



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 – September 21, 2021

Next Meeting: October 19, 2021 (Third Tuesday of each month via on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice in the [Friends of Accotink calendar](#).)

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Present: Avril Garland, Beverley Rivera, Philip Latasa, Sue Kovach Shuman, Kim Schauer, We welcomed Doug Craun, Sofia Chapin and Gary Bangs!
all via on-line meeting, due to COVID 19 closures and precautions,

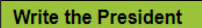
Forthcoming Opportunities to represent FACC:

International Coastal Cleanup: The schedule our fall stream cleanups., September 18- Oct. 9, 2021, is posted on the [FACC calendar](#).

Americana Drive Cleanup: November 11, 2021

Accotink Gorge Anti-Wisteria Expedition: November 24, 2021

Announcement:

Our friend and collaborator, George Kralovec, active in the Citizen's Climate Lobby, called in at the start of the meeting to appeal we contact our President and Senators to appeal for passage of last-chance carbon pricing legislation. [Information and contact template](#) Use the  button.

Introductions:

Our new attendees offered a few words about what brought them to their first FACC meeting.

- o Gary – Joined an exploration of the Accotink gorge and “Just want to see what was happening.”
- o Doug – Has lived beside Accotink Creek or in its watershed for 30-plus years, heard about FACC through the John Mason Trail issue and wanted to participate.
- o Sofia – Is a recent George Mason graduate in environmental science, an Invasives Management volunteer, and lives in the Kings Park area of the Accotink watershed.

[Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): : [#SaveCinderBedWoods](#)

Avril shared how a group had met with Supervisor Storck August 26th. Philip added that the Supervisor saw our videos and seemed to indicate he had his doubts about the wisdom of the Bikeway. She pointed out that the Bicycle Master Plan targets forest areas, but it is a fight to get others to even recognize the problem. She offered the anecdote of recently meeting a climate advocacy group leader on the Cross County Trail and only receiving the response “It’s a tradeoff” when the issue was explained. Avril spoke to the Tree Commission September 16th. She was able to inform the members of the ActiveFairfax program and its impacts on trees, something many had not known before.

Philip mentioned we have produced a couple more videos on the topic, one showing unmet [trail maintenance needs](#) that should be addressed before building more trails. The other shows [Cinder Bed Road underwater](#), just as the Bikeway would often be if built there in the floodplain.

Philip urges everyone to use the hashtag [#SaveCinderBedWoods](#) in any communications and to share any of the postings we have with that hashtag.

We need to do more about contacting civic associations and media. Flint will look into contacts through the Civic Association Federation. Avril will plan to attend the Tree Commission meeting on September 16, to do a presentation on the project. Sandy will look at contacting Kingstown HOA.



Cinder Bed Road underwater

Philip also made a presentation of the videos to the Trails and Sidewalks Committee September 8th with unknown impact.

Sandy stated we are still waiting for documentation requested from FCDOT months ago, such as environmental reviews and submissions to the Army Corps of Engineers. She wondered if it mattered, since the project seems cleared to go ahead without any further approvals by the Board of Supervisors. Philip countered that what we are seeking now is disapproval from the Supervisors.

Avril attended the [ActiveFairfax](#) online public meetings September 13th and 15th and Philip attended on the 15th. These meetings were regarding the draft statement of goals of the program. The FACC board approved official [comments on the goals](#), basically asking for expanded environmental consideration.

Sandy noted that many trails threatening woods were placed on maps years ago without any environmental screening. Philip added that ActiveFairfax is accepting suggestions for many more such trails on its interactive maps.

The [Northern Virginia Transportation Authority](#) is conducting an ongoing survey of transportation needs and ideas to develop its multimodal [TransAction](#) plan by next summer. Philip opined that in our region “multimodal” usually means standard road widening, plus more widening for an extra strip of asphalt called a bike lane, plus vague hopes that busses will be major users. Since the Authority provides funding for so many projects, everyone should complete the survey and send in separate comments defending watershed and environmental issues. Avril and Philip went to an in-person event at the Vienna Metro, hoping to promote tree preservation among the attendees, but the unfortunate presenters were unable to attract any attention from commuters.

Philip lamented he had still done little to connect with civic associations and the media.

Other Activities and Issues of Interest:

- [John Mason Trail](#): [#SaveFairfaxTrees](#)

The John Mason Trail, although located in Fairfax City, was on the County Board of Supervisors [agenda](#) September 14th. Philip mentioned he was oblivious and did not see the discussion, but assumes it was a gesture of comity requested by City staff and not reflecting any actual County interest.

Ironically, the very same night, the City Council voted to postpone discussion, probably in response to citizen letters and a dozen City residents who spoke against the trail at the meeting. The presentation is now scheduled for October 5th, followed by a vote October 12th.

This trail has also inspired two videos, one on Fairfax City [trail maintenance needs](#) and other on the existing [Main Street Marketplace](#) connection, a perfect model for what should be done here.

There was a media article in the [Fairfax Patch](#) regarding the trail. Unfortunately, one of the commenters got rather hostile. [NOTE: A follow-up [Patch article](#) has now appeared.]

Kim observed that the comments of Fairfax City residents will carry the most weight with City Council.

The ad hoc committee of interested City residents distributed information door hangers in the surrounding neighborhoods and also placed “kindness rocks” in nearby parks, both with QR codes linking to our webpage.



Kindness rocks carry the message – “Be kind to our forests”

- [Annandale Greenway:](#)

The Annandale Greenway is a citizen proposal to link up existing streets and paths in central Annandale for non-motorized use. Although he doesn't have any details, Philip suggested this sounds like something we could and should support as an alternative to tree sacrifice and forest fragmentation. We've already missed organizational meetings and cleanups on September 11th and 13th. The group invites the public to an inaugural walk on the Greenway, October 24 at 3 p.m.

Supervisor Gross and Park Authority officials support the project. James Albright, who came up with the idea of the Greenway, represents Mason District on the Trails and Sidewalks Committee,

Philip enquired if anyone wishes to act as liaison with this project. Sandy will attend the walk.

- [Accotink Gorge:](#)

Avril reported the attempt to survey a 15 square yard plot of trees in the Gorge last Sunday ran into technical issues. She hopes to resolve and reschedule soon. Avril described the group focused on the Gorge as herself, Katie, and Philip. Gary asked to be included.

Philip advised we have scheduled an Anti-Wisteria Expedition November 24th from 10:00 to 1:00. Herbicide support will be provided by Park Authority personnel. Avril expressed doubt about any use of the Park Authority's outside herbicide contractors, based on past experience.

Avril noted the usefulness of continued workdays in establishing credibility for grants.

- *Litter Legislation:*

On September 14th the Board of Supervisors approved a 5-cent disposable plastic bag tax. Avril and Philip attended the meeting and were among the 30 or so speakers in favor. Nine of the supervisors also spoke in favor and we are grateful that two of them mentioned Friends of Accotink Creek in their remarks. Sandy added that Arlington and Alexandria have passed the same tax.

A [brief video](#) is available including our remarks. [brief video](#)



[Avril addresses the Board of Supervisors](#)

- *Elly Doyle Award:*

A Channel 16 crew joined Beverley at her Invasives Management Area site September 18th to record material for the Elly Doyle Award presentation on November 19th. The same crew also came to one of our cleanup sites the same day, but was disappointed that we had zero volunteers from the public. Still, they recorded a question and answer session with Philip and may return if we have more volunteers later in the cleanup season.

The Park Authority has named a new Executive Director, named [Jai Cole](#). Philip suggested we should send a letter of congratulation, welcome, and introduction expressing some of our interests and offering collaboration. Philip will draft a letter and pass it by the board for approval.

- *[Plant NOVA Trees Campaign:](#)*

We have posted about this on Facebook, sent out information with our meeting reminder, and we have a few handouts for our cleanup events, but Philip wondered if we were supposed to be doing more. Beverley mentioned the tree plantings at her Invasives Management site as another action we are doing. Beverley will let us know if other actions we should take are brought up in Plant NOVA Trees meetings. A discussion of tree sources mentioned [Earth Sangha](#) and [Fairfax Releaf](#).

- [International Coastal Cleanup:](#)

We had our first Saturday of cleanups last Saturday. Turnout was disappointing with only two volunteers from the public at our first site, none at our second, and a bit better showing of seven at our last site. Our most unusual find of the day was a Smurf figurine.



A whimsical find from our first day of the stream cleanup season

- *Tree Commission:*

Avril discussed the particulars of a letter she received from her district Tree Commissioner containing recent [Tree Commission recommendations](#) to the Board of Supervisors. Philip will draft a note of endorsement from FACC and will send it to the board for approval.

[Avril's spoken address to the Tree Commission September 16th is at this link.](#)

- *Long Branch USGS Study:*

On September 14th the Board of Supervisors approved a [joint study of Long Branch central](#) with the U.S. Geological Service. This is not something we had heard beforehand, but seems to be analysis of water samples to assess the effectiveness of measure undertaken during the [Long Branch central Project](#). Sandy will look for further information when project meetings resume. Kim noted the County and USGS have an ongoing collaboration including various studies and sampling stations.

- *Mussel Rescue:*

On September 17th the USGS gauge went over 2000 cubic feet per second, the threshold at which mussels are pushed out of the main streambed and become stranded on gravel bars. On September 19th, after the water receded, four volunteers walked the one-mile stretch of Accotink Creek where mussels are still present and were able to rescue 22 stranded mussels.



Three rescued Eastern Elliptio mussels, plus one not-so-sure

- *Donations:*

We received a \$19.09 donation from the AmazonSmile Foundation as a result of AmazonSmile purchases between April 1 and June 30, 2021

- *Army-Navy Country Club Fans:*

From the land of stranger-than-fiction, Philip brought news that the Army-Navy Country Club is applying to Fairfax City to install giant fans on its greens for the purpose of keeping the cool season grasses alive in summer. The neighbors are not happy about the noise and are likely to make noise of their own. We do not need to take action.

- *Vernal Pools:*

Philip enquired as to the state of the vernal pool video. Beverley has emailed the Master Naturalists, but has not heard back. Beverley advised continued patience, and after discussion, that course was adopted by consensus.

- *Fairfax Water Grant:*

Kim elaborated on progress toward making use of our Fairfax Water educational grant. She is discussing a collaboration with a group of Thomas Jefferson H.S. instructors involved in an interdisciplinary environmental course combining instruction in biology, technology, and English with about 100 students. Kim will request an extension of the grant deadline this week and propose modification of the grant terms to fit the TJ collaboration. Her intent is to use the funds to purchase a datalogger for use by

the class in water sampling. Initial sampling may not be in the Accotink watershed, but the gear will be available for our purposes in the future.

- [Whither FACC:](#)

Outreach Enhancement:

A general discussion included:

- A recommended resumption of the practice of sending the Bulletin to the core group upon completion each month.
- Uncertainty over whether we should send an additional meeting reminder on the day of meetings, given that the reminders are generally sent only a few days prior anyway.
- A happy discovery that Sophia has the skills and perhaps the time to review our online presence and recommend enhancements. Her day job at the Piedmont Environmental Council involves similar responsibilities. Philip will send Sophia a wish list.