

Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley

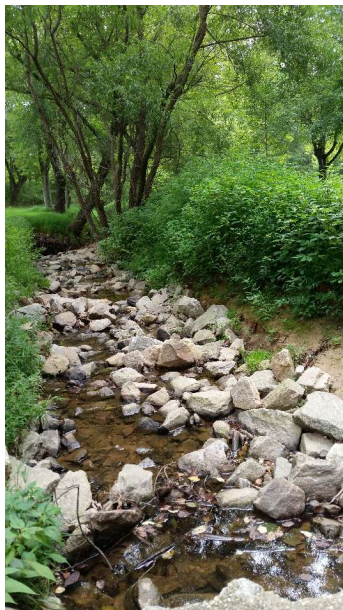
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September 2014

A Letter from Braddock District Park Authority Board Member...

Greetings All –

Welcome to the very first edition of the quarterly Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley e-newsletter.



On July 7th 2014, Supervisor John Cook sponsored the first meeting of the Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley (LBSV) to formally kick off an effort to bring several communities together who have one thing in common – they all border the Long Branch Stream Valley. In his opening remarks, Supervisor Cook said we are seeing increasing erosion, degradation, and invasive species throughout the county. The kick off

meeting was seeking to form a group that will advocate for, maintain and help improve the Long Branch Stream Valley. He said that we need help in these areas and the Friends Groups do that for the “wild” spaces that aren’t actual parks. There is a list of many things that need to be done, and he asked that individuals who volunteer put in what time they can.

I noted that as the Braddock District Representative to the Park Authority Board, I am looking to take a district watershed perspective versus an individual community or park perspective to better serve the stream valley and Lake Accotink Park. Lake Accotink Park gets a lot of trash from its tributaries and since Long Branch feeds into Accotink Creek which then feeds into the lake, getting to the trash upstream means less trash downstream at the marina and along the lake’s shore line. So, this newsletter is being distributed to residents in the communities of Olde Forge / Surrey Square, Rutherford, Little Run, Long Branch, Bradfield, Red Fox Forest, Canterbury Woods and Stonehaven.
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Trash Removal October 18th A Great Outdoors Activity for the Entire Family

Unfortunately the increased population in Fairfax County over the last 25 years has also led to increased trash in our parks and stream valleys. Some people think that kicking trash into storm sewers is an acceptable way to dispose of that trash; but, trash in storm drains only empties directly into our stream valleys and then downstream to one of the many lakes where it often sits upon the shore line until volunteers come and pick it up, disposing of it properly. For trash that goes into the Long Branch Stream Valley, the trash eventually winds its way down to Lake Accotink’s marina and shore line.

Cleaning up the stream valley of trash is an admirable public service project that teaches stewardship, and a great outdoor activity for families with younger kids who want to have fun getting wet, muddy and dirty (moms permitting) pulling trash out of the stream banks. October 18th is the Lake Accotink Park Watershed Clean Up Day for Fall 2014. Since this date is already scheduled, Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley see it as a good date to hold a Long Branch Stream Valley Clean Up. Holding these two events in tandem provides for a district watershed perspective vice an individual park / community perspective. Join us on October 18th. Meeting locations and trash disposal sites will be identified on the Long Branch Stream Valley web-page of the FACC website. Don’t forget to bring gloves.

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*(cont.) A Letter from Braddock
District Park Authority Board
Member..*

The first meeting touched upon what the scope of the Friend's group should be, and the following topics emerged: Invasive management; Trail safety; Trail maintenance; Trash removal; Water Quality Monitoring; and Educational Awareness - for all ages. From that, four committees are being established:

- Invasive Management
- Trail Management
- Water Quality Management
- Educational Awareness.

An additional committee - Community Outreach – is also needed to provide information through these quarterly newsletters. The minutes of the July 7th meeting are posted on the Friends of Accotink Creek (FACC) website on a webpage set up for the LBSV Friends group.

http://www.accotink.org/2014/LBSV_Meeting_Minutes_2014_07_07.pdf.

I am happy to report to you that several individuals have already come forward to start volunteering in leadership roles for the Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley. Chris Bauernshub (Stonehaven) has volunteered to take on the role of president, Scott

Thaxton (Stonehaven) is taking on Vice President, Allison Hagner (Long Branch) is taking on Community Outreach, and Kate Insley (Little Run) is taking on Educational Awareness.

I am also happy to report that several Friends groups and individuals in the Braddock District are standing by, ready to help Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley get off the ground. Both the Friends of Accotink Creek (FACC) and the Friends of Lake Accotink Park (FLAP) attended the July 7th meeting, and offered assistance in helping Friends of LBSV set up programs. So, there are lots of volunteer positions to fill, and I ask you to think about which effort you would like to be a part of.

The next Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley meeting will be Monday September 22nd 2014 at the King Park Library Conference Room. As Supervisor Cook noted, there is lots to do, and many hands make for a lighter load. I hope to see many of you there. While determining the organizational structure of the Friends group is important, I think another important issue is what you will call yourselves. Friends of Accotink Creek are referred to as Creekers, the Friends of Lake Accotink Park go by the name of FLAPpers or Lakers, and another Friends group in the county – the Friends of Green Springs are known as the FROGS. As far as I know, “the Streamers” is not yet taken. Lastly, the Lake Accotink Park Watershed Clean Up

Fairfax Resident Attacked By Hornets

Police responded to a home in the 4900 block of Althea Drive on Saturday, Aug. 2 at around 5:20 p.m. for a report of a CPR in progress. The victim's injury was believed to be caused by a hornet; the woman was trimming bushes and may have inadvertently come into contact with a hornet nest. She experienced an allergic reaction and family contacted 9-1-1 for help. She was transported to Inova Fairfax Hospital where she later died. The deceased was a 43-year-old woman who lived in the home. Police worked jointly with the resident to determine the efficient removal of the hornet nest from the property.

The next day, Sunday, August 3, in an unrelated matter, police were contacted to a report of a broken hornets' nest on a walking path in the 5200 block of Juliet Street in Springfield at around 6 p.m. Several people in the area had been stung; the police report does not indicate further actions or injuries that may have required medical attention. The area was apparently roped off for people to avoid the area.

The Park Authority is currently working with FCPD Animal Control to create a fact sheet that would tell citizens who to call, and what to do and appropriate responses to a person stung. The County has contracts with pest control companies to handle these situations and if residents SEE a hornet nest on public property, they should contact the police non-emergency line at 703-691-2131. If, however, it is on private property, a homeowner should contact a pest control company to assist them with the situation.

Day for Fall 2014 is scheduled for October 18th 2014 – rain or shine. Scheduling a Braddock District-wide Long Branch Stream Valley Clean Up for the same date reinforces a watershed perspective for the Accotink Watershed, especially since other parks in the Long Branch central sub-watershed include George Mason Park, Long Branch Falls Park, Olde Forge Park, Surrey Square Park, Willow Woods Park, Red Fox Forest Park, and Ashford East Park. Trash drop off points will be designated where volunteers can deposit trash so that Park Authority personnel can come in and haul it away. More information will be provided at the September meeting. See you then.

Best Regards –
Tony Vellucci
Braddock District Representative
Fairfax County Park Authority Board

Friends of Accotink Creek Conduct Nature Walk In LBSV

On August 30th, Friends of Accotink Creek (FACC), in support of the Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley, provided two 45-50 minute “**Follow the Water**” walks into the Long Branch Stream Valley to raise educational awareness and provide general information about stream valley ecology. They pointed out invasive and native plants, discussed water quality, addressed erosion issues and answered questions attendees had – such as why some actions are harmful - like mowing to the water’s edge. The walks were free and primarily

geared to children, but open to residents of all ages. About 19 people gathered at 9:00 AM at the Rutherford Park parking lot off of Guinea Road. Another group met at 11:00 AM at the Canterbury Woods Park parking lot off of Wakefield Chapel Road. Given the success of this outing, FACC is looking to sponsor another walk next Spring, and perhaps one specifically for adults. Look for information on the next “**Follow The Water**” walk in the next newsletter.

Park Authority to Acquire Land In Long Branch Stream Valley

The Park Authority is currently in the process of acquiring a 1.72 acre infill donation property in the Long Branch Stream Valley just north of Olde Forge/Surrey Square. The parcel is identified as MAP #: 0691 01 0024 and can be viewed at <http://icare.fairfaxcounty.gov/search/commonsearch.aspx?mode=parid>.

The Park Authority’s survey department is creating a plat (including legal description) of the 1.72 acres to attach to the Deed of Gift which will then be sent to the owners Belleau Wood Inc. /Van Metre Company for signature. Once signed, the Park Authority will record the property and it will be officially added to the Park system. The acquisition should be completed before the end of the year.

Friends of Accotink Creek provide information during a "Follow The Water" Walk. Photo provided by Kris Unger



Friends of Accotink Creek Survey Long Branch Stream Valley

Kris Unger and Philip Latasa, representatives from Friends of Accotink Creek (FAC) conducted a quick survey of the LBSV on June 16th 2014 and walked a good part of the stream valley providing this initial evaluation:

- Surprisingly light on trash - one small raft found.
- Abundant fish were found. There are significant pools of water along the way.
- Erosion is the main issue. It would be helpful to slow down the water flow out of yards by using rain barrels, etc.
- Some people who back up to the stream valley have thrown their yard debris into the park; thereby spreading the invasives planted in their yards and some are encroaching by mowing on park land.
- Some public access ways have been cut off by neighboring homeowners who have incorporated public land access into private yards.



The complete results of the Long Branch Stream Valley survey can be found at <http://www.accotink.org/DMLongBranchCentralJune2014.htm>

Park Authority to Acquire New Tool To Take On Invasive Forests

On July 7th 2014, Justin Roberson, Natural Resource Specialist, Natural Resource Management and Protection Branch, Fairfax County Park Authority (Phone:(703) 324-8586) provided an overview to attendees at the first Long Branch Stream Valley Friends group meeting highlighting a new piece of equipment the Park Authority Board recently authorized staff to purchase. Officially it is called the Bobcat Forestry Cutter (see photo below courtesy of Bobcat), but we have nicknamed it the Invaserator (The Invasive Terminator). Park Authority staff tested the equipment on an autumn olive patch in Poplar Ford that had been taking over a meadow. The equipment knocks down trees up to 12 inches in diameter and chews up the debris. It has also been used in Rocky Run Stream Valley, and on such invasive species as Bradford pears and bamboo. After the Invaserator knocks down patches of heavy invasive infestation a contractor (Invasive Plant Control Company) comes in to apply an herbicide. After that, volunteers are needed to replant and to help check for plant invasive regrowth, and remove it if possible.

The equipment cost about \$95,000 to purchase and the money came from monopole funds the Park Authority receives for having cell phone towers on park land. Park Authority staff is finishing up on the exact specifications to place the order and hopes to have the Invaserator delivered sometime in the Fall. The Invaserator can be used on several stretches of bamboo growth in the Long Branch Stream Valley- especially across from the new bridge in Canterbury Woods.

Volunteers are needed to take on the replanting and monitoring of stream valley sites. If you are interested in supporting this effort, please consider joining the Invasive Management Committee and making a difference.

Trail Safety & Maintenance

Many parts of the Long Branch Stream Valley provide an unobstructed line of sight so that those on the path – whether bicycling, hiking or running - can see all around them, but there are other patches along the trail where heavy brush obstructs a clear line of sight. In some cases, the heavy brush overgrowth is an invasive and should be removed.



At the same time, there are parts of the trail that have gotten so bad that users have started new side trails to get around puddles of water and ruts that have formed. Starting new trails pose several dangers for the environment as individuals do not always understand how their actions – even with the best of intentions – could cause greater damage. And sometimes it is necessary to close portions of a trail and reroute it to give native species the opportunity to regenerate. Stream valley trails do not always get all the attention they deserve as Park Authority area managers are under adverse staffing pressure due to county budget constraints.

Concerned residents can work with Park Authority personnel to help maintain and rehabilitate trails in the Long Branch Stream Valley learning about trail rerouting and how it should be done with the least impact to the environment. If you are interested in supporting this effort, please consider joining the Trail Management Committee and making a difference.

Our Newsletter

The Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley Newsletter is distributed to members and the civic associations at Olde Forge / Surrey Square, Rutherford, Little Run, Long Branch, Bradfield, Red Fox Forest, Canterbury Woods and Stonehaven. It will come out quarterly, in March, June, September and December. We would love your submissions - photos, comments and articles about the stream valley. Send them our way. Submissions received by November 15th 2014 will be included in the December edition. Please send them to friendslbsv@gmail.com. Look forward to hearing from you!

Friends of LBSV Look To Erect Signboards

While social media is becoming more and more prevalent, Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley are looking to erect several signboards along the trail to put up information for park patrons. If you know of a boy scout who needs to complete an Eagle Scout project, or have some spare time on your hand and are a fairly good carpenter, please contact friendslbsv@gmail.com.

Water Monitoring Program

Volunteers are needed to measure the water quality in the Long Branch Stream Valley. A program to do just that had been active many years ago, but fell into dormancy. Now, Friends of Accotink Creek are interested in helping Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley establish a water quality monitoring program, using existing measuring stations. What's involved? Look for and net the invertebrates on the bottom of the stream, count them and put observations into a formula to get readings that are then forwarded to the Northern Virginia Soil and Water Conservation District(NVSWCD). Philip Latasa noted that the most important thing is to ensure readings are obtained consistently from the same site. His readings for Accotink Creek get about a 4 out of 12 on a water quality testing scale. No one knows what Long Branch Stream Valley water quality is since volunteer testing has been dormant for so long.

There is a short training program that NVSWCD sponsors with an open book test at the end of the one day course to make sure volunteers can accurately identify the invertebrates; testing takes about two hours. Each site should be monitored about four times a year.

Are you interested in measuring and monitoring the water quality in the stream valley? If you are, please consider joining the Water Management Committee and making a difference.

Would you like to be a Friend of the Long Branch Stream Valley?

We are just getting started, so attend our next meeting or one of our events and get on our newsletter mailing list. Just contact us at: friendslbsv@gmail.com or visit our Facebook Page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Friends-of-Long-Branch-Stream-Valley/900707383277668>

Take a look, stay in touch and like Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley!

Officers:

President
Vice President
Secretary

Chris Bauernshub
Scott Thaxton
Vacant

Committees:

Invasive Management
Trail Management
Water Quality Management
Educational Awareness
Community Outreach

Vacant
Vacant
Vacant
Kate Insley
Allison Hagner

Thank You!

A big thank you to Tony Vellucci for his enormous contributions to the newsletter, Phillip Latasa and Kris Unger for leading the "Follow the Water" walk. Photos for this edition of our publication were taken at Rutherford Park by Allison Hagner and Kris Unger.

Word Search

S J O D X F W B A R I C O F P
S T R E A M D I R M I L O A M
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ABATEMENT
DOWNSTREAM
NATURE
RAINFALL
TRASH

CANOPY
ENVIRONMENT
POLLUTION
STREAM
WATER

COMMUNITY
INVASERATOR
QUALITY
TRAIL
WATERSHED