



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 – October 15, 2019

Next Meeting: November 19 2019 (Third Tuesday of each month)
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

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Present:

Sandy Collins, Flint Webb, Dave Lincoln, Philip Latasa, Kris Unger
Kathleen Gaffney – Welcome Kathleen!

Upcoming events

- Stream Monitoring Lake Accotink Park December 14, 2019
- Mt. Vernon Environmental Expo Nov. 16, 2019
- FACC Elections, Dec. 17, 2019

FACC Subjects Discussed –

• Represent FACC:

- *350 Fairfax Plastic Free Forum Sept. 28, 2019*
Sandy described this as a good event, and crowded. We had plenty of visitors to our display, and the trash puppets were popular. The bottled water industry was one of the bigger targets. There were talks covering Maryland's anti-plastic legislation and the progress there vs. the Dillon rule effect in Virginia. The new purple bin glass recycling was also a topic. Sandy noted the attendees were predominantly women.
- *Daniels Run Invasives Oct. 23, 2019*
Philip advised our sister group, Lands & Waters, is in need of volunteers wranglers for a large group of adult volunteers. This is at the Daniels Run Elementary campus, where Lands & Waters has been at work for years and where Katie had her recent [invasives removal project](#).
- *[NVCC Fall Film Festival](#) Oct. 23, 2019*
Philip enquired if anyone was interested in staffing an FACC table or joining a panel discussion.
- *Mt. Vernon Environmental Expo Nov. 16, 2019*
Philip asked if anyone was available to staff an FACC table at the 2nd Annual Mount Vernon District Environment Expo. Dave and Kathleen are available. Dave noted the theme is climate change, which our usual display does not address directly. Ideas the group came up with for additions to our display included:
 - The effect of changes in rain intensity, duration, and frequency on streams
 - The effect of cutting trees to pave with asphalt
- *Virginia League of Conservation Voters Happy Hour, date TBD*
Kris advised this event has morphed into the planned INOVA walking tour October 17th.

• [INOVA/Fairview Park:](#)

○ [Walking Tour](#)

Kris reminded us the tour will take place October 17th, followed by a social hour at Caboose Brewery in Merrifield. About 30 people are signed up. The Fairfax Healthy Communities Coalition is the umbrella. Kris related how the original construction issue escalated, and we are now on the path of constructive engagement. INOVA has been encouraged by members of the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to engage with FACC and Friends of Holmes Run. As the result of sundry community influences, the original build-all plans now include much conservation.

Philip recalled that in August, FACC, Friends of Holmes Run, and Northern Virginia Soil & Water Conservation District had a smaller [tour of the preservation areas](#) of the INOVA project site. The participants in that tour have discussed preparing a list of environmental recommendations to INOVA, but have not finalized anything. There was a discussion of how and when to present recommendations and Philip shared his draft.

• [International Coastal Cleanup:](#)

Our stream cleanups ended October 5th. We had 215 volunteers who removed 286 bags of trash and 22 tires. Our most unusual find was probably the rosary we found at Fairfax Blvd, baptized in the 'holy waters' of Accotink Creek. We also found our first e-scooter in the creek, at the same location.

A substantial portion of the volunteer turnout was a team of young men from Falls Church High School who were with us at 9 of our twelve sites, plus the Lake Accotink Park cleanup last Saturday. We were also joined by a group from NVCC Honors Society and NVCC Biology Class. Kris will draft a letter of recognition for the Falls Church H.S. group.

Philip advised he has been trying out a new response to passersby who say, "Thank you!" during cleanups - "Accotink dot O-R-G – Send money!" So far, no results.

There was also an Eagle Scout project cleanup at Manassas Gap Railroad Park in Annandale, on the Coons Branch tributary on September 21st.

The cleanup season is not quite over:

- The Fort Belvoir cleanup of Accotink Bay is this Thursday, October 17th
- Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley will have their cleanup October 19th
- By special request, we will have a cleanup at Thaiss Park October 26th with the Fairfax High School Leadership Class.
- We will have another [Americana Drive Cleanup](#) with Fairfax County Restoration Project on Veterans Day, November 11.

Philip filed complaints with the Park Authority and with DPWES about the sloppy trail paving work on the Cross County Trail we saw during the cleanup, mostly large piles of soil left



[Pray for Accotink Creek?](#)

unsecured right on the streambank, and the considerable amount of construction debris in the creek. The Park authority promised vague action – DPWES has not responded.

Philip learned DPWES is looking at a pilot program providing temporary employment to the chronically underemployed. Trash pickup is apparently something they have in mind, so we may hear more later.

• Lake Accotink Park Master Plan:

Philip noted public meetings resumed September 19th. The full-lake option is now much less appealing, as it will come at the cost of clearing trees all the way from the lake to Wakefield Park for a permanent 24" aboveground pipeline, as well as clearing five acres of trees at the terminus for a dewatering area.



Flint mentioned the Fairview Park lake peninsula made of dredge spoils. He noted the need for dredging is caused by development and developers should pay, not taxpayers. Kris described sedimentation as a cost of development that is treated as an externality which communities are left to pay for eternity. Dave proposed spending the dredging budget on retrofitting older communities to reduce the erosion at the source. Flint suggested the problem as a Green Breakfast topic.

Philip spoke at the public meeting against the pipeline and drafted [written comments](#), which were approved without objection. Any other ideas about how to avoid this unfortunate outcome are welcome.

Philip suggested we should be thinking about proposals for the general aspects of the Master Plan, as we can expect public meetings to resume shortly.

• Federation Legislative Priorities:

Flint outlined three legislative priorities he is proposing to the Fairfax County Federation of Civic Associations:

- Stormwater -Flint explained that historic data regarding rain intensity, duration, and frequency is no longer adequate and we must design for conditions as they will exist during the life of planned facilities.
- Salt contamination of water – Dave noted we are at the threshold for safe water for persons affected by hypertension during salt runoff surges. He indicated private landholders need to be pushed. Kris suggested bringing the question to [SaMS](#).
- Drinking water quality – Flint explained this issue originated with stream trash issues, when Audubon Naturalist Society studies connected mistrust of municipal water with plastic water bottle use. Flint suggested one approach would be to extend Commonwealth testing of programs for well water to municipal water in older homes. Kris shook his head at some of his co-workers, who are veteran smokers but will not drink municipal water.

Flint requested suggestions on other organizations that may support these priorities. Kris mentioned the Fairfax Healthy Communities Coalition, Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions, and Sierra Club.

• Follow the Water:

Kris noted we have funding of \$2500 from Virginia Lakes and Watershed Association, plus another \$2500 from Fairfax Water focused on salt, so he will be ramping up planning soon.

- TMDL:

[SaMS](#) will have a community Listening Session December 3rd to address understanding of salt overuse. The session will focus on the Long Branch central watershed.

Flint mentioned the [old EPA Accotink Creek TMDL](#) and asked what legal requirements exist in the current TMDL plans to mandate improvements. Dave responded that salt management will be voluntary. Sandy explained that localities are addressing the sediment TMDL mainly by means of stream restorations.

Kris recounted the last [SaMS](#) meeting addressed avenues of public outreach, but major players (VDOT) got cold feet. He also mentioned that VDOT's November 'Meet the Trucks' public outreach event lacks any salt control information for communities.

Kris has joined the Steering Committee for the Salt Management Strategy.

Kris pondered why we spend millions on stream restoration for TMDL's, but why not instead spent millions for **TCEL's** – Total Community Engagement Levels – to raise public awareness?

- Thompson Farm:

On September 25th the Planning Commission voted to approve the application, sending it to the Board of Supervisors for final consideration. Philip indicated there is no reason to expect any further change to the plan.

- Difficult Run Assisted Living:

Philip advised this application was indefinitely deferred by the Planning Commission in September and the applicant subsequently withdrew. He also advised he had sent [additional comments](#) on behalf of FACC based on last-minute additional information. In short, a clearly marked spring and its channel and its associated RPA protection conveniently disappeared from the application, providing room for a required septic drain field. This erroneous (or fraudulent) application was given insufficient scrutiny and approved by County staff until a reexamination was prompted by informed citizens.

The suggestion has been made that the omission is serious enough to warrant a complaint to the Virginia Department of Professional Regulation. Philip stated he had offered support from FACC if the citizens organized in opposition proceed with a complaint. He also encouraged the citizens to form a Friends of Difficult Run and there was some interest.

- [Maple Ave Development:](#)

Philip advised this plan sadly involves filling in a section of intermittent stream and an old farm pond to build seven houses on eight acres. The applicant could already build this many by right, but is proposing to cluster the houses, so perhaps there is some small bit of preservation gained. On the positive side, the RPA area has been increased due to confirmation of additional wetland areas.

The case was delayed by an inadvertent lack of community notice, made up for by a [public meeting](#) on September 30th, where neighbors warned of a high water table that feeds the pond and urged more study. Philip also spoke at the meeting and submitted written [comments](#). The application was approved by the Planning Commission October 10th. .

Speaking of intermittent streams, Philip mentioned that the EPA has just announced the repeal of the [clean water rule](#) giving some level of protection to intermittent streams. Sandy noted that state-level protections still remain.

- [George Snyder Trail:](#)

Philip relayed Judy Fraser's report that the George Snyder Trail planning in Fairfax City is grinding forward. Judy hopes to come up with some means to redirect the path out of the woods and onto existing parallel streets, and should let us know soon how we can support her.

Judy also included some FACC handouts and a trash puppet in the Fairfax City Environmental Sustainability Committee booth at the Fall Festival October 12th.

- [Donations:](#)

Philip reported a PayPal donation of \$40.00 from James McCartney.

- [Wakefield Run Monitoring:](#)

On September 17th Julie and Philip did the last biological monitoring of Wakefield Run. When the restoration of Wakefield Run was completed in 2014, we undertook to monitor it for five years to evaluate the difference in invertebrate life. Those five years have passed.

Philip indicated the results are not very conclusive. While we do see a change in the diversity of macroinvertebrate life, the numeric scores have remained in the unacceptable range for the entire period.

Philip opined that research models alone are used to determine credits earned by stream restorations. Dave queried whether our monitoring results measure up to the models of expected results and whether the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District had shown interest in our results. Philip was uncertain on both counts. Sandy asked what is the real result for the aquatic community for all the money spent on restorations?

There followed discussion of marking/evaluating/leveraging the end of the monitoring period, including suggestions for meeting with NVSWCD, a Green Breakfast topic, and connecting Wakefield Run to nearby 495 Express Lanes issues, particularly the 'murdered spring'. Flint will contact NVSWCD.

- FACC Elections:

Philip advised that in December, we will have FACC elections for Purser and Conservator-at-Large. Our bylaws allow three full two-year terms and both incumbents are eligible for reelection.



- Whither FACC:

Dave will arrange a conference call with the Friends of Sligo Creek, the rather more successful group which was the founding inspiration for FACC. Flint will obtain information on training for nonprofits from an associate of his.

Philip floated the idea of a separate meeting for this topic, perhaps in a social setting. The Dos Amigos restaurant near the Springfield Costco was suggested. Kris thought we might include a tour of the adjacent Accotink Gorge.

The group discussed participating in the Volunteer Fairfax [Boardlink](#) program for matching groups with experienced board members, but deferred.
