



FRIENDS OF ACCOTINK CREEK 2023

Another busy and productive year for FACC; working to protect our local watersheds, advocating for imperiled areas, reporting serious stream pollutants, organizing trash pick-ups, removing invasive plants at multiple sites on a weekly basis, monitoring stream health, being involved with winter salt watches, and working to educate future protectors of our waterways.



FACC organizes 24 cleanups annually along 12 adopted stretches of our local waterway, including the continuing illegal dumping along Americana Drive, where volunteers this year removed **335 bags of trash, 62 tires, 4 shopping carts, 3 barbeque grills, 8 doors, 5 toilets, and 10 tons of construction debris.**



FACC also coordinated volunteers for the spring [Potomac Watershed Cleanup](#), and then for the fall [International Coastal Cleanup](#) **Total from both cleanups amounts to 267 volunteers removing 304 bags of trash.**



But beyond removing trash, FACC continues to **advocate** for imperiled areas such as the Accotink Gorge, which is home to rare wildflowers and some of the most diverse examples of oak hickory forest in the entire Fairfax County Park system; however, the gorge is entirely consumed by **invasive wisteria**. The Friends, partnering with Plant NOVA natives, aim to make real progress with anti-wisteria efforts by obtaining donations to enable professional control in defense of the exceptional native flora.



Education on the importance of monitoring the health of our streams.

Stream monitoring continues, documenting the health of the stream by examining what is living in the streams and the level of tolerance to pollutants in the water, (Dates are every second Saturday of the months of March, June, September, and December – for this or any other upcoming events, check the [FACC website calendar](#)).

Also, thanks to our **advocacy**, during trail repairs at the southern end of the Hunters Branch tributary, the project deployed protection measures to keep passing equipment out of the vernal pool; although the pool and many more areas along Hunters Branch are still endangered by the [Accotink Gravity Sewer](#) project.

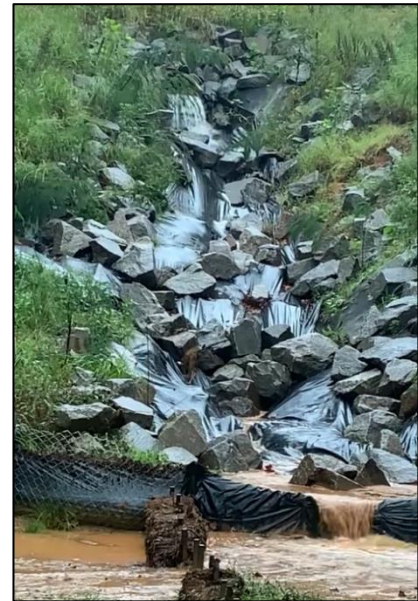


FACC advocated to keep equipment away from the vernal pool at Hunter's Branch.

Yet another threatened vernal pool: the failed drain pipe causing sediment to fill a [vernal pool](#) at the entrance of Lake Accotink Park. The plastic bedding is torn, sediment spews out to the nearest drain. FACC continues to petition to have something done about it.

FACC speaks out for damage to the environment that otherwise would have no voice, including the proposed Cinder Bed Road Bikeway where **development** would require impact to good and high-quality forest, floodplain and wetland resources. Biologists from Virginia Department of Natural Resources and the City of Alexandria did additional mapping of acidic seepage swamps in May along the [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#) route.

Their findings became the basis of the expansion of the Newington Conservation Area and the acidic seepage swamps found there. We continue to work with other concerned groups to advocate for a rerouting onto existing paved areas to minimize disruption to habitat and to object to the proposed 24-hour lighting of the path which would further stress and disrupt wildlife.



Continuously failed attempts to prevent sediment from entering a vernal pool at Lake Accotink Park.



Vernal Pool expert Michael Hayslett (right) explains the soils associated with vernal pools.

This year, the Friends also released our [vernal pool videos](#), "Fairfax Vernal Pools with Mike Hayslett", and "The Amazing Vernal Pool", produced by [Kathryn Pasternak](#), Fairfax Master Naturalist independent filmmaker to educate students at varying school levels starting with second grade and working up to higher grade levels. Teachers are welcome to access these educational videos.



Rescued plants which will be relocated.

With **native plant rescues** ahead of the Stafford Drive Stream Restoration in Fairfax City **thousands of rescued plants** went to a variety of new homes, including relocation into nearby Kutner Park. Rescues continue through spring 2024.

In a collaboration of Park Authority staff, Fairfax Releaf and volunteers, 40 some native trees were planted as the first step of a 5-year grant from Microsoft for **Invasives Control** at one of FACC's invasive control sites at Lake Accotink.

Another aspect of FACC's volunteer work throughout the watershed is monitoring chloride contamination from **winter salt**. Our **Congratulations** go out to Gary Bangs who was named Izaak Walton League's Save Our Streams program Salt Watcher of the Month for December 2022. Chloride contamination from **winter salt** is a cause of water quality impairment, and monitoring is vital to maintain awareness.



As part of the Fairfax Parks Coalition, the Friends of Accotink Creek were also recognized for the [Sally B. Ormsby Environmental Stewardship Award](#) of the Fairfax County Park Authority.

And finally and very sadly, one of our long-time advocates, Flint Webb, passed away August 27th from cancer. Flint will not only be missed for his environmental advocacy, but also his warmth and humor.



Volunteers from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints volunteer weekly at the park – here they removed two highly invasive Callery (or Bradford) Pears to allow the success of native trees.

But please join us in this holiday season in some capacity – volunteer with us, or please consider making a [tax-deductible donation to our 501\(c\)3](#). Or join us for an event. Always welcome.

All the very best to you and your family, thank you for your continued support, and promotion of our mantra: **Get Your Brain Wet.**

We'd like to leave you with an excerpt from a poem by [Cindy McGean](#). Cindy is an author who formerly lived beside Accotink Creek. She sent us a lovely gift of an anthology of memories, titled [Woods and Field](#).



Learning how to monitor the health of a stream by testing for the presence of macroinvertebrates.

The full text of this moving and beautifully illustrated collection became the basis of a series of nature poetry reading and writing sessions at area libraries.

**“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”**



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