



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 – June 20, 2023

Next Meeting: July 18, 2023 (Third Tuesday of each month via on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice in the [Friends of Accotink calendar](#).)

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Present: Gary Bangs, Beverley Rivera, Sandy Collins, Avril Garland, Philip Latasa, Raymond Martin, Delia Hunt and Peter Clark all via on-line meeting.

Meeting opened welcoming new members who had not attended before.

Raymond explained that he lives in the Greensprings Retirement Center area and can easily walk to Accotink Creek from his home. He has been looking for others in that area to work on projects helping Accotink Creek watershed. Anyone interested please contact FACC.

Delia is a student at Lewis High School in Springfield. Her biology teacher Ms. Clausen suggested FACC as a resource for an environmental project they are hoping to do this summer in the area by their outdoor classroom. One such suggestion was a green roof on a shed to show how it can reduce heat generated by a normal shingle roof. Sandy and Philip provided some possible resources to explore on green roofs.

• Represent FACC

- [Microsoft Planting](#), April 20, 2023 Beverley and Philip indicated that Park Authority staff, Fairfax Releaf, and Beverley's volunteers planted 40 some native trees as the first step of a 5-year grant from Microsoft for invasives control in Lake Accotink Park. The dry weather has complicated things but Beverley has been able to take water to them in containers.



Lake Accotink tree planting crew

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- *Mount Vernon District Environment Expo, April 22, 2023* Sandy said the event went pretty well. There were a lot of families, and they were able to talk with a lot of people. They handed out all the free native plants that were rescued in Fairfax Stafford Drive area. People seemed very pleased to get the plants.
- *Fairfax City HisTree, April 22, 2023* This was an Earth Day event in Fairfax. Philip reported that he does not know if we won any converts to our cause, but we did manage to give away about 120 rescued native plants. Katy and her son can take most of the credit for the sellout.
- [Choralis Concert, April 30, 2023](#) Gary and Avril reported that the concert was enjoyable to listen to, but the majority of attendees didn't really have an interest in talking with FACC. Those who did come and talk were enticed by Avril using a mosquito dunk as a prop, then asking if they knew what it was. Overall the table at the concert was ineffective, and Avril stated she would not recommend information tables at other than environmental events or advocating a specific event.
- [Follow the Water May 19, 2023](#) Philip stated that Bryan Campbell and Geroge Kralovec organized a demonstration of macroinvertebrate sampling in Long Branch central for students at Canterbury Woods Elementary School. There was additional support from Stormwater Planning Division.
- [CareFirst Equity Week, July 19, 2023](#) Philip provided that last year we collaborated with [Lands & Waters](#) to host an event at Daniels Run Elementary School for the CareFirst Equity Week. CareFirst then made a donation of \$2500, which we shared with Lands & Waters. They've asked us to do this again on July 19th, 10:00 – 1:00. We could use a few leaders to help volunteers with invasives removal.

- [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): Philip stated that we had our presentation to the Amberleigh residents on April 19th. About 20 residents attended, with no dramatic results. The presentation is online as both a [video](#) and a [PDF](#).

On April 24th, Delegate Vivian Watts and a staff member from Delegate Mark Sickles office walked along a portion of the Bikeway route. Again, there were no specific results.

On May 11th, biologists from Virginia Department of Natural Resources and Rod Simmons from the City of Alexandria did additional mapping of acidic seepage swamps along the Bikeway route. When their report is complete, this will provide additional documentation of what we already knew about the rare habitat types along the route. There is a tentative plan to return in July for more data.

- [Franconia to Lorton Third Track](#)

Philip said a new threat to the Cinder Bed Woods is coming from the railroad. The Virginia Passenger Rail Authority will add a third track by 2027. The construction is promised to stay within the right of way, meaning any tree loss is likely to be on the west side, away from the sensitive wetlands. However, reality may differ. It is also possible the construction will adversely affect the seepage hydrology the wetlands depend upon. The widening of the bridge over Accotink Creek

farther south will also likely create a wider construction footprint. No compensatory replanting is planned. Bicycle access to the Franconia station will be restricted by construction of a pedestrian only tunnel under the new track.



Among the tall ferns, surveying the acidic seepage swamps

- [Potomac Watershed Cleanup](#): Philip said that we finished our spring cleanups on May 20th. For the season, a total of 167 volunteers collected 161 bags and 13 tires. This was our lowest volunteer total since 2009. Our most unusual find of the season was a banana/toothbrush shaped baby teether.

The special cleanup we scheduled as a followup to the Choralis concert was a disappointment. Twelve people signed up, but only one showed up.

Young volunteer Dominik Meade created a [GoFundMe](#) campaign to fund purchase of a bicycle trailer for solo trash cleanups during his frequent fishing trips along Accotink Creek. He has achieved his \$150 goal.



- [Americana Drive Cleanup](#) Philip said that we had our first Clean the Bay Day cleanup on June 3rd on Americana Drive. We were aided by groups from [Team Rubicon](#), [Tzu Chi Foundation](#), [NoVA New Leaf](#), [Christopher Cares Foundation](#), [Balfour Beatty](#), [Annandale Rotary Club](#), [Dewberry](#), and [KPMG](#). The 96 volunteers managed to remove 145 bags of trash, 18 tires, and roughly one ton of assorted construction debris, including, a kitchen sink and the inevitable toilet. VDOT had actually conducted its own cleanup a few weeks earlier, so the conditions were not as deplorable as usual.

Two expense items were approved by the board for reimbursement. Philip had a minivan rental for transporting volunteers and supplies, \$279.07. Amy Gould had refreshments and rental car refueling of \$140.69

- [Lake Accotink Dredging](#): Philip provided the following update relating to Lake Accotink. One development is that dam repairs are completed and the lake is again full.

Also, the Board of Supervisors decided to form a task force to study the dredging problem and provide findings. What the task force could find that has not already been studied to death is not clear. We can only assume the Lake Accotink Park Master Plan will continue to be delayed until the task force reports. [Environmental Committee Meeting Information](#)

- **Flag Run Oil Spill:** Gary indicated that he came across a [DEQ Report](#) of a fuel spill in Flag Run near the Beltway on April 7th. The Fire Department responded and placed booms and mats in the stream. An email exchange with the Fire Department indicated they didn't feel it was serious enough for any public notice.

- **Urban Forester Grant:** Philip said the new Fairfax City Urban Forester, who was a guest at our January meeting, is applying for a USDA grant and asked if we would provide a letter of support. The grant project would have two related focus areas 1) implementing an urban forest management plan, specifically active invasive plant management, creation of a tree ordinance, and tree planting and 2) community stewardship with local partners and volunteers to support these activities. He adapted the template she provided, and submitted the letter.

- **Braddock Road Project:** Philip said that responding to public feedback, there will be another public meeting in late spring/early summer on the Braddock Road project, followed by a public hearing later this year. The public meeting will specifically address comments related to tree preservation, stormwater management, and the existing trail. No meeting date has been announced.

- **State of Streams:** Gary indicated that this is a project in conjunction with Nature Forward. The initial 2023 State of Streams meetings took place April 28th and June 13th. The three creeks being included are Sligo (MD), Rock Creek (DC), and Accotink (VA). The workshops are still resolving issues with lack of data for certain criteria, therefore have not finalized which indicators will be utilized.

- **ASNV Advocacy Training:** Philip said that Audubon Society of Northern Virginia asked if we are interested in planning, promoting or participating in an in-person, fall advocacy training workshop to help Northern Virginia environmental organizations become more effective. The agenda could include how to communicate with lawmakers, presentations and testimony, use of the media, and how to track state and local governments. They would like to have our ideas on other topics and the logistics. ASNV has budgeted funds, but would be happy to have contributions. We have worked with Northern Virginia Audubon on a number of issues, especially Cinder Bed Road Bikeway, so we agreed to this as well.

- **Northfax West:** Philip indicated that he stopped by the Northfax West project on April 30th and the sediment runoff going directly into Accotink Creek was bad enough to call for a [DEQ report](#). [Sediment video](#).

The bad news is one week later there was no creek at all. It had been diverted into the new 1200 foot long culvert, which connects to a preexisting 2000 foot culvert. That's some 2/3 of a mile the creek must now travel in darkness.



A desolate stone plain awaits the remnant of the North Fork before being swallowed in the darkness of the underworld built by Northfax West



[North Fork Funeral Video](#)

- [George Snyder Trail](#): Philip said that on June 13th citizens presented Fairfax City Council a [petition](#) of 865 signatures favoring the protection of forests from paving.



[Video of citizen presentations to City Council](#)

- [Stafford Drive Restoration Project](#): Philip said that on May 11th, Fairfax City held a public meeting to provide updates on the Stafford Drive Stream Restoration. Some points worth noting were:
 - A separate flood control project is being studied in the same area, but it will focus on expanding the Stafford Drive culvert, rather than affecting the stream directly.
 - Construction will not start before winter.
 - The plan to rework the entire floodplain was confirmed
 - About 500 trees above 6" diameter will be lost
 - The contractor will possibly undertake onsite tree transplants, relocating trees from the path of disturbance into areas where work is already completed.

Plant rescues are continuing through fall. We have been transplanting some rescued plants into Kutner Park, in areas cleared of English ivy.

- [Fairfax Circle Small Area Plan](#): Philip reported that the Fairfax Circle Small Area Plan's first public meeting was at Fairfax High School on June 15. About ¾ of a mile of Accotink Creek flows along the southern boundary of the Area, from the Harley Davidson on Route 50 to Pickett Road. In some places asphalt goes right up to the banks. This is the area where an actively working concrete plant is located immediately next to the stream. This plan offers an opportunity to direct future developments in directions that will benefit the creek.

The opportunity to provide input is available now, using the plan's [Interactive Map](#) .

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- *Donations:* Philip said that we received donations of:
 - \$1000 from Vivian Morgan Mendez of Friends of Nottoway Park
 - \$100 from Cathy Ledec, whom many of us know as a champion of Huntley Meadows.
 - \$11.61 from the AmazonSmile Foundation for activity between January 1 and February 20, 2023. We also received a one-time Amazon Smile bonus donation of \$29.38, equivalent to three months of what we earned in 2022. The bonus will be our final receipt from Amazon Smile.
- [Whither FACC:](#) *Anyone?*

The good news is, as of May 8th, we achieved the goal of 1000 Facebook followers.

The bad news is, a few days afterward Facebook made some upgrades which for unknown reasons, dropped us back to only 966 followers.