

## Friends of Accotink Creek 2024

Yet another busy and productive year for the [Friends of Accotink Creek](#) working to protect the overall health of our waterways; advocating for imperiled areas, such as the proposed [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#) where development would require impact to high-quality forest. Also coordinating volunteers to remove 13.95 tons of trash from polluting our streams. FACC also hosts weekly invasive plant removals, and planting hundreds of native trees, shrubs and native plants, many carefully caged off to prevent deer browse to allow the plants to get well established.

FACC Outreach continues, including tabling at local events to educate about the need to protect our waterways; quarterly stream monitoring to assess the health of local streams; January's stream monitoring event started with a [mussel rescue](#) relocating endangered freshwater mussels from the stream below the Lake Accotink Dam.



### 🦋 Monarch Season! 🦋

This Monarch butterfly caterpillar and chrysalis were the first customers spotted at the new pollinator garden now being installed by FACC at Lake Accotink Park. We hope to see many more next year, when the garden is fully populated with milkweeds and other native wildflowers from our Fall plantings.



bumpers, 2 toilets, 1 mattress set, 1 bathroom sink, 1 shopping cart, 1 trash compactor, 5 gallons of cooking oil, and 25 quarts of motor oil.

FACC has been petitioning for years about the illegal dumping at this site and collaborates with partners from the Fairfax County Restoration Project, Team Rubicon, West End Rugby, Tzu Chi Foundation, Annandale High School Rotary Club, National Junior Honors Society, and local residents to clean it. The clean-up was attended by Delegate Vivian Watts and Fairfax County Public Works Director, Chris Herrington. While other officials, such as Supervisor Walkinshaw, show support at other cleanups throughout the year.

With no accountability for local construction work, this illegal dumping will continue.

FACC also conducted 24 annual cleanups along 12 adopted stretches of our local waterways with 253 volunteers cleaning up 333 bags of waste material.

Four separate clean up events were conducted, at Americana Drive in suburban Annandale removing 5.75 tons of material; this site continues to be filled with construction debris. Instead of taking materials from construction projects to the landfill, crews often dump it at Americana Drive. Sadly, at this one site alone, volunteers removed 542 bags of trash, 30 windows, 127 tires, 4 auto





Awareness is needed and FACC continues to come up with solutions to address the problem at the source, not just Americana Drive but the length of Accotink Creek.

FACC also continues to engage with the community to become involved, and to promote future educators by supporting youth programs such as: [‘Follow the Water’](#) which starts with a

classroom presentation, then a watershed walk along a nearby stream, and then stream monitoring so that students can assess the health of their nearby stream by examining aquatic invertebrate life, and gain an understanding of the necessity of clean water. FACC also provided support to Mantua Elementary’s MWE program, observing the importance of ground-nesting bees and other habitat on their campus, along with stream life.



FACC supported Carefirst Equity Week at Daniels Run Elementary, partnering with our sister group, [Lands and Waters](#), as we have for many years. Marshall Elementary School also contributed with their ‘Only Rain in the Drain’ art work.



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FACC’s Community Outreach this year involved tabling events at the Springfield Bridge Walk,

Mount Vernon Environmental Expo, Vienna Dark Sky Day, Eileen Garnett Civic Space Earth Day, Fairfax City HisTree, Taste of Annandale, Latino Conservation Week and Earth Sangha Open House. Accotink Creek was also featured in this Nature Forward’s [State of Streams](#) report. In the report, FACC’s Gary Bangs was quoted as saying that “Streams like Accotink Creek are both the first and the most accessible line of defense for our rivers, bays, estuaries, and oceans, the place where our litter and polluted runoff initially converges. They also play a significant ecological role in their own right and provide community access to observe nature. Nature Forward’s report independently validates what we need to do, starting with protecting wetlands, reducing



impervious surfaces, reversing deforestation, and eliminating fish passage blockages.”

FACC supported the [relocation of 51 turtles at the draining of Ashby Pond](#). Speaking of which, many turtles took advantage of the newly-developed pollinator garden at Lake Accotink Park to dig nests and lay eggs. The invasive management site, previously a wasteland of invasive species continues weekly to be worked on by FACC, in collaboration with scout projects, faith, school, and corporate groups.

Due to the many years of work by dedicated volunteers, the area is now home to more than 500 species of protected trees, shrubs and flowering plants, some transferred from local areas that were being threatened by local development. We are dedicated to protecting new growth to replenish our forests.



*Elders from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints have been invaluable to our efforts to remove invasive vines and replace them with hundreds of native plants*



*Volunteers by the usual mountain of highly invasive Japanese Stilt Grass*



FACC continues to monitor the pollution of a [Lake Accotink Vernal Pool](#); this site has been contaminated through a shamefully neglected broken drainage pipe that releases gallons of sediment into the stream below the dam after rain, and has been doing so for years. See photo for the failed attempts to prevent runoff directly into the stream.

FACC also continues to follow the [Lake Accotink dredging](#) (the Lake is currently being lowered for an assessment of the dam).

There was a January oil spill in Fairfax that entered the creek, and another January incident of a water main break at Daniels Run that contaminated the water. FACC also continues to monitor the [Accotink Gravity Sewer](#) which would cause extensive damage to woods and wetlands.

But please know that we are monitoring situations and 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.

**DONATE**

All the very best to you and your family, thank you for your continued support, hope that your holidays are merry and bright - and we leave you with our mantra – **Get Your Brain Wet**



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