Notes from the President

Hello FLAP!

I have great news for you— the Lake Accotink master plan revision process has begun! There is a public information meeting March 14th at 7:00 pm at Cardinal Forest Elementary School. Please plan to attend as the Fairfax County Park Authority will review the master plan process and begin requesting public input to help shape the future of the park. For more information about the master plan process, see page 2 of this newsletter.

While important, the master plan process will not affect the 2016 Fairfax County Park Authority bond referendum. Right now, Lake Accotink has been allotted 1.5 million for general maintenance out of the 80 million dollar bond. This bond will control all FCPA capital spending for the next five years. Therefore, if nothing else changes, there will be no capital improvements at Lake Accotink during this bond cycle. Myself and several members of FLAP and Friends of Accotink Creek will be speaking out about this issue at the April 13th Fairfax County Park Authority Board meeting. We are limited by the number of people who can sign up to speak but any number of people can be present in support. If you are interested in attending this meeting in support of Lake Accotink receiving more funding in this bond please email me at flap.president@gmail.com.

The next FLAP meeting will be March 24th at 7:30 pm at the Richard Byrd Library in Springfield. The main focus of the meeting will be the master plan and the next steps in working to increase funding allocated for Lake Accotink in this year’s bond referendum.

Finally, the spring Accotink Watershed cleanup is being held April 2nd. FLAP will be meeting at the marina at 9 am. In the past we have focused primarily on Flag Run, as that is a significant entry point for trash at the lake. Flag Run is the stream that is spanned by the bridge right next to the beach. As long as the water levels are not too high, we will plan to head up that way again. We will also focus on Accotink Creek at the head of the lake (away from the dam) as there are large amounts of trash trapped there as well. Gloves and trash bags will be provided by the FCPA.

Thanks to Tom Kinder for the header photo. You can find more of Tom’s work at his website: http://www.pixjpics.com/

Please be sure to “like” our Facebook page to stay updated on FLAP events!

-Meghan
Park Authority Begins Master Plan Revision For Lake Accotink Park
By Tony Vellucci, Braddock District Representative, Fairfax County Park Authority Board

The Fairfax County Park Authority has begun the process to revise the master plan for Lake Accotink Park. The planning process will help guide the future of this park located on 7500 Accotink Park Road in Springfield and Park Authority staff are looking to hear from the public.

A Public Information Meeting Please is scheduled for Monday, March 14, 2016, at 7:00 p.m. at Cardinal Forest Elementary School (8600 Forrester Blvd., Springfield). Park Authority staff will present a brief background on the park and the master plan process and then open the floor to listen to the community's vision for the park.

A park master plan (MP) is a general guide for appropriate park uses and their approximate location within a specific park site. The plan serves as a long-range vision (10-20 year timeframe) for future development and programming. Issues typically addressed include planned park elements, natural and cultural resource management, and general design concerns. The plan is conceptual in nature and not intended to address detailed issues related to engineered site design or park operations.

Typically, there are at least three public meetings throughout the planning process to seek public involvement. The first is a public information meeting to introduce the project and existing site conditions; explain the planning process; identify community issues and respond to preliminary questions. Later, the community is invited to planning workshops to evaluate alternative park uses and conceptual designs.

Lake Accotink Park is one of three staffed lakefront parks in the Park Authority system and provides a wide range of active and passive recreation opportunities to patrons. The Park Authority looks forward to working with neighboring communities, the Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP), and individuals to develop a plan that meets community needs.

For more information, please check the project web page at http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/plandev/lakeaccotink.htm If you can't attend the meeting on the 14th, county residents are encouraged to send in their comments by e-mail at park-mail@fairfaxcounty.gov. Please share this invitation with anyone you know who may be interested in the planning of Lake Accotink Park.
Fairfax County voters will be voting on more than just the next president in November. There will likely be a bond referendum for the Park Authority. If approved by voters, it will allocate $80 million over 5 years to specified FCPA projects. As of right now, Lake Accotink is listed as a potential recipient of about $1.5M from this bond for general maintenance, not for any capital improvement projects.

Anyone who visits Lake Accotink Park can recognize that there are immediate needs that should be addressed that go beyond general maintenance needs. Some examples include (but are not limited to) trail repair between the lake and Rolling Road, installation of lighting (as anyone who has walked back to their car after Braddock Nights can attest, the path back to the parking lots are completely unlit), and relocation of the carousel/mini golf out of a flood plane and away from the water.

Large expenditures at Lake Accotink in recent years have been primarily to dredge the lake as it fills in with sediment carried downstream through Accotink Creek. There have not been any capital improvements at the lake in the past ten years. Comparing the FCPA spending on improvements at Lake Accotink with Burke Lake and Lake Fairfax, you can see that Lake Accotink improvements outside of dredging the lake amounted to $1,860,726 which was spent on the trail at the dam, dam repairs, and ADA (Americans With Disabilities Act) accommodations at the park.

Finally, even though the bond should go to voters in November 2016, any actual expenditure of funds will not occur until sometime in the 5 year period. If projects at Lake Accotink are not included in this bond cycle (which will be another 4 to 5 years), meaning that we may not see any major improvements to the park for 10 years.

FLAP representatives will be speaking in front of the Fairfax County Park Authority Board on April 13th to outline the need for additional funding at the park. While the number of speakers is limited, there is no limit on the amount of people who come out in support of the additional funding. Please send an email to flap.president@gmail.com if you would like to attend.

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Accotink Watershed Cleanup Scheduled for April 2nd

A separate signup will be sent out for FLAP members who are planning on attending the spring Accotink Watershed cleanup. We will be meeting at the marina at Lake Accotink at 9 am on April 2nd. FLAP will provide grabbers and FCPA will provide trash bags and gloves. Hope to see you there!
Keeping Trash Out of the Watershed

As anyone who has participated in cleanups at Lake Accotink or gone on one of FLAP’s Raiders of the Lost Trash expedition could tell you, trash frequently builds up at the marina, the island, and the lake shores. This trash is entering the Accotink Watershed at any number of locations and is carried via high waters from storms down to the marina where it is stopped by the dam.

While cleanups are hugely important in improving the condition of the lake, prevention of trash from entering the Accotink Watershed is even more important. There are several easy steps that everyone can take to reduce the amount of trash entering Accotink Creek.

- Secure your trash on collection days by using containers with a lid.
- Place heavier recyclables on top of lighter materials in open recycling bins. This will prevent bottles and paper from blowing away.
- Wait to place your trash and recycling out until the morning of collection day.
- Secure trash and recycling before heavy rain events.
- Store trash and recycling away from flood prone areas.

Click here for more information on preventing trash in the watershed.
Raiders of the Lost Trail: The Orange and Alexandria Historical Trail at Lake Accotink

Did you know how Rolling Road got its name?

- The term “rolling” came from the great hogsheads of tobacco that were rolled over the roads on the way to warehouses and shipping centers. This road was used to transport tobacco to the landing at Pohick Run.

Did you know that the bridge trestle at Lake Accotink (not the current day one but the one pictured below) was the site of several Confederate attack during the Civil War?

- On December 28, 1862, Confederate forces burned the bridge crossing across Accotink Creek. On July 26, 1863, Confederate soldiers attempted to derail a trail at this location by loosening a rail and leaving some horseshoes on the track.

This spring FLAP will be embarking on a Raiders of the Lost Trail excursion in the park to locate historically significant sites along the old Orange and Alexandria railroad. Some parts of the old railroad are on the main trail through the park (between the lake and Rolling Road) and some are off the beaten path. We will take a Saturday morning to hunt down these locations with the goal to eventually post official markers so that anyone can follow the trail. Date and time will be sent out soon.
Volunteers Needed for Royal Lake Wildlife Conservation Efforts Prior to Dredging Operations

By Tony Vellucci, Braddock District Representative, Fairfax County Park Authority Board

Royal Lake is scheduled for dredging this year. In all likelihood, the dredging will be a combination of a dry and a wet dredge. If there is a dry dredge component to the contractor’s dredging plan, there are several lessons learned from the dredging of Woodglen Lake last year to be leveraged for Royal Lake. One is the amount of aquatic wildlife that can be saved with some advance planning, and the need for volunteers and volunteer groups to assist in the wildlife conservation efforts.

The draining of Woodglen Lake last year revealed an incredible fresh water mussel population. While DPWES was able to relocate a good number of fish from Woodglen Lake to Lake Accotink, there was little they could do to relocate the fresh water mussels, and most became a feast for sea gulls and other wildlife. Two factors impacted why more could not be saved. First, no one really knew the extent of the fresh water mussel population because they were not visible until the lake level was drawn down. Second, there was no organized mussel rescue party.

Fresh water mussels are not cute, warm or cuddly, but they do play an incredible and important role in lake ecology – acting as water filtering and purification agents. And for that reason alone, they are worth saving and we should make every attempt to save as many as possible. Given the number of mussels found at Woodglen Lake, and the fact that Royal Lake is about three times larger, a significant volunteer effort will be needed for the Royal Lake Mussel Rescue Party.

At one time, fresh water mussels are believed to have inhabited a number of streams in Fairfax County, however today the only place stream mussels survive is just south of the dam at Lake Accotink. The Friends of Accotink Creek (FACC) and Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP) recently funded a fresh water mussel study to learn more about these amazing organisms that can live to be about 80 years old. The study determined that a primary impact to thriving populations is sediment caused by stormwater run-off. The study is posted on the Friends of Accotink Creek website at www.accotink.org. The FACC are determined to save the fresh water stream mussels in Accotink Creek and have routinely sponsored Mussel Rescue Parties after major storms to return the mussels to the stream bed after they have been deposited high on the stream banks due to high stormwater levels.

As DPWES finalizes its plan for lake dredging operations and selects a contractor for the lake dredging contract, Stormwater Planning Division, Watershed Planning & Assessment Branch personnel will hold two community meetings. The first is scheduled for April 6th at 7:00 PM at Oak View Elementary School on Sideburn Drive, and will address ecological factors related to Royal Lake dredging operations, outlining the current health of Royal Lake and citizen efforts needed to save as much wildlife as possible. The second will address the overall project, timeline, and logistical factors related to the dredging operations; its date/time and location is still to be determined.

Please plan on contributing your time to assist the Friends of Royal Lake with the Royal Lake Mussel Rescue Party, and other wildlife conservation efforts.