



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.

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Our many projects to make the creek healthier depend on your support!

Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – April 21, 2026

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

Present: Gary Bangs, Philip Latasa, Sandy Collins, Avril Garland, and Sue Kuiler, all via on-line meeting.

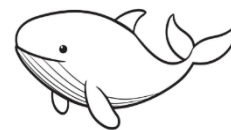
AGENDA



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• Represent FACC:

- *Board & Brew*: Philip said that the March 25 event was the third time we have attended and the third time we have struck out. We only got a few people interested in becoming board members. A couple did have excellent qualifications, but none followed through. We should keep trying in hope of finding our white whale.



- *Daniels Run Cleanup*: On April 10th Dave and Philip joined a teacher-organized cleanup of outdoor areas, mostly involving weeding, invasives removal, and relocation of native plants. Dave became a hero to the science teacher by assembling the new tool shed that has been sitting in a box for most of the past year.

The more noteworthy outcome of the workday was learning we don't need to worry that new security measures might ruin our annual workday with CareFirst. All participants were able to enter without complications just by scanning a driver's license.

- *Kings Park Elementary Earth Day*: Brian will be tabling for FACC at this event on April 22. Our information will focus on Lake Accotink, since the school is very near the lake.
- *Annandale High School Yard Sale*: Dave and Brian will be staffing a table for FACC at this event on May 2nd. We will focus on nearby Americana Drive and hope to interest students and the environmental club in participation and community outreach.
- *Woman of Influence*: Sue said that Katy was honored by the Fairfax City Commission for Women for her strong community engagement as a local business owner, civic association leader, and environmental advocate. Katy founded the City of Fairfax Home Grown National Park and the Fairfax Environmental Forum and is a Master Naturalist. In addition to Friends of Accotink Creek, she volunteers with Fairfax PRISM, Virginia Native Plant Society, Fairfax Tree Stewards, and the Northern Virginia Bird Alliance.



Katy and the Commission for Women at City Hall

- [Return of the Turtles](#): Coinciding with Katy's award, came the conclusion of the turtle rescue project she did so much to make happen. Of the 60 turtles rescued from Ashby Pond before renovations, 30 were [returned on April 11th](#), while the rest will remain in their new home near Manassas.



Handle with care!

- [George Snyder Trail](#): Philip asked if anyone was interested in helping do some photography to produce a StoryMap or video promoting the on-street route? Sue suggested Katy's nephew may be of use.
- [Accotink Gorge](#): Philip said that with a nudge from Fairfax PRISM, he made another attempt to get something going in collaboration with Fort Belvoir.

Philip also asked if anyone would have the time to spare for a spring invasives workday or two, focused on garlic mustard? We received a request from Immanuel Christian School for a project for a group of high school students who are only available May 1st 9-11am. This school has brought groups of students to volunteer at Beverley's Lake Accotink IMA for years, so we want to keep the relationship going.

- [PRISM Extravaganza](#): Avril said that we had several events during the PRISM Extravaganza period. All of them were our regular weekly invasives workdays at Southside Park, Accotink Trail, and Lake Accotink

Park. We didn't see any particular turnout boost during the Extravaganza and we only managed to get a few volunteers interested in signing up with PRISM.

We didn't get any elected officials to join us during the Extravaganza, but Supervisor Sizemore Heizer will be able to attend on Saturday, June 27th, at Lake Accotink. We are not sure when she will arrive or how long she might stay.

We should develop some points to discuss with the supervisor, such as:

- IMA issues
 - Lake dredging and mussels
 - Americana Drive
 - Cinder Bed Road Bikeway
- [*Cinder Bed Road Bikeway*](#): Avril said that on April 11th a dozen of us gathered to protest against the Bikeway at the [Franconia Governmental Center ribbon cutting](#). Because attendees were backed up waiting to enter the building, we had opportunities to open discussions with them. Despite our efforts over the years to educate the public, none of these neighbors were aware of the Bikeway. The protest did get coverage in FFX Now and the Connection newspapers.

Our next adventure in public outreach may be the Amberleigh community yard sale, on a date yet to be announced.

We have also scheduled nature walks in the Newington Conservation Site, to be led by Virginia Native Plant Society, on May 17th and June 7th.

[Chairman McKay's Spring Social](#) on May 12th could be an opportunity for Bikeway evangelism, possibly as guests networking with other attendees, possibly as a rerun of our protest, possibly both.

[Bike to Work Day](#) on May 15th is an opportunity to point out the alternate routes in the area. Philip would like to produce a video of people biking these routes and converging on the Bike to Work Day [pit stop](#) near the Metro.

We were contacted by the new board president for Fairfax Advocates for Better Bicycling with a message of seeking consensus. Dave has responded and we will meet at Lake Accotink soon.

○ [*Road Salt Dumping*](#)

Not related to the Bikeway, but on Cinder Bed Road, there was an egregious case of intentional dumping of serious quantities of road salt adjacent to wetlands and the Long Branch tributary discovered by Philip. The culprit was easy to identify, since several spreader trucks of the company were parked in the same spot. He reported the incident to DEQ and Stormwater Planning. They passed jurisdiction to VDOT which is requiring the company to remove the salt and contaminated soil.



One of many piles of road salt dumped on Cinder Bed Road

- *Canterbury Woods Elementary School*: Dave is planning with a teacher and Girl Scout troop to conduct an invasives control project at Canterbury Woods Elementary School on June 6th. These are the same school and teacher we have worked with for [Follow the Water](#) in previous years.

During the Long Branch cleanup last Saturday we had some pretty productive discussions that touched on these plans:

- We learned the Girl Scouts will join with Cub Scouts for the project
- Supervisor Sizemore Heizer would like to attend.
- The rain gardens installed at the school could be a focus of the work .
- The Willow Woods section of the [Long Branch central Project](#) is adjacent to the school. The project manager expressed interest in involving the school.
- This involvement by the school might include a native plant rescue.
- Supervisor Sizemore Heizer wants to promote public outreach for the Long Branch central project, possibly as an event at Canterbury Woods Elementary.
- Public outreach is something we have long urged the project management to do more of, so this direct interest by the supervisor is a good opportunity.

Whoever is available should work with Dave to take best advantage of the opportunity.

The June 6th date conflicts with the Americana Drive cleanup and the Lake Accotink Open House.

In other news from Long Branch, we received photographic confirmation from some young nighttime fishermen that eels are found upstream from the dam.



Nighttime eel sighting on Long Branch central

- [Stream Redesign Setback](#): Sue said on March 16th, heavy rains dealt a setback to the recent Stafford Drive stream redesign project by washing out many of the newly planted trees. The City was slow to react, and the washout just left the area looking like a mess, further upsetting the neighbors who were already disappointed in the loss of forest for the project. It does look like the actual stream structure held up to the rain.

Philip said that our Facebook post, based on the reporting of a neighbor, got over 4900 views, an exceptional number, by our modest standards. But it didn't match our [hammerhead worm post](#), which got over 5500 views a few years back.

- [Lake Accotink Dredging](#): Philip provided an update on Lake Accotink.
 - *Lake Accotink Dredging Open House*
On Saturday, June 6th, 3:00 – 5:00 PM, Public Works and the Park Authority will host an open house at Kings Glen Elementary School.

We need to take advantage of this opportunity to speak to the public on behalf of the mussels. We must also document the current state of planning and get photos of the lake configuration options.

He said that he attended such events before wearing a small poster informing people about the plight of the mussels and hope we can do that again. It is likely one or more supervisors will also attend.

This is the same day as the Americana Drive cleanup, so my availability may be limited.

- [Potomac Watershed Cleanup](#): Philip said that the cleanups in our watershed have already started with the Town of Vienna Cleanup, Fairfax City Cleanup, Ossian Hall Park Cleanup, and Long Branch Stream Valley Cleanup. Our own cleanups begin April 25th, and continue for four Saturdays. Supervisor Lusk and Supervisor Sizemore Heizer will be at cleanups on May 2nd.

- [Grace Presbyterian Church Cleanup](#): Dave also organized a cleanup at Brookfield Park by the members of nearby Grace Presbyterian Church and Springfield United Methodist Church on March 22nd.

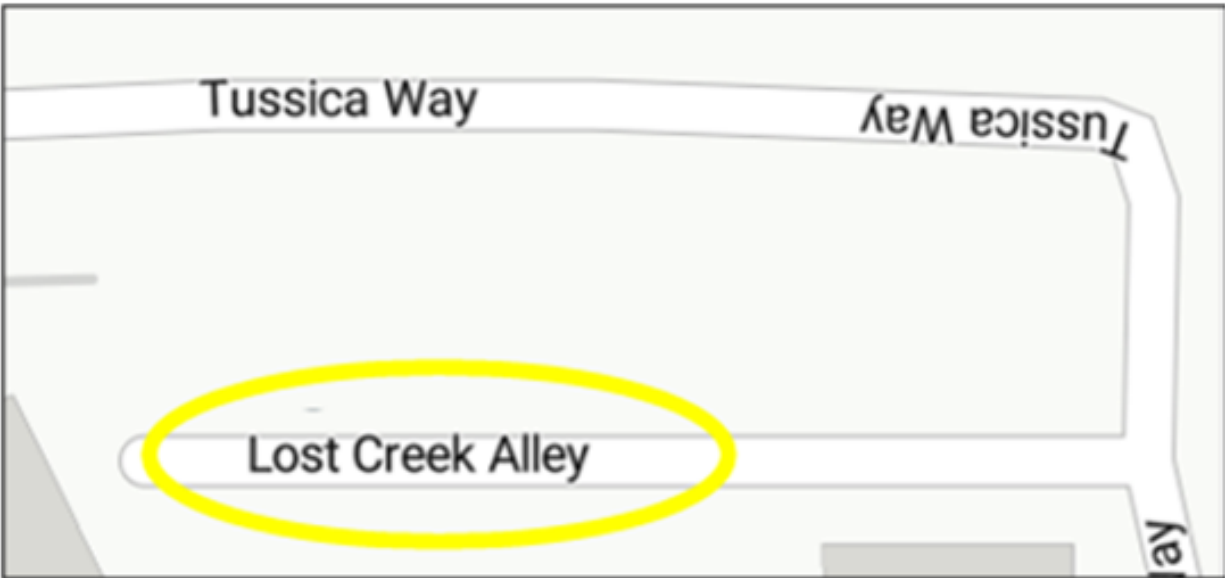


Church youth volunteers at Brookfield Pond

- *Park Authority Budget*: Avril said that her and Philip spoke to the Board of Supervisors budget hearing April 15th. We covered the main requests we have of maintaining funding for invasives management, natural resources management, and Hidden Oaks Nature Center, while eliminating funds for the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway.

- *Water Supply Planning Stakeholder Workgroup*: Philip said that we received an invitation to Join the Northern Virginia Water Supply Planning Stakeholder Workgroup, whose purpose is to guide planning for regional water supply through 2060. It may be a little outside our mission area, but wondered if anyone was interested. With no one able to commit, he will decline the invitation.

- *Lost Creek Alley*: Philip came across this minor item that seems worth noting. In the new housing development that replaced Paul VI High School there is a tiny street named “Lost Creek Alley”. Located just a few blocks away from where the North Fork of Accotink Creek was buried by [Northfax West](#). Is this an accident, an homage to what was lost, or a deliberate rubbing of salt in the wound?



A street named with ambiguous intent

- *Damming of Daniels Run:* Philip said there always seems to be someone who finds new ways to abuse our watershed. The Buddhist temple on Blenheim Blvd has built a dam of loose stones across Daniels Run and placed an enclosure of cinder blocks in the resulting backwater. This may be intended as a water vegetable garden. They also are in the process of installing a greenhouse on the streambank. He reported these violations to the City Public Works.

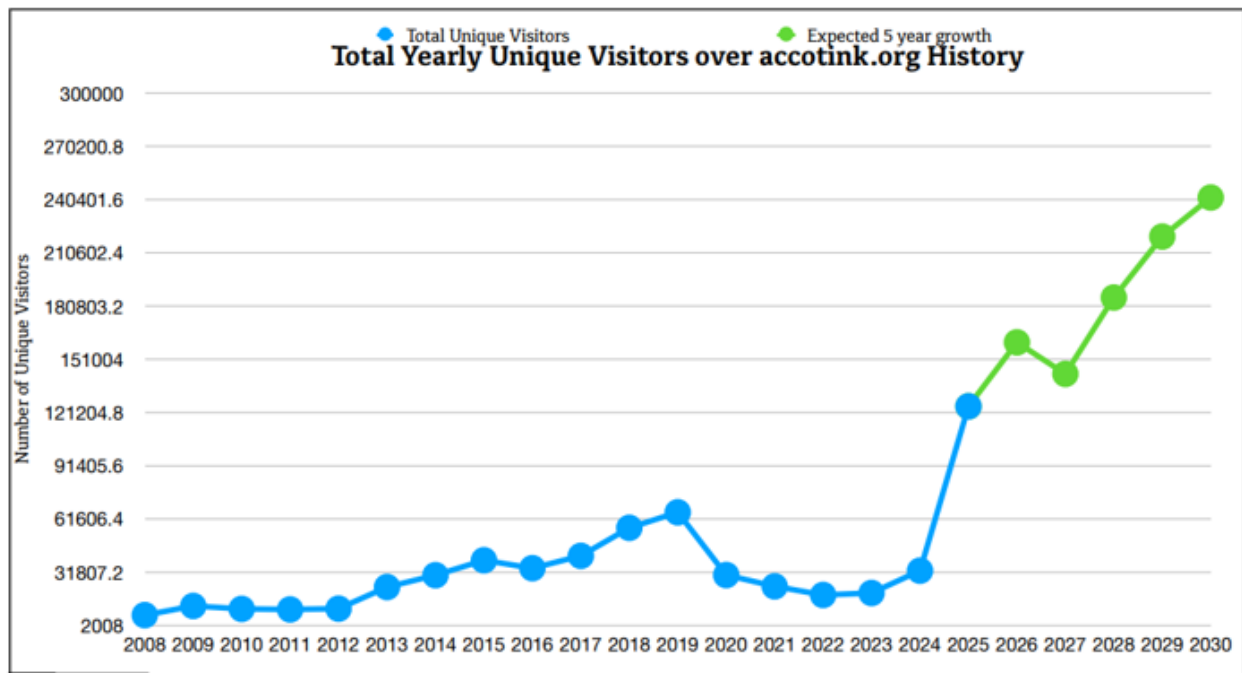
- *Kris Unger Memorial:* Sue said that we still need to prepare a plan for the City to evaluate. She did talk to Mike who said he could do it.

Also Sue asked if we should apply for a Fairfax Master Naturalist grant to see if we can get the second vernal pool at Cardinal Park? This is a location we originally found to be feasible for the memorial pool.

- *Website Updates:* Philip said that all our contact forms have been updated by our two IT volunteers. Please test the [Contact Elected Officials](#) form when you need to communicate with your supervisor.

Next steps will be getting photo albums back in place and improving our menus.

His great nephew did an analysis of our website traffic that shows a baffling upsurge in visits over the past couple years. He has not noticed any corresponding increase in contacts or volunteers. If anyone knows what this means, please let us know.



[Full Report](#)

- **Donations:** Philip said we had the following donations.
 - \$100.00 from Su Jewell, local professional naturalist whom some of us know, with the message *"In honor of and memory of Kris Unger, who did so much to make our community a better place to live. Rest in clean air!"*
 - \$100.00 from Gustavo la Torre. This appears to be a recurring monthly donation, although the message from PayPal is a bit ambiguous.
 - \$77.02 from Aubry Eaton
 - \$20.00 from Adriana Carmona Paredes
- **[Whither FACC:](#)**
 - *Annual Newsletter:*
Philip reminded everyone that as discussed last month, we should all be writing very brief reports of our own activities and observations with photos suitable for inclusion in the annual Bulletin.