into Commonwealth agency planning.

[SB 1199](#) Conservation Easements: Protects original intent of conservation easements.

Philip noted concern about [SB 1164](#) “Advanced Recycling” which would loosen regulation of plastic waste plants. This one is opposed by all the environmental groups and supported by the chemical lobby.

Locally, the Board of Supervisors hearing on February 23 will consider prohibiting the use of plastic bags for collection of yard waste. Philip took an action to send comments in support of the proposed ordinance.

Accotink TMDL: Dave related DEQ's on-line public meeting on January 21 that opened a month-long



An uncovered salt pile stands in the parking lot of a shopping plaza in Springfield, VA. (November 2018/Glenda Booth)

public comment period on the Salt Management Strategy Toolkit, an outgrowth of the Accotink TMDL and the identification of the Accotink as an impaired stream with Chloride pollution as a cause factor. An overview of the toolkit is [at this link](#). The SaMS Toolkit has information on how reduction of salt wastewater can be accompanied by cost savings for private and public operators. The [Bay Journal](#) had an article on the Salt Management Toolkit. Their photo of a poorly managed salt pile is in our watershed on Bland Street in downtown Springfield.

Watershed Disasters:

Stormwater Drain Break: Philip described the continued sedimentation of a pool along the entrance to Lake Accotink Park caused by a broken drain from a stormwater pond on adjoining business property. It has been reported, and nothing happened. Sandy took action to notify Supervisor Lusk about the persistent problem.

Uncovered salt pile on parking lot behind Boston Properties (Accotink Gorge): Dave reported a salt pile that Philip discovered exposed for the second time. DPWES responded and provided photos of the pile covered after discussion with the manager. Philip suggested notifying the District Supervisor (Mount Vernon).

Potomac Watershed Cleanup: Following up on the issue discussed in January, Philip noted there seems to be a race on between the vaccinations and the spreading variants, and that it isn't clear which trend will be prevailing in April. The consensus was to go ahead and schedule the cleanups and re-evaluate next month.

zMod: Philip noted the County's revision of land use planning called zMod, the exact provisions of which are not yet clear. But some citizens are alarmed, saying the public will have less opportunity to be heard on proposed developments. A group has formed the [Act4Fairfax](#) website.

Western Annandale CBC (Community Business Center): Philip reported on status of a proposal (discussed previously) to allow commercial buildings in current residentially zoned areas off Hummer Road. The watershed impact was small, but it seemed to be an abuse of the special redevelopment zoning. Supervisor Gross has withdrawn it from consideration.

Franconia Governmental Center Relocation: Philip noted the current Franconia Government Center,



which includes the Lee District supervisor's office, is located just outside the boundaries of our watershed. It is due to be relocated to a parcel that straddles the boundary with Dogue Creek. Would anyone like to work with the Supervisor's office on encouraging watershed friendly features? Friends of Hunley Meadow might be interested in a joint effort. Sandy took an action to correspond with the Supervisor.

(Photo: Future site of Franconia Governmental Center)

Blake Lane Park: Philip noted the Board of Supervisors will hold a public hearing on April 13th about the proposed transfer of Blake Lane Park from the School Board to the Park Authority. Philip will draft comments to the supervisors supporting the transfer.

Accotink Gorge invasive plant control: Avril and Philip visited the gorge with FCPA's Invasive Management Coordinator Patricia Greenberg on February 3 to discuss invasive wisteria eradication in the Gorge. They are positive about trying to address the wisteria infestation, but any details for how to make things happen or go beyond the small efforts of a few volunteers remain to be worked out. They suggested trying for corporate sponsorship. Avril asked for volunteers to work in the Invasive Management Area in the Accotink Gorge Invasives, noting that becoming an invasive management area site leader is very simple: she only had to: 1) participate in 3 invasive removal events, 2) go to the Fairfax County Government Center to get fingerprinted and fill out a form. 3) attend a 45-minute PowerPoint presentation with a County invasive program manager. During the pandemic, training has been somewhat curtailed.

Bamboo Initiative: Avril reported a meeting has been scheduled for the end of February that includes the staff working group, Supervisors Storck and Alcorn to develop thoughts on next steps on possible legislation to fine residents for spreading bamboo outside their property.

Fairfax County Environmental Excellence Awards: Philip reported the 2020 Fairfax County Environmental Excellence Award winners named by EQAC include Meghan Walker, whom many of us know from her time on the Friends of Lake Accotink Park board. We also know Sara Holt, who is active in the Bamboo Initiative and Delegate Mark Keam, who represents part of our watershed in the Merrifield area.

Teen Job Fairs: Philip noted that Fairfax County Teen Job Fairs will be done online Saturday, March 13th from 2-5 p.m. and Saturday, March 20th from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. In the past, we have thought to get inspiration from these fairs on how we might organize our own summer jobs program, but never accomplished anything. The opportunity is there if someone wants to try again. Discussion followed about possible approaches to hiring students for summer work eradicating invasives. At the link one may [register to attend](#).

Donations: Philip reported we received donations this month of:
\$25 from Thomas Herre via PayPal

\$250 from “Blackbaud Giving Fund” (Gwen Latasa’s fundraising campaign for FACC)
\$25 from Philip, who paid for renewal of registration with the State Corporation
Commission

Posters Gallery: Philip put together a [photo gallery](#) of miscellaneous watershed posters and messages



we have accumulated, which was linked in the agenda. This is based on code borrowed from another website: There are still a few bugs. Advice on fixes is welcome. *We enjoyed a preview of the slides.*

(Photo: First slide in our new [“Posters” photo gallery](#))

Whither FACC?:

Bank Signatures Philip reported we need to remove Kris and add someone as the second signatory on our bank accounts. Beverley seems the most logical. All concurred (especially because Beverly had left the meeting).

Outreach Enhancement: Edward related planning he and Julie have been doing on outreach. They recommend that FACC establish an Instagram account. It offers the opportunity to reach a younger demographic. They will proceed and report back.

Virtual Meetings: Free Conference Call is asking for donations of about \$7 per month. The attendees agreed on a \$50 payment; Philip will look into it. [late-breaking news: Philip found they only take monthly donations, so we should discuss further.]