



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 – August 15, 2023

Next Meeting: September 19, 2023 (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: Gary Bangs, Avril Garland, Philip Latasa, Beverley Rivera, Kim Schauer, Peter Clark, and Katy Johnson all via on-line meeting. Also joining for the first time Sarah Brady.

- [Woods and Field](#)

*“to sun-dappled, pebble-filled rivulets
where raccoons track messages on the shores
while crayfish hide
and waterskeeters glide
and turtles slip
into song-filled crystal water -
Alive, alive, alive as we -
Alive, alive, alive always in me”*



Our guest included [Cindy McGean](#), an author who formerly lived beside Accotink Creek, but now finds herself living far away. Still she has not forgotten and sent FACC a lovely gift of a poem of memories, along with some illustrations by a friend of hers. She said that she spent her childhood in the woods and meadow that are part of the creek's floodplain by Woodburn Road. She is offering a poem that she wrote for her parents about the woods, field, and creek. FACC should consider it her gift to our work. She ended by thanking us for the work we are doing to protect this beautiful, magical place.

What ideas for sharing the poem in ways that will best benefit Accotink Creek?

Ideas previously shared included:

- A YouTube video would be good. It could be shown in schools as an invitation to students to write their own nature poems or even presented to the Board of Supervisors as an example of the importance of having ready access to immersion in the natural world, especially for kids.
- It would make lovely wallpaper for a child's room, or a mural, or even a standalone book.
- Brian suggested we offer an all-ages program to library branches within the Accotink watershed, in which we would read the poem; show the drawings; explain the literary references; and talk about the creek, the watershed, and what we do and would like to do? The program would offer

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something for everyone, I think, and it would be a great way to raise our profile and attract some more support. He offered to help put it together. This suggestion generated the most discussion and we'll followup with Brian to see if he has made progress.

- *Represent FACC*

- o *CareFirst Equity Week, July 19, 2023* Philip said that we had about 30 volunteers from CareFirst, all dressed in matching t-shirts and equipped with props for picture taking. The volunteers put in three hours of work clearing invasives and rehabilitating outdoor classrooms at Daniels Run Elementary School. We've not heard back about a donation, but we are hopeful since they did last year.

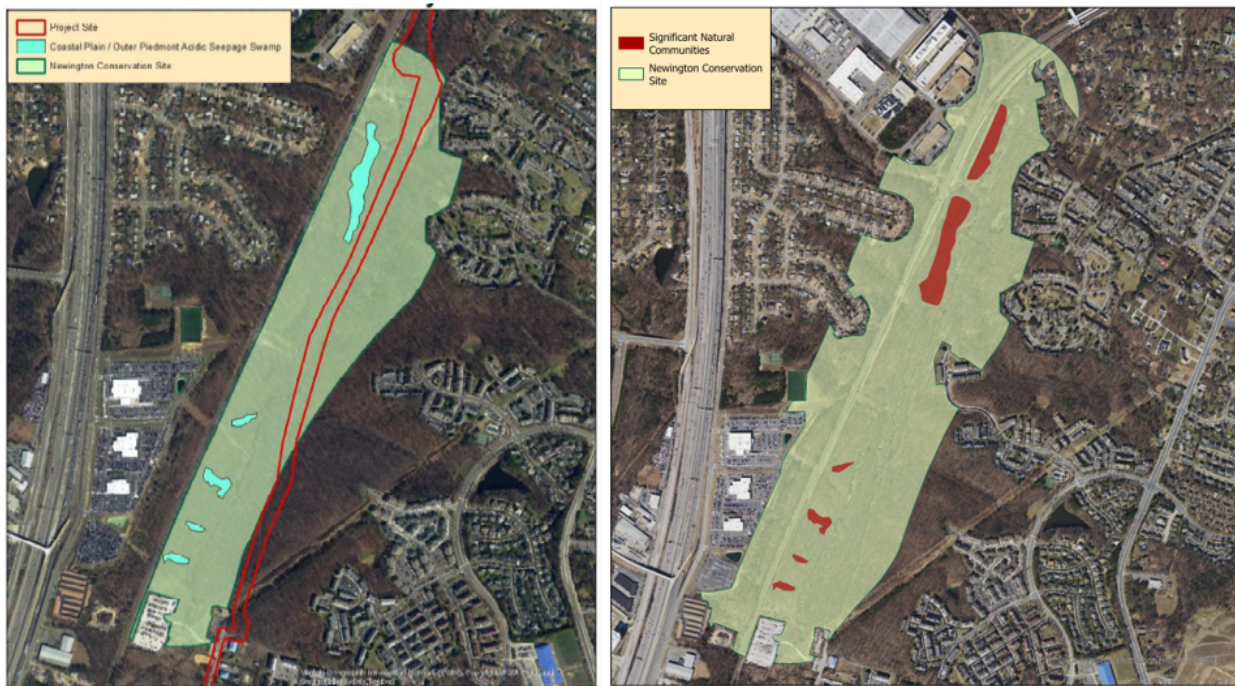


CareFirst volunteers at Daniels Run Elementary

- o Philip reported that a Plant Rescue with [Wild Ones](#), is scheduled Sept. 17, 2023. Wild Ones is a natural habitats group with whom we have collaborated in the past on invasives removal and plant rescues. They will be bringing a group of unknown size to support our Stafford Drive plant rescues and replanting. Everyone is welcome to join this day or other days which are posted on the calendar.

- ***Cinder Bed Road Bikeway***: Philip said that we previously discussed the May 11th visit of Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation biologists to the area. The result was a new DCR Map of the Newington Conservation Area. The new map substantially increased the size of the conservation area, expanded it to the west of the railroad tracks, and also documented additional acidic seepage swamp areas in the direct path of the Bikeway. None of this gives any actual legal protection to the area, but still we may hope.

The new map has some implications for the [Frontier Drive extension](#), since it would affect parts of the Newington Conservation Area west of the railroad.



Before-and-after features of the Newington Conservation Area

There remains a state of confusion regarding the status of the project. The Amberleigh HOA received a letter from the County indicating a 6 to 12 month delay and possible rerouting. However, the Franconia Supervisor's office told a story of a few weeks delay, related only to a right of way disagreement between Metro, CSX, and VRE.

- [International Coastal Cleanup](#): Philip announced the schedule is posted on our website and with Volunteer Fairfax. He did clear the new location at the Providence Community Center with the supervisor's office. That also will involve some new groupings of which cleanup sites are done each day.
- [Accotink Gorge](#): Philip said that he and Avril prepared a map of target areas. The Park Authority will use the map to obtain treatment estimates from their contractor after our tour of the gorge with Plant NOVA Natives.

We'll need to expand Dave's spreadsheet to include businesses, not just owners, and connect it to Margaret's map. Rekha sent an email explaining that she has started a spreadsheet of her own and will merge the two. Once we have the estimates and the complete list of businesses, We can plan appeals for funding.

In the meantime, we should schedule some fall workdays. Probably in mid to late October. Philip is waiting for confirmation from the acting IMA director that we will have herbicide support.

Philip also said that in addition to our usual work area, he hopes we can return to the "Headland", the area once identified as the highest priority for stopping the wisteria before it dominates. However, we can't have inexperienced volunteers in this area of difficult terrain and sensitive flora.

- [Lake Accotink Dredging](#): Since Sandy was absent from this meeting, Gary provided a summary of the most recent meeting ([August 14th](#)) which he had watched on Channel 16. The beginning of the meeting was looking at editing a list of questions from the task force to the new contractor, [WSP/Limno Tech](#). Then there was a presentation made by Lake Barcroft dredging program by Davis Grant, General Manager, Lake Barcroft Watershed Improvement District. He provided a history of establishing the district, which has special taxing authority of the residents to maintain Lake Barcroft. Even with the smaller amounts of sediment they remove he said it was getting more difficult and more expensive to find a place to dispose of the product. They dredge into two “holding ponds” and allow the sediment to dry out before hauling away. But he said, this year they have hit a problem because of the unusually wet August, the material has not dried out as needed. He is hoping they have a dry spell yet, or it may impact their next dredge cycle. This took up most of the meeting time allotted, so the other presentations by county park staff, on Managed Wetlands by Adam Wynn and Dave Lawlor were postponed. The task force then broke out into 3 subcommittees to work on scheduling their meetings.

Philip said that he learned something interesting that might eventually have some connection to the future of the lake if it ceases to protect the downstream mussel population. Two restored streams in Reston are being [stocked with freshwater mussels](#) in a study of the potential to include mussel habitat in restoration designs. Kim said she is following up on this study and has offered Friends of Accotink Creek as another possible group to work with at Accotink Creek. Kim also said she had attended the FCPS Get to Green kickoff meeting and every school now has a Get to Green leader, so if we have a school of interest check with their [Get to Green](#) leader.

- [Braddock Road Project](#): Philip said the July 26th public meeting had a few news items to report.

The steep slopes on both sides of the road will require about ¾ mile of 10 – 15’ high retaining walls. These walls were described as saving tree cover by avoiding more severe land grading.

Many of the public commenters were negative on the idea of paths, for tree loss, for the lack of pleasant user experience, and for perceived danger of a roadside path.

- The project is funded only east of Southampton Drive.
- The Ravensworth Road section of the project is OK with just one shared use path, but Braddock Road still has two. That is one too many, but unlikely to change.
- Something like 3/4 mile of retaining walls are being added, ostensibly for the sole purpose of saving trees. One must wonder if it was not also less costly than the alternative of extensive grading.
- The numbers on tree preservation have improved from previous meetings.
- Formerly in-line and relatively unobtrusive stormwater swales are to be replaced by 10 stormwater ponds, for a savings of about one acre of land. However the quality of the savings vs. quantity is not so clear.
- Our most critical issue with the project was plans to connect Danbury Forest Drive and Wakefield Chapel Road into a traditional intersection that would have badly impacted Long Branch. VDOT is sticking to its intention to avoid that, so we have a "win" there.

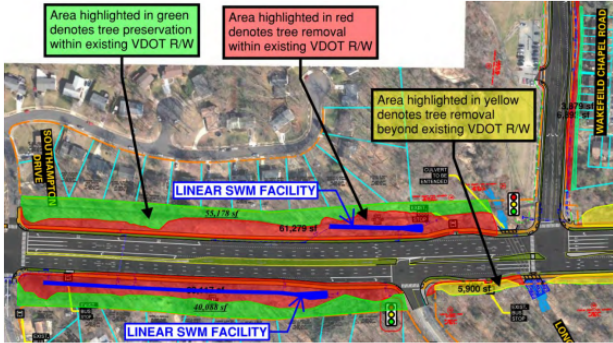
One slide says the existing trail's "*Set back from roadway with limited visibility - may feel uncomfortable for some users*", yet we hear the very opposite argument from other projects that want to put trails in forests.

Philip has submitted [comments](#) on behalf of FACC.

Summary of Tree Preservation

PIM #2 Design (November 2022):
Tree preservation within
VDOT right of way = 28%,
within limits of disturbance = 24%

Current Design (July 2023):
Tree preservation within
VDOT right of way = 47%,
within limits of disturbance = 41%



Tree save slide from VDOT [Braddock Road meeting](#)

- [Accotink Gravity Sewer](#): Philip is still awaiting a response from DPWES regarding the state of planning and the possibility of avoiding habitat impacts. The Providence Supervisor’s office advises patience until the end of the summer vacation season.

Additionally Philip learned of a few other sewer projects of interest:

- o [Tysons Wastewater Conveyance](#)

The Tysons Wastewater Conveyance Project is designed to handle the increased volume from the expansion and new density in Tysons Corner. It isn’t in our watershed, but it will feed into the Accotink Gravity Sewer.

- o [Braddock Road Pump Station](#)

The Braddock Road Pump Station is the one at the south end of Wakefield Park next to the creek. This project will also involve work on lines outside the station itself, in wooded areas of Wakefield Park and Fitzhugh Park across the Beltway, and under the streets farther east. Public Works advises they can’t yet determine the scope of the actual work.

- o [Springfield Estates Pump Station](#)

This one is in our watershed and does involve replacement of sewer lines. It is of interest because, unlike the Accotink Gravity Sewer, it is entirely underneath streets – no trees harmed.



Springfield Estates Pump Station Project

- *Herbicide Legislation*: Avril reported that there has been no real progress on legislation. But because the wording of the requirements are so confusing, a request is being made for VDACS to formally specify where the prohibition exists for volunteers to use unrestricted herbicides while removing invasives.
 - *3033 Chain Bridge Road*: Philip said on the positive side, we have learned the developer has modified its plans to include preservation of the small stream on the site. On the negative side, we have learned that the flow in the stream is largely the result of condensation from the building's chillers. The building engineer showed Philip the condensation collection point in the basement. Here is the dimly lit [video link](#) in the Bulletin.
- Tree survey discs and tapes have begun appearing on the site. This caused a brief alarm among neighbors who imagined it meant the bulldozers were about to roll.
- *King Arthur Road Bridge Project*: Philip said that VDOT plans to repair the King Arthur Road bridge over Accotink Creek. It looks as if the bridge piers will not be replaced, so there should be no impact on the creek. However some utility lines are to be moved, which will have some impact.
 - *Lorton Core Study*: Philip reported that Fairfax County is conducting the Lorton Vision 2040 Study to guide future development. Only a small peripheral portion east of Pohick Road is in the Accotink watershed. Anyone who is interested would be welcome to monitor the planning.
 - *Murals Program*: Philip said that the County is developing a public murals program focused on redevelopment areas, such as Annandale. He has long imagined a mural on the walls alongside the Cross County Trail where it passes under Little River Turnpike, but never knew how to make it happen. Gary stated that he would explore this further.
 - *Whither FACC*: Philip said that on July 20th, he posted a photo sent to us on Facebook about hammerhead worms found on the Cross County Trail. At over 5500 views and still growing, it is by far our most popular posting ever. So, the lesson is – we need many more photos of disgusting slimy things.



[Hammerhead Horror](#)