



## 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 – November 19, 2019

Next Meeting: December 17, 2019 (Third Tuesday of each month)  
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

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#### **Present:**

Sandy Collins, Flint Webb, Dave Lincoln, Philip Latasa, Kris Unger, Kathleen Gaffney, Julie Chang

#### **Upcoming events**

- Winter Salt Listening Session December 3, 2019
- Sustainable Environmental Advocacy December 5, 2019
- Stream Monitoring Lake Accotink Park December 14, 2019
- FACC Elections, December 17, 2019
- Whither FACC Strategy Session, January 20, 2020 (tentative)

Julie and Kathleen introduced themselves to each other, with the question of whether they might have already met resolved by joking reference to a possible earlier connection by means of telepathic dream projection.



#### **FACC Subjects Discussed –**

##### • Represent FACC:

- *Daniels Run Invasives Oct. 23, 2019*

Julie reported Lands and Waters continued its work with a volunteer invasives removal workday involving 15 participants. Work areas were around the perimeter of the school and in the courtyards.

Some areas were covered with cardboard and mulch to prevent resprouting, but Julie lamented the plastic shipping labels still on some of the donated cardboard.

A Fairfax City (or county?) film crew was there, prompting Julie to offer the practical advice to avoid bending over when being filmed. →

Kris noted Lands and Waters has been working at Daniels Run Elementary for many years. Philip mentioned Katie's project and hoped that the work can be carried on. Kathleen will contact Lands and Waters.



- *Mt. Vernon Environmental Expo Nov. 16, 2019*  
Dave and Sandy staffed a table for FACC. There were 40+ exhibitors, including a display of electric cars. Dave mentioned an interesting exhibit by the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences modeling sea level rise that shows Accotink Creek becoming tidal as far as Route 1. Sandy observed there were a good number of people, but it sometimes seemed the number of exhibitors and visitors was equal.

Dave also commented on the [Drawdown](#) presentation. Flint remarked on a recent GMU *Drawdown* presentation on reduced emissions and CO<sub>2</sub> sequestration. Julie mentioned [biochar](#) as a drawdown tool and made the connection to women's empowerment in climate change adaptation.

- [Sustainable Environmental Advocacy Dec. 5, 2019](#)  
Kris let us know he and two other local environmental leaders will be leading this event, which he described as being a "low risk, low resource experiment". The goal is to encourage more conversation. Kris is looking for about 20 attendees.

- *Stream Restorations:*

A conversation arose regarding the Long Branch project focus proposed by DPWES. Discussion covered the state of planning (if any) and the need for input from FACC and the community.

Sandy mentioned the excessive clearing in a stream restoration project off Telegraph Road. Discussion involved general lamentation of the tree loss caused by stream restorations. Dave queried what standards of tree preservation restoration contractors must follow, but no one had a ready answer. Dave will contact DPWES.

- *INOVA/Fairview Park:*

- *Nature Walk*  
Kris felt the October 17<sup>th</sup> nature walk had been enormously successful. There were 50-some participants from 30-some organizations, including representation in force by neighboring civic associations. Kris credited Doug Stewart of Sierra Club with doing much of the organizing. He also gave credit to the Inova contracting engineer for being a straight shooter in question-and-answers during the walk. Kris noted the interest of Friends of Holmes Run in keeping this going. [\[Tour memo\]](#)

Discussion touched on nearby Fairview Park. Kris noted that Fairview is owned by the billionaire founder of UUNet, so financial outcomes are secondary.

- *Inova Recommendations*  
Philip shared a set of [recommendations](#) to Inova Friends of Holmes Run has produced with the goal of enhancing preservation and keeping Inova aware of community interest. Kris and Philip made some contributions and FACC is a partner, although the site is almost entirely in the Holmes Run watershed.

Kris related that the thing that makes the difference is community engagement and that the next step is to follow up with the Inova Sustainability Office. Kris referred to the opportunities of working with [Virginia Clinicians for Climate Action](#), noting several of their members work at Inova and have expressed interest in working with FACC and Friends of Holmes Run on the health aspects of preservation. Flint recalled attending VCCA's last annual symposium and Kris promised we'll be at the symposium next spring at Inova.

- [International Coastal Cleanup:](#)

We had a coda to the cleanup season when the Fairfax High School Leadership Class requested support for an October 26 cleanup at Pickett Road. The students hardly needed our help, it turned out. When Philip arrived, the students had already completed an early shift starting at 6:30 using their own resources. The students brought out a total of 45 volunteers who removed 51 bags of trash and 8 tires.

- [Americana Drive Cleanup:](#)

In cooperation with Fairfax County Restoration Project, Philip advised we had another Americana Drive cleanup on Veterans Day, November 11<sup>th</sup>. We had 33 volunteers who collected about half a dumpster full of trash. That's far less than we collected back in February, so we may take that as a hopeful sign.

We received a payment of \$100.00 on behalf of the Rotary Club in support of the cleanup. The group soundly endorsed providing reimbursement to FCRP for the for food purchases that amounted to \$106.95.

- [County Litter Pilot:](#)

Kris informed us DPWES has a pilot program through the end of December to provide employment to homeless/unemployed residents of shelters collecting trash and removing invasive species. The program was running low on trash sites, so reached out to watershed groups, including FACC, for suggestions. It seems the program is not able to work on VDOT property.

Philip mentioned he suggested to the director that if the focus was on invasives they would never run out of opportunities. One of the teams went to Elaine and Beverley's invasive management site.

- [Lake Accotink Park Master Plan:](#)

On October 29<sup>th</sup>, the Board of Supervisors approved the financing plan for dredging Lake Accotink, via a loan from the Virginia Clean Water Revolving Loan Fund.

Philip wondered what can we do to try to revive this debate and avoid the pipeline. He observed Save Lake Accotink, for all its success, seems to have gone back to sleep. Philip asked if we should put up signs around the park entrances, as Save Lake Accotink did.



Kris preferred to hold off on any signs, but rather seek to initiate discussion via a walk along the pipeline route with a small group (FACC, Save Lake Accotink, the incoming Braddock supervisor, and the dredging study contractor, WSSI). Kris suggested we could position ourselves as the "watershed people". Dave advocated emphasizing tree loss as the issue. Flint pointed out WSSI would not participate without the Park Authority. Philip reminded that other supervisors' offices were also involved, particularly Lee, but also Springfield and Mason. Sandy noted many people asked at the Mount Vernon Environmental Expo about the future of Lake Accotink. After considerable back and forth on the approach, Kris will get things started by coordinating with Save Lake Accotink.

Philip reminded us that public meetings on the general master plan should resume soon. He pondered whether we should turn every meeting into a discussion of the pipeline. Philip also shared our



[comments from 2015](#) on the general master plan and stated he was largely at a loss for what else to recommend beyond no net loss of habitat.

Despite being at a loss, Philip did offer a few thoughts on master plan suggestions:

- ✓ Studying a location for a boardwalk like at Huntley Meadows
- ✓ A gazebo in the lake, like at Meadowlark Botanical Gardens
- ✓ Preserving the watershed sign at the boathouse
- ✓ Public nature-themed art
- ✓ “Accotink-henge”, an arrangement of buildings to create some sort of phenomenon at solstice sunsets
- ✓ Turning facilities into environmental "net zero" showpieces, setting an example like the Chesapeake Bay Foundation’s [Brock Center](#).

Any additional ideas and suggestions are welcome, and needed soon.



One of many nature-themed outdoor works of art at Alexandria’s Eisenhower East Park



Nature-themed playground art in Fairfax City’s Van Dyck Park

- [Blake Lane Park:](#)

Philip recalled we had previously told Save Blake Lane Park that we would accept donations on their behalf and advised we have received the first such donation, of \$50.00.

Philip also shared that Save Blake Lane Park is hearing about pro-school anti-park advocates who are quietly lobbying the Board of Supervisors. In response, SBLP is urging the public to ask the Board of Supervisors to transfer the property to the Park Authority. Philip asked if we wish to comment.

Kris advised Friends of Holmes Run will meet Providence District supervisor-elect Dalia Palchik and we may want to piggyback.

Flint suggested that Blake Lane Park should be monitored for [Spotted Lantern Fly](#) , since it has many exotic Tree of Heaven, the main host species.

- [TMDL:](#)

Kris observed that stronger pushback from larger stakeholders like VDOT is developing as the [Winter Salt Listening Session](#) on December 3<sup>rd</sup> nears. He described the session as an opportunity to show community power.

Flint noted the Federation of Civic Associations' [December meeting](#) will feature a discussion of salt and lead in drinking water where the connection between streams and drinking water may get attention. Sandy expressed the concern that one response may be increased use of bottled water.

Kris confirmed that FACC can have a table at the Listening Session and the consensus favored doing so.

- [Soil Dumping:](#)

Philip referred to the recent *Washington Post* article regarding soil dumping along Accotink Creek. Lawsuits are making competing claims of responsibility, but it does not seem to be in dispute that 100 truckloads of construction fill were dumped in a backyard without permits of any kind. The dumping spilled over into park property, with some intrusion into the RPA. The homeowner is now experiencing sanctions from the Park Authority and Code Enforcement. The location is along the Accotink Gorge, between the power lines and Alban Road. Kris described disposal of excess soil as another externality of land use.



- [Water Caltrop:](#)

Philip learned at a workshop last Friday that the dreaded invasive exotic Water Caltrop (*Trapa bicornis*) has returned. We had been under the impression that the two known outbreaks, at Pohick Bay and at Vienna Metro had been eliminated. Now we learn that there are new infestations in our watershed at Brookfield Pond, the Northern Virginia Community College pond, and a stormwater pond in Merrifield owned by Inova. There seems to be no one at a Federal, state, or local level who can take charge of stopping the spread. Flint recalled the Inova pond was contentious at time of construction for not being up to standards.



Sinister seed of Water Caltrop, a.k.a. Bat Nut

A humor-laced discussion considered the edibility of Water Caltrops and whether that edibility contributed to the spread. Kris proposed getting rid of Water Caltrops by selling them at \$5 or even \$10 per pound – “locally sourced”.

- [FACC Elections:](#)

Philip reminded us that our December meeting will feature elections for Purser and Conservator-at-Large. Both incumbents are eligible for reelection. There was humorous reference to creating additional Board openings via impeachment.



- [Whither FACC:](#)

Dave lamented that there had been no reaction to the notes on Friends of Sligo Creek he had sent out. It seems there had been general misunderstanding of the expected response.

Discussion moved toward a consensus of having a Whither FACC retreat/strategizing session after our Board elections, tentatively scheduled for 6-ish on January 20<sup>th</sup> at the Dos Amigos restaurant next to the Springfield Costco. Suggestions for other invitees included:

- ✓ Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley
- ✓ Save Lake Accotink
- ✓ Friends of Nottoway
- ✓ Friends of Lake Accotink Park
- ✓ Save Blake Lane Park

- *Interstate Commission on the Potomac River*

Flint brought up having met the Executive Director of the Interstate Commission on the Potomac River Basin at a conference on algal blooms. The Director indicated he was familiar with FACC and had heard about the mussel survey and the TMDL salt and silt issues.

Flint suggested we may want to contact him about ideas for funding for FACC. Flint will coordinate a meeting.

- [General Assembly Preview:](#)

Philip advised the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is hosting one of the December 7<sup>th</sup> General Assembly Preview watch parties at Alexandria Renew (the Alexandria wastewater agency) After the session they plan a regional panel discussion, if anyone would care to attend or participate in a panel.