



# 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 16, 2024

Next Meeting: May 21 (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, Avril Garland, Philip Latasa, Dave Lincoln, and Sandy Collins all via on-line meeting.

• **Represent FACC:**

- o [Fairfax Circle Small Area Plan](#), Philip provided an update on the Small Area Plan.

## OPEN SPACE + SUSTAINABILITY INVITING NATURE, RECREATION, AND STORMWATER RESILENCY



According to the March 21<sup>st</sup> public presentation, the Fairfax Circle Small Area Plan offers great improvements for Accotink Creek. It would add green space, improve stormwater controls, and reduce asphalt, especially on the west side of Blenheim Blvd where the pavement currently extends down to the banks. All these improvements may take place over a period of decades and are subject to change or even being forgotten. Most of the

comments of the citizens present focused on the need to deal with the homeless population in the area before any improvements can succeed. [Meeting Presentation](#)

- o [State of Streams](#) Gary reported that Nature Forward will launch the 2024 State of the Streams on Thursday, April 18 at Meadowbrook Park in Chevy Chase. There are supposed to be refreshments, elected officials, and a nature walk, in addition to the presentation of the study of five streams, Little Falls Branch, Rock Creek, Seneca Creek, Sligo Creek, and Accotink Creek. Gary, Dave, and Philip will attend.
  
- o *Earth Day Events, April 27, 2024*
  - *Mount Vernon Environmental Expo* Dave and Sandy stated that they will again attend this event.
  - [Fairfax City HisTree](#) Philip said that he and Katy will attend. As last year, the main offering at the HisTree Day will be giveaways of plants rescued from the Stafford Drive stream restoration project. Those rescues will continue through the summer and perhaps the fall. We also hope to generate more participation in the rescues.
  - [Eileen Garnett Civic Space](#) Gary stated that he would attend the stream cleanup planned April 27 at Coon Branch tributary in [Manassas Gap Railroad Park](#) along with the organizers of the Greenway Project.
  
- [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): Philip said that the group of the interested seems to be at a loss as to how to respond to the postponement of our meeting with Supervisor Lusk. They may try to organize some nature walks in the area and invite Supervisor Lusk, Chairman McKay, and Supervisor Walkinshaw as chairman of the Environmental Committee.
  
- [Accotink Gorge](#): Dave stated that due to security restrictions in the airspace, permission to use the drone filming the gorge will not happen. There was further discussion about possible steps forward, and also talk about scheduling wisteria removal days even if no herbicide support will exist. No decisions were made at this time.
  
- [Oil Spill](#): Philip said that on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, an overturned truck spilled about 2300 gallons of jet fuel at the southern end of Davison Army Airfield on Fort Belvoir. It's not clear how much of that reached Accotink Creek. Fort Belvoir emergency services responded and the public is assured there was no meaningful environmental damage. News articles – [FFX Now](#) , [Inside NOVA](#)
  
- *Cox Communications Volunteers*: Philip said that Cox Communications has a maintenance facility adjoining Lake Accotink Park. They have arranged with the park manager to provide a group of 20 to 30 volunteers monthly for invasive species removal. They will have their first workday tomorrow, working next to the upper parking lot, just across the railroad tracks from their own facility.
  
- [Conservation Legislation](#): Avril stated that although [HB 320](#) was signed into law by the governor, there are issues yet to be resolved. This law allows herbicide applications on public land by volunteers. The joy is tempered by the words “direct supervision” in the law. That language has initially been interpreted by the Town of Vienna to mean “in person”, effectively making it meaningless. We hope that misunderstanding will be corrected.

Avril further reported two budget amendments to address invasives were removed. There was a proposal for \$500,000 as VDOT right of way pilot project in NOVA, and \$2.45 million to fund the 2018 Virginia Invasives Species Management Plan which has never been funded.

- [Deer Control Transition](#): Avril said that although the transfer of the deer control program from the police to the animal shelter has been halted, the group of the interested is continuing meetings with supervisors to ensure that any future changes do not reduce the effectiveness of the program.
- [Follow the Water](#): Philip said that on March 12<sup>th</sup>, Friends of Long Branch organized a Follow the Water program for 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Canterbury Woods Elementary. The main activity was sorting through trays of stream invertebrates. Although the selection of invertebrates in Long Branch is not the best, the students very much enjoyed the opportunity to get outdoors and get their hands dirty during school. Ecologists from Stormwater Planning Division brought along samples of live invertebrates from healthier streams to provide the students with a picture of what could be.

FACC did the Follow the Water program in the past at Little Run Elementary, upstream from Canterbury Woods, back in 2018. Two rain gardens were installed at that time, but are now badly in need of invasives removal.



*Canterbury Woods students gather around the whiteboard to tally their findings*

- [Potomac Watershed Cleanup](#): Philip indicated that the Potomac Watershed cleanup on Accotink Creek began April 6<sup>th</sup> with the Vienna Town Cleanup Day, the Ossian Hall Park cleanup by The Nature

Conservancy, and a cleanup along Hunters Branch by the Stonehurst Community. On April 7<sup>th</sup>, Girl Scout Troop 55131 also had a cleanup of Dunn Loring Park.

This Saturday, April 20<sup>th</sup>, Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley will have their cleanups at two points on Long Branch. April 21, Fairfax City will have its Community Cleanup Day.

FACC's spring stream cleanups will begin May 4<sup>th</sup>.

- [Americana Drive Cleanup](#): Philip said that On March 24<sup>th</sup>, the Springfield Youth Club's West End Rugby Team did a cleanup of one of the more favored dumping spots on Americana Drive. In 1<sup>1/2</sup> hours, the team collected 20 trash bags, 47 tires, 1 sofa section, 1 folding chair, one car bumper, and an estimated 1.5 tons of construction debris (mostly lumber and paving blocks). All this had accumulated just in the time since our Presidents Day cleanup February 19<sup>th</sup>.

Our next Americana Drive cleanup will be on [Clean the Bay Day, June 1<sup>st</sup>](#).



***West End Rugby cleanup results on Americana Drive***

- *Donations*: Philip said that we received \$50 from Frank Marzella, which will be matched by his company, [Sales Force](#), for a total of \$100. A group from Sales Force joined a workday at Avril's IMA site. Philip also said that we received \$500 from Nature Forward, described as a stipend for participating in the State of Streams report.