



## 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 – April 21, 2020

Next Meeting: May 19, 2020 (Third Tuesday of each month)  
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

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*It's easy & free!*

#### **Present:**

Sandy Collins, Dave Lincoln, Julie Chang, Kris Unger, Philip Latasa  
All via conference call, due to covid19 closures and precautions



Conference calling

#### **FACC Subjects Discussed –**

- Represent FACC:

- *Everything cancelled by covid19!*

- George Snyder Trail:

Philip advised the proposed small group walk did not take place, but he went solo and his notes are linked to the new George Snyder Trail page on our website.

Philip did not send in the comments approved at our March meeting because nothing is going forward right now and because he has been talking with Audubon Naturalist Society and some City residents on developing alternative proposals.

- Country Club Hills Connector

This is a much lesser trail project and a much better idea, providing a street-to-street connection of only 650 feet, pretty much all boardwalk. Comments are needed by June 1st. Philip shared draft comments urging the City to save both money and trees by going through the fire station parking lot instead of around it. The draft was approved without objection.

- City of Fairfax Bicycle Transportation Plan

The City was to begin their new bicycle transportation plan this spring. When they get back on track, we'll want to express the value of using existing roads instead of paving forests.

• [Northfax West Development:](#)

We have a new webpage for this project also. Philip has been talking, again with Audubon Naturalist Society and mostly the same group of people on this project. The sacrifice of 1000+ feet of perennial stream appears to be something that has been on various City plans for at least a decade, so it will be quite a challenge to stop this train, but we should try. Philip shared draft comments, but does not plan to submit them to the City just yet. The [draft](#) was approved without objection.

As we discussed last time, Philip contacted Delegate Bulova, but got no response.

Philip mentioned discussions of doing a public virtual meeting with neighbors to preempt future developer-controlled forums, but lacked ideas on how to make that happen. Discussion covered the possible use of Free Conference Call or Zoom. Philip thought the more challenging aspect was not technology, but attracting participants. [Note from Julie - I looked into the max # of participants that can join a call on [FreeConferenceCall.com](#), and on their support site it says we can have up to 1000 people join the call for up to 6 hours.]

Philip quoted this bit of advice for streams facing burial in the darkness of culverts:

***Do not go gentle into that good night  
Rage, rage against the dying of the light***

- Dylan Thomas -

• [I-66 Outside the Beltway:](#)

Plant Nova Natives & Fairfax County Restoration Project are collaborating on revegetation with natives, and improved stormwater controls. Someone has arranged for the topic to be discussed by the Board of Supervisors. Updates will follow.



Mosby Woods tributary opaque with sediment

Many of us were copied on email exchanges regarding pollution events Kris and Philip witnessed on April 15<sup>th</sup>, with the water of two different tributaries looking like tomato bisque. In Long Branch north they were able to see sediment being pumped and witnessed the silt bag as it collapsed. In the Mosby Woods tributary coming through the Chain Bridge Road tributary, the water looked even more opaque but the source was not visible. Philip stated the water was clear as gin in the same tributary before it entered the work zone.



VDOT's Accotink bisque?

Kris and Philip filed five pollution reports with DEQ and Kris raised the alarm in many different places. We got responses from

Braddock District Supervisor	Potomac Riverkeepers
Providence District Supervisor	NVSWCD
Delegate Bulova	Clean Fairfax
Senator Marsden	Audubon Naturalist Society

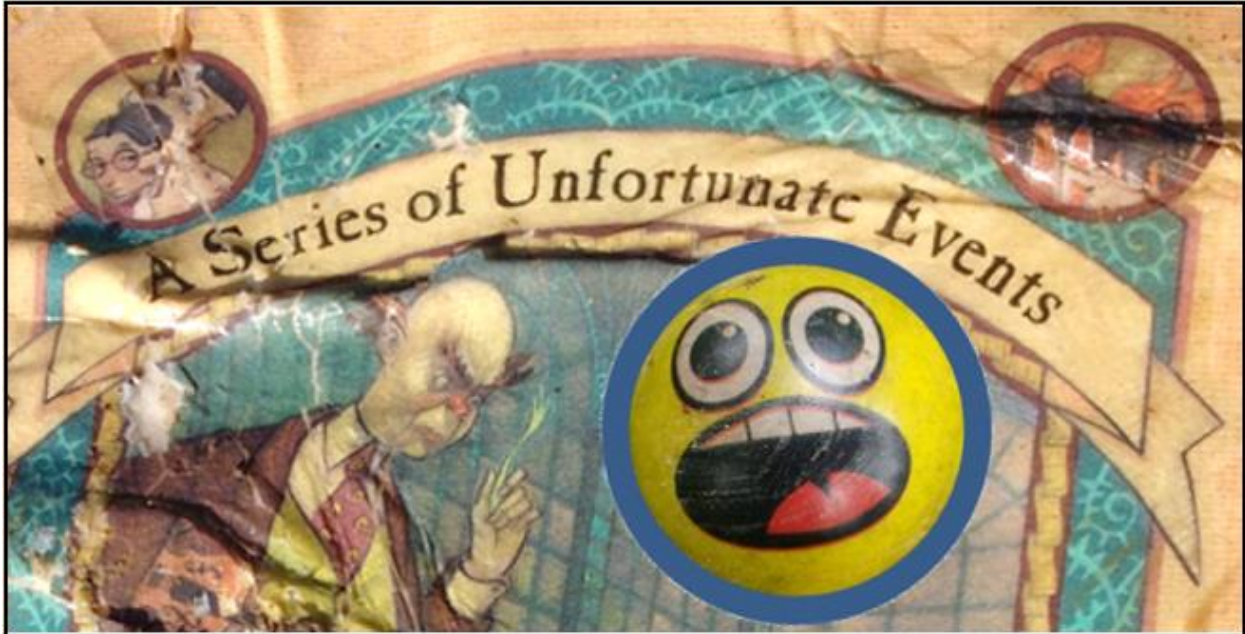


-More -



Braddock District, Delegate Bulova, and Senator Marsden all contacted either DEQ or VDOT to make their interest known. We may hope their interest will result in something more than the usual response to such incidents, which is less than a slap on the wrist and more like a kiss on the cheek.

The DEQ cases are listed as closed with the notation “Pollution report being managed by a media-specific program”, a phrase for which we are awaiting an explanation.



Unfortunate events - I-66, George Snyder Trail, Northfax West - Trash found downstream foretells the fate of the North Fork

- *IMA Funding:*

The Board of Supervisor’s date for the adoption of the FY 2021 budget is May 12th. It was initially understood that the Invasive Management Program would be among the cuts. It appears this may not be the case, but it is worthwhile expressing our support, since the drop in revenue will mean many difficult choices for the County. Philip shared a [draft letter of support](#), which was approved after discussion and edits.

- *EPA Regulation Suspension:*

The EPA announced it suspended enforcement of U.S. environmental laws indefinitely, due to the pandemic. Philip opined this is little more than a covid19 scam without legal basis. He shared a draft of comments. Sandy felt the suspension was not as dire as it might seem. After discussion, the consensus was to not submit comments.

- *Operation Stream Shield:*

Operation Stream Shield is the new County program to employ shelter residents to remove trash and invasive species. Operations are currently on hold, but one of the managers is talking to Beverley about a related offshoot of involving a few group home residents in regular invasives control activities.

- [Vernal Pools:](#)

A year ago Kris reported a pipe failure that was causing a large vernal pool at Lake Accotink Park to fill with sediment. Nothing much happened, so Philip refiled the complaint in February. The current status is that the property owner was cited and has hired contractors to repair the pipe. No repairs have happened as of this week but perhaps will start soon after covid19 restrictions are eased. We can only hope the repair job won't inflict more damage than the sediment.

Dave commented that this pool indeed looks bad and may not have surviving life, but nearby pools downstream from the dam seem to be doing well.

On a more positive note, Philip mentioned he and Kris discovered a nice little vernal pool just across the creek from Americana Park that was filled with Wood Frog tadpoles and Spotted Salamander eggs. Kris questioned the viability of the pool, but perhaps we can hope.



**Spotted Salamander eggs - a renewal of life, as cradled in the hand of Kris**

- [Plastic Bag Bills:](#)

The several plastic bag litter control bills introduced in the General Assembly were all rolled into Senate Bill 11 and passed. There was cynical industry lobbying for a veto that tried to connect reusable bags to fears of covid19. FACC sent a [letter to the Governor](#) urging him to sign, which he did on April 10<sup>th</sup>. Litter Free Virginia (aka Clean Fairfax Council) sent out an authoritative [action alert](#) that was a big help in framing the issue.

Philip shared a draft of a follow-up letter to the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Secretary of Natural Resources with our thanks and urging vigilance against efforts to erode environmental protections in the name of covid19 recovery. The [draft](#) was approved without objection.

As things become more settled, we shall have to encourage the County and City to enact enabling ordinances

- Natural Landscaping at County Facilities:

The public hearing for the Planning Commission is April 29th and the Board of Supervisors is June 9<sup>th</sup>. Sandy is still working on draft comments.

- Lake Accotink Park Master Plan:

Philip had no pipeline updates since our last meeting, but solicited any ideas on what we should be doing.

Regarding the general Master Plan, Philip noted he came across the Fairfax City Van Dyck Park Master Plan, which has some ideas worth emulating. He shared some excerpts and a link.

- ✓ Engineering studies and sustainable maintenance practices to [address the severe erosion of Accotink Creek](#), which has an effect on park facilities
- ✓ Stormwater infiltration improvements such as permeable pavers, rain gardens, and planted medians with shade trees are recommended
- ✓ Van Dyck Park has a mature forest canopy throughout much of the park. However, non-native and invasive plants are found throughout the park. To ensure the health of desirable plants in the parks, the city should take steps to address the growth of non-native and invasive plants.
- ✓ ...it is recommended that art installations be sited in accessible locations where the art can be enjoyed by all members of the community.

Discussion indicated some puzzlement over the art recommendation, so it was removed. Philip provided some [EXAMPLES](#).

- Meetup Renewal:

As discussed at our last meeting, Philip sent a message to all our Meetup members. but got only two responses. Discussion followed of the popularity of Meetup versus alternative social media platforms. The consensus was to wait and see, but otherwise let the Meetup site expire at the end of the current paid period, about four months.

- Virginia Lakes and Watershed Association Grant:

Philip pointed out Virginia Lakes and Watershed Association donated \$2,000 for Follow the Water which has not been used. We need to decide on a course of action.

- [Whither FACC:](#)

Kris let us know he is departing in the next few days to Alberta, a permanent move to look after his parents. He expressed his wish to leave FACC in a good place and indicated he may visit and keep a bit of a hand dipped in Accotink Creek.

Kris availed himself of the opportunity to muse upon on the frustrations of environmental advocacy. A few gems:

FACC is like the old trees standing guard over the forest.

"I'm gonna stand and do my part."

"Freak out early!"

"I choose to be the kitten in the mangler"\* , i.e. the one thing that challenges complacency and arouses public concern.

General words of appreciation for Kris over the years followed. A selection:

Julie

Shared her recollections and appreciation of past [Trash Days of Action](#) with Kris.

Dave

Issued a warning against those who choose to practice KOMM (Keep on Making Money) even when headed toward a cliff. "At least they will go over the cliff with a lot of money."

"Are there enough monsters for you in Canada?"

"*Vive la lutte!*" – Long live the fight!

Sandy

"If we're fractured, we're not going to get anywhere."

"Stay focused. Stay fierce."

\* For those too young to know –

Mangler – "a machine for ironing laundry by passing it between rollers"

