



## 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 – October 20, 2020

Next Meeting: November 17, 2020 (Third Tuesday of each month)

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#### **Present:**

Sandy Collins, Dave Lincoln, Flint Webb, Kim Schauer, Julie Chang, Philip Latasa  
Avril Garland – Welcome Avril!  
Nimesh Rudra – Guest speaker

#### **Upcoming events**

- [NOVA Green Festival](#) October 28, 2020
- City Council George Snyder Trail work session November TBD, 2020
- Americana Drive Cleanup November 11, 2020
- Stream Monitoring Lake Accotink Park December 12, 2020

#### • *Represent FACC:*

- *VCU Invitation - Fall, 2020*

Sandy related the experience she and Dave had participating in Dr. Joe Wood's VCU environmental science class. [Dr. Wood's lecture](#) featured a thorough discussion of the Accotink Creek [TMDL](#). Sandy and Dave presented the perspective of how the TMDL may be working or not working. Will Isenberg of DEA also gave a good talk on his agency and the TMDL process. Dave observed this was an experience worth repeating.

Flint described how the current TMDL is the successor to an earlier [TMDL attempt](#) that ended in lawsuits. The earlier TMDL was an bid by the EPA to employ stormwater flow regulation as a means to the end of reduced sediment. This concept proved just a bit too challenging for Fairfax County and VDOT to accept.

- *Green Breakfast Young Conservation Leaders October 10, 2020*

Nimesh, a sophomore at Thomas Jefferson H.S., summarized two studies he had completed concerning the Accotink Creek watershed:

- ✓ [Water Quality in Accotink Creek](#), an examination of the effects of a stream cleanup on four separate chemical indicators
- ✓ [Effect of Microhabitats on Insect Biodiversity](#), a comparison of insect species diversity in different habitat types, including in Nottoway Park.

Nimesh had also presented his studies at the October 10<sup>th</sup> Green Breakfast. He explained he chose Accotink Creek for proximity to his home and because he frequently visits Audrey Moore RECenter. This prompted Flint to recall our own five-year study of the effects of stream restoration on macroinvertebrates in [Wakefield Run](#). Flint considered the value of extending that study. Kim and Nimesh will discuss possible future collaboration, possibly using automated dataloggers.



- [George Snyder Trail](#):

There were two recent meetings on this topic:

- [City Council meeting](#) October 13<sup>th</sup> at which we learned that the route may have been nudged farther away from the RPA, perhaps in response to our advocacy. We also heard councilmembers ask questions and make statements indicating they are largely in the dark on habitat and watershed issues.
- [Bicycle Transportation Plan meeting](#) October 15<sup>th</sup> at which we learned the Ranger Road alternate route we have advocated all along is now a part of the [Plan](#), not as an alternative, but in addition to the George Snyder Trail.

Philip mentioned financial questions about the trail. The projected cost is \$14 million. Subtracting the \$4 million estimated for easement acquisition still leaves a price 10 or 20 times what might be expected for 1.5 miles of trail. Money is not a constraint for the City, since all funding is from a grant from a VDOT program funded by the I-66 contractor.

Kim was skeptical that the approximately \$24,00 per year estimate of annual trail maintenance cost was realistic. She also noted that VDOT was looking for projects ready to go and asked if the plans can change. Philip believed they could change, but with construction planned within two years, it is becoming more unlikely. Avril asked if the proposed dark-sky [lighting](#) was also insect-friendly, a feature that seems unclear.

By chance, Amy Gould of Fairfax County Restoration Project was communicating with Senator Marsden about a VDOT issue outside our watershed, and she will pass on a message with our concerns.

- [Northfax West](#):

The Virginia Native Plant Society has organized a series of plant rescues every Friday and Sunday at the Northfax West site. A couple of City Council members have also sponsored fish rescues, one last Saturday and one October 31<sup>st</sup>. Philip joined a few plant rescues and the first fish rescue. Using our stream monitoring nets, he described sometimes catching 10 or 20 fish at one go, something that could be said of few other spots on Accotink Creek. The group conservatively relocated 200 fish. There were also about 20 salamanders and 2 crayfish. The destination selected by the City was Daniels Run, in an area restored a few years ago where perhaps there may still be some underpopulated space available for new inhabitants.



[Diminutive rescued crayfish](#)



Julie made a joking reference to the culinary possibilities of these tiny fish.

- *Proposed Developments:*

- [Western Annandale CBC \(Community Business Center\)](#)  
Flint had no news on this issue. Philip mentioned a recent [Annandale Blog article](#) that indicates substantial neighborhood opposition.

Flint brought up an issue outside our watershed, the proposal of the American Horticultural Society to [sell River Farm](#), its headquarters on the Potomac River north of Mount Vernon. Philip noted Supervisor Storck's newsletter has indicated he is supporting efforts to maintain the open space.

• [International Coastal Cleanup:](#)

We concluded our fall stream cleanup season on October 10<sup>th</sup>. For the season, Philip reported we had 152 volunteers, less than the last five years or so. Oddities we found included a leaf blower, a GoPro camera, and an ankle monitor.

Supervisor Dahlia Palchik joined us at our Woodburn Road location. We had royalty with us at several sites in the person of [International Junior Miss Starlite Galaxy](#), [National American Miss Preteen Virginia](#), and [National American Miss Junior Virginia](#).

The Fairfax High School Green Club and Lewis High School Junior Class provided help at two of our cleanup sites, but the students from Lewis may never go out in the woods again, having found the experience of the Accotink Gorge to be far more daunting than what they had imagined, including an encounter with a yellowjacket nest.

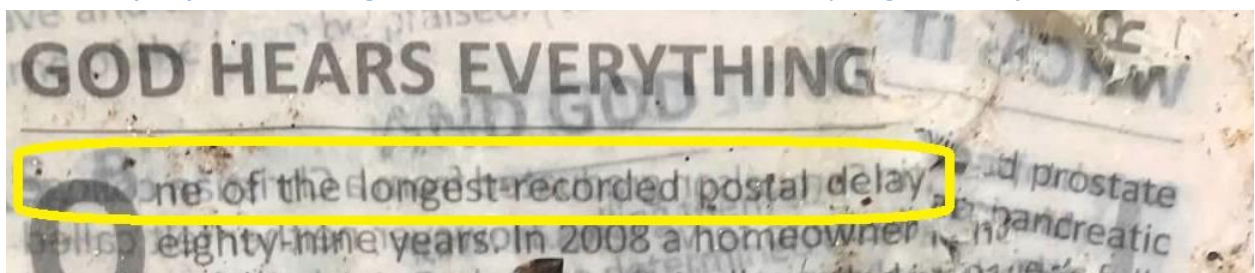
The Oracle of the Accotink sent us three messages that may foretell the political future with warnings of postal delays, writing on the wall, and the hint that a certain Mr. "T" may get "the ax".



Looks like Barbie gave Ken "the boot"



Post Office pen predicts writing on the wall? "God hath numbered thy kingdom, and finished it." [Daniel 5](#)



A prognostication of postal delays?



Could this Tee ball bat be telling us a certain Mr. "T" will get "the ax"?

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

Sandy had no update from the supervisor's office, but discussed the information newly available on the [project website](#) . which indicates assessment should begin this winter and be complete by summer 2021, construction plans should be in place by summer 2022, and construction begin late in 2022. Philip questioned why this timetable seems to indicate analysis is starting all over again. Sandy will check with Stormwater Planning Division for more information.

- [Federation Legislative Priorities:](#)

Flint went over three new Legislative Package proposals being considered by the Federation of Civic Associations.

1. A Virginia Environmental Policy Act like such acts in California and New York that provide for environmental assessments in situations without federal jurisdiction. Sandy expressed her familiarity with the rigor of the New York act, with requirements similar to NEPA.
2. A Virginia equivalent to the [Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act](#) introduced in Congress, requiring manufacturers to take responsibility for final disposal of their products. Flint conceded this would be a heavy lift. The Federation proposal includes a call for a Fairfax County plastic bag tax. Sandy has already sent messages to two supervisors supporting the tax – she will do the same with the other Accotink supervisors.
3. Incorporating leaf area into tree cover calculations, a means of crediting green roofs and green walls.

Flint also reviewed [SB 849](#) , which allows local governments to regulate fertilizer applications on non-agricultural lands and which he hopes the Federation will endorse. He mused that the soil and water conservation districts might be able to coordinate regional fertilizer policies.

Philip asked Flint to let us know when the Federation adopts these proposals so FACC may endorse them, but Flint suggested FACC should not wait. Philip will see about drafting some messages.

Philip shared an appeal from the Friends of Little Hunting Creek to sign on to two suggested additions to the Legislative Package the County will propose to the next General Assembly, one for a beverage container deposit and one for a study of Resource Protection Area effectiveness. The group consensus was to endorse, but with uncertainty over how to do so, given the language specific to the Little Hunting Creek. Philip will coordinate.

- [Tree Stewards Award:](#)

Beverley [nominated](#) Friends of Accotink Creek for one of the annual tree stewards awards presented by Public Works and we received the award. There is no ceremony this year, but rather a piece that will be broadcast on Channel 16. We expect details will follow.

- [Fairfax Healthy Communities :](#)

Kris was involved in forming Fairfax Healthy Communities , and through him, so was FACC. We have been asked by Audubon Naturalist Society (a member) if we can again have a representative at meetings and if our logo should still be attached. Sandy will check in with Audubon.

- [495 Northern Extension Letter:](#)

Philip asked do we wish to endorse this joint letter? He suggested we might wish to add a preface speaking more to watershed issues, such as:

- Fish & wildlife passage
- Stormwater controls
- Habitat preservation
- Native plantings

The consensus was to endorse, with the watershed preface.

- [Break Free From Plastic Pollution Act :](#)

H.R.5845 — The Break Free from Plastic Pollution Act, would make plastic pollution the responsibility of the manufacturers nationwide. Philip asked do we want to sign the Plastic Pollution Coalition’s [letter of support](#) to the Congressional authors, and also our local Representatives and Senators. The consensus was to endorse, and Philip will follow up. Dave enquired if the bill would carry forward into the next session of Congress. Since it will not, Philip will include a “try again” sentence in our message.

- *Donations:*

Philip advised we received a \$50 donation via PayPal from Garlen Maxson. This led into a discussion of soliciting donations more effectively. Avril suggested the possibility of grants, but Philip observed we seem to lack the capacity to effectively execute grant projects. Julie will review our annual December donation request letter.

- *Bamboo Initiative:*

Avril is taking on an Invasive Management Area site in Eakin Park, just off the intersection of Nutley Street and Route 50. She has also attracted the interest of several other persons on the issues of invasives. They started by focusing on the high-visibility running bamboo, which is a headache for property owners. Fauquier County has passed an ordinance mandating property owner responsibility. Avril put together an online meeting with Supervisors Alcorn and Gross to urge action. Supervisor Alcorn said he had already discussed the issue with Supervisor Walkinshaw.

Philip sent a [follow up letter](#) to the supervisors after the meeting, expressing the hope that bamboo might be the “tip of the wedge” that drives action against invasives in general.

Avril is putting together a second meeting with Supervisor Alcorn. She commented on having realized the passion that bamboo arouses when she mentioned it in an online gardening group and got a big response. It seems that bamboo invades peoples personal “bubbles” by creeping relentlessly into their yards. Avril related the tale of one young couple struggling with a bamboo invasion that has taken a quarter of their yard. She floated the idea of a bamboo-cutting house party as an FACC outreach.

- *Browne Academy:*

Dave spoke of having responded to a request from an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at Browne Academy in Alexandria. The student, a resident of NW District of Columbia, interviewed Dave on the topic of climate change and its effect on water. Dave offered to talk at the school.

- [Whither FACC:](#)

Philip shared the recent message from Facebook *"You just reached 800 page likes. Nice work!"*

Philip asked Dave for information about a recent FACC Facebook cleanup post which he had "boosted" (paid money to make more people see) for 5 days. The results were "3927 People Reached and 147 Likes". Neither Dave nor anyone else could really explain the actual benefit to us of the "boost", but it's nice to think more people saw us.

Flint let us know we need a new host for online meetings as he will be absorbed by work obligations for a few months and the rest of us continuing to use his company Skype account would not work. Several suggestions were made to use Zoom, but free use is limited to one hour and work-arounds would be cumbersome. Kim suggested Google Meeting, but that requires a Gmail account. Flint thought the Federation Zoom account might be available. Avril broached the idea of returning to in person meetings, perhaps outdoors, but the idea met a doubtful reception. Philip will check other online meeting options.

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