



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 – February 20, 2024

Next Meeting: March 20 (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, Brian Slawski, Kim Schauer, Sandy Collins, and Peter Clark all via on-line meeting.

• *Represent FACC:*

- o *Plant NOVA Natives Partners Meeting, January 30, 2024* Philip and Avril reported that the meeting was largely a review of 10 years of [Plant NOVA Natives](#). There were about 60 attendees from various organizations and agencies.
- o *Mount Vernon Town Meeting February 10, 2024* Dave attended and said it was a normal town hall with tables from various agencies and organizations setup. He said Supervisor Storck did stop by and asked about how public access to Accotink Gorge could occur. This will be followed up with his staff member Nick Rinehart.
- o *Hidden Oaks Habitat Workday, February 24, 2024* Philip stated the Friends of Hidden Oaks Nature Center will have an invasives workday this Saturday. It seems they are more organized than before, now having their own [website](#) and [Facebook](#) page. It would be good if someone from FACC could be there for a bit of networking. Gary said he would look into it and may be able to attend, but with the short notice may do a future event instead.
- o *Earth Day Events, April 27, 2024*
 - *Mount Vernon Environmental Expo*, Dave is still planning to attend.
 - [Fairfax City HisTree](#), Philip stated that there is no news, but we are still committed to have a display at this event.
 - [Annandale Greenway Earth Day](#), Philip reported that the Annandale Greenway will NOT host an Earth Day event on April 20 as we discussed last month. Instead, the Department of Planning and Development will have an event on April 27th. This conflicts with the other two events we are already committed to on the same date. The location is the new Annandale Civic Space, a park located in our watershed and along the proposed path of the Greenway.

Gary stated he may be able to attend. He attended the previous meeting at the location as they formed a group to start community gardens.

Philip also said that we were contacted by a neighbor about dumping behind Fairmont Gardens apartments spilling down into the Coon Branch tributary. The neighbor reported to Code Enforcement and much of it was cleaned up. This is Manassas Gap Railroad Park, where we had hoped to have a stream cleanup as part of the Greenway event, and still may, if things work out.

[o Franconia to Lorton Third Track](#)

Philip said that this railroad project, which we thought was a few years in the future, has already begun with tree clearing alongside the tracks that run through the middle of the Newington Conservation Area and at one point right next to the proposed Bikeway route. Since there was never any hope of stopping the negative impact of the railroad project, it's just one more reason why the Bikeway should not go forward.



Tree clearing underway for the [Franconia to Lorton Third Track](#)

- o *Latino Conservation Week, TBD July, 2024* Beverley said that her husband, Juan has tabled an event for this before. Brayan who coordinates volunteers on Saturdays at the Lake Accotink site is prepared to host an invasives workday. Everyone is welcome to join.
- o [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): Philip said that the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway is grinding forward. Land rights on two properties have been acquired out of 27 needed.

We are hoping for a meeting with Supervisor Lusk on March 13th at 3:00 pm, for whoever wishes to join.

- o [George Snyder Trail](#): Philip said that the January 23rd City Council meeting was a fiasco. We had every expectation of a partial victory in the form of a resolution to complete only the western portion of the trail. Instead, the Council majority opposed to the full build could not agree on a specific plan, so the full build is going forward by inertia.

In a Channel 4 interview, the Mayor complained about the opposition - "*you would think we're dropping an atomic bomb in the middle of this park*". Not an atomic bomb - the acres of forest lost to the trail would be merely equivalent to the [blast radius](#) of a 500 pound bomb.



- o [Vernal Pool Contamination](#): Gary and Philip met Supervisor Lusk at the Franconia District Open House. His staff assured us they were pushing Land Development Services on getting permanent repairs underway at the farm pond at the Lake Accotink Park entrance. So far, we have seen nothing change.
- o [Lake Accotink Dredging](#): Philip said that on January 23rd, the Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to advance the smaller lake option at Lake Accotink Park. Yet another study will be the next step – a study of the methods, costs, permitting, and sedimentation rate. There is also supposed to be a new staff position to coordinate all of the dredging efforts. Actual action still seems far off.
- o [Accotink Gorge](#): Dave reported that Supervisor Storck asked about getting public access to the gorge. It is unclear what that would entail. He will followup with his staff about it. Also Dave talked with a company that utilizes drones to make videos and thought it may be useful to do this in the gorge to show the wisteria infestation. That will be explored further.
- o [Costco Expansion](#): Philip suggested that since Supervisor Storck wants to explore gaining public access to the Gorge, perhaps we can use Costco's zoning application for a gas station to get concessions. This would also be a good opportunity to press Supervisor Storck on supporting the Gorge project in general, by helping organize the effort to raise funds and involve VDOT and Fort Belvoir.
- o [Conservation Legislation](#): Avril provided an update on a long list of legislation, in particular addressing invasive species. Most of them have passed and will head to reconciliation between House of Delegates and Senate, where amendments may still occur. Then many may end up vetoed by the Governor. So still a process to get them enacted. The only bill pulled was the restriction on HOA prohibitions of native plants since it was probably not going to pass and this will give opportunity to work on it for next year.
- o [Advocacy Reimbursement](#): Avril reported that gas and parking money will be a barrier for many people wishing to advocate for legislation in Richmond. As a 501 3c, FACC can use a small amount of its funds for advocacy. No one making the 4-hr round trip to Richmond for the purposes of lobbying should be out of pocket. It was agreed upon by the board to reimburse Avril for costs she'll submit, and formally state to potential advocates that there is an avenue for cost reimbursement if desired. First step would be to discuss and get approval from Board of Conservators beforehand.

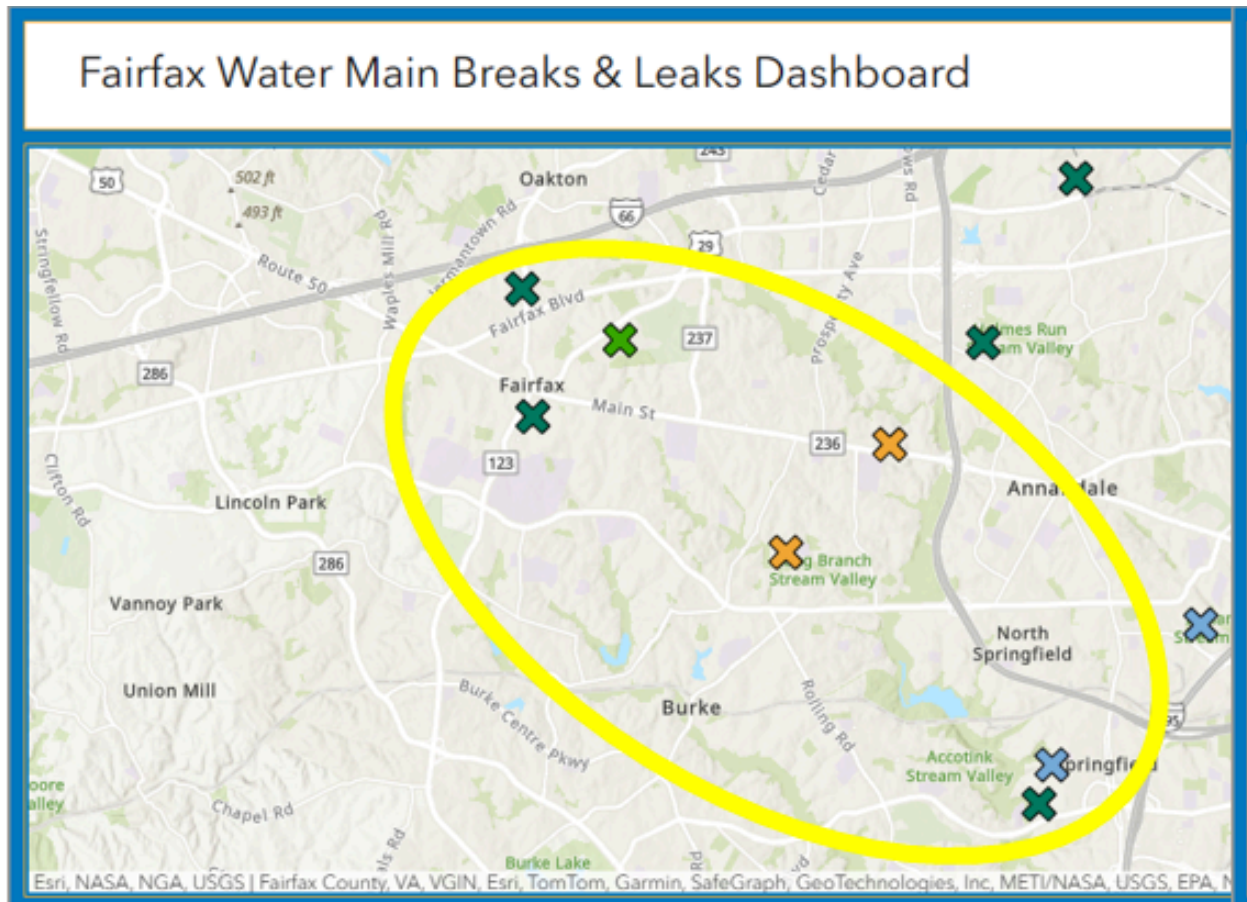
- o [Deer Control Transition](#): Avril discussed a County proposal to transfer animal control functions from the police to the Animal Shelter which surfaced in late January. The most alarming aspect is the possibility that deer management will be in the hands of managers philosophically opposed to hunting in any form. Advocates are going to meet and discuss this at length for various supervisors to ensure concerns are heard. [FACC draft letter](#) was approved to be sent.
- o [Salt Watch](#): Gary stated that with the high readings we get after a snow event, next year FACC is looking at buying some higher value strips to get a more accurate reading. He also reported that Friends of Accotink Creek has a site on [Clean Water Hub](#) where data is entered for Salt Watch and Nitrate Watch.
- o [Daventry Invasives Program](#): Dave said that he has persuaded his homeowners' board to allow him to lead volunteer invasives management on common property. Avril will do a ZOOM training event to give an overview of FCPA IMA program and identifying invasive plants. A large portion of Daventry's property is adjacent to FCPA land in Accotink Stream Valley.
- o [Americana Drive Cleanup](#): Philip said that on President's Day, 55 volunteers collected 155 bags of trash and a couple tons of construction debris. Litter was as bad as ever, but dumping was somewhat more moderate than it has been previously. This mannequin head was the most unusual item found.



Weird discovery on Americana Drive

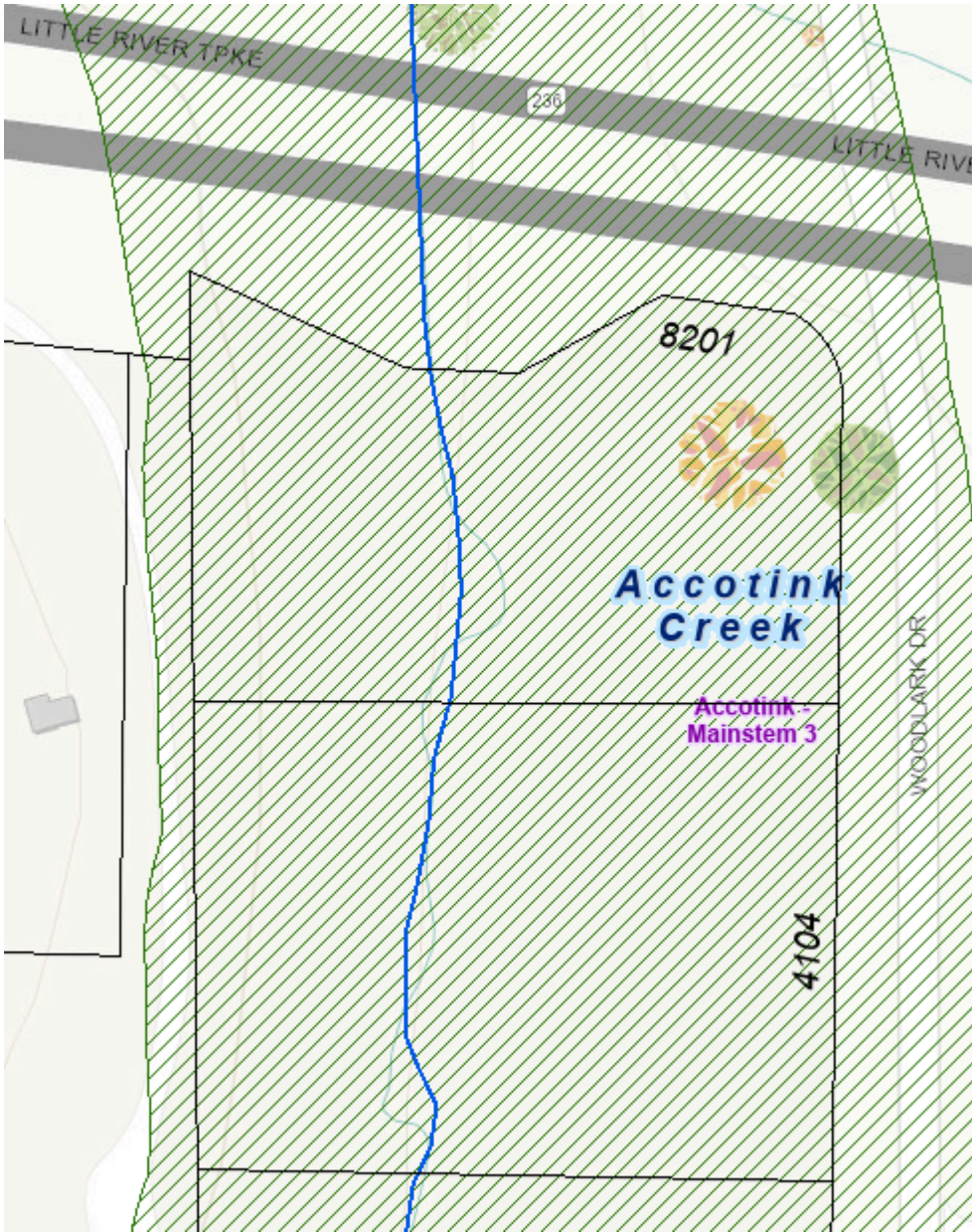
- o [Oil Spill](#): Philip said that in other disasters, there was a motor oil spill in Fairfax City on January 25th, very near another spill that happened [last year](#). It didn't seem to be a large quantity, based on observations, but it is just one more in a series of disasters affecting the North Fork of Accotink Creek, including [Northfax West](#), [I-66 Outside the Beltway](#), and the [George Snyder Trail](#).

- o [Water Main Breaks](#): Philip said water main breaks are a daily occurrence in Fairfax County and they often dump significant amounts of sediment and chlorinated water into streams. Most of them escape our attention, but a Fairfax City councilmember informed us of excess sediment in Daniels Run, which he traced to a pair of water main breaks. These were part of a rash of breaks during a brief period of January cold weather.



Fairfax City had at least 6 other breaks in five days, according to the [Fairfax Water interactive map](#) , with 13 more in other parts of the Accotink Creek watershed.

- o Woodlark Drive Development: Philip said that 4104 Woodlark Drive was the site of a protracted conflict over RPA protections when the owner proposed to build there back in 2018. That lot is still vacant, but the lot right next to it is now on the market. This second lot is also completely within the RPA and floodplain, with a tributary running through it.



Two lots that should be left to nature

- o *Bee Happy*: Philip said that scouts put up three mason bee houses in Lake Accotink Park over one year ago, but failed to include any explanation for the public of what the structures were. One of the bee houses is at Beverley's IMA site. He finally got around to putting information signs on the side of each house. The signs feature artwork by our friend Elaine Sevy.

<p>MASON BEE HOTEL</p>	<p>Mason Bees are species of solitary bee in the genus <i>Osmia</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bee Kind - Mason Bees are gentle and friendly. Females use their tiny stings only when harmed. • Bee Caring - Female Mason Bees build homes of mud for their eggs and larvae in holes in wood or plant stems. • Bee Quiet - Mason Bees are active only about six weeks in early spring. • Bee Helpful - Mason Bees are excellent and valuable spring pollinators. • Bee Busy - Mason Bees can visit up to 2,000 blossoms a day. • Bee Blessed - More than a hundred species of Mason Bee are found in North America.
<p><i>Bee Happy</i></p> 	
<p>HOTEL de ABEJAS ALBAÑILES</p>	<p>Las abejas albañiles son especies de abeja solitaria del género <i>Osmia</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Abejas amables - Las abejas albañiles son gentiles y amigables. Las hembras solo usan sus pequeñas aguijón cuando sean lastimadas. • Abejas cuidadoras - Las abejas albañiles hembras construyen casas de barro para sus huevos y larvas en agujeros en la madera o tallos de plantas. • Abejas tranquilas - Las abejas masones están activas solo unas seis semanas a principios de la primavera. • Abejas útiles - Las abejas albañiles son excelentes y valiosos polinizadores de primavera. • Abejas ocupadas - Las abejas albañiles pueden visitar hasta 2,000 flores al día. • Abejas bendiciendas - Más de cien especies de abejas albañiles se encuentran en América del Norte.
<p><i>Abejas Felices</i></p> 	

Bee hotel signs

- o Donations:* Philip reported that we received donations of:

\$70 from Susan Kuiler, a neighbor active in the George Snyder Trail campaign.

\$50 from Jang Han, who also donated \$100 last month, in response to his daughter's FB appeal

And we also received a \$100 matching donation from Jang Han's employer

- o Free Conference Call*

Free Conference Call was once funded by government-required contributions from telecoms, but that is gone and they now ask for "pay what you can" donations. Last year, we donated \$50. They suggest \$80 per year so that is what we shall do this year.

Free Conference Call

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