



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 – May 21, 2024

Next Meeting: June 18 (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, Brian Slawski, Beverley Rivera, and Elizabeth Murphy all via on-line meeting.

• Represent FACC:

- o [State of Streams](#), On April 18th, Gary, Dave, and Philip attended the unveiling of Nature Forward's State of Streams report for 2024. Accotink Creek was one of five streams featured, the others all being on the other side of the Potomac. Cris Herrington, director of Fairfax County Public Works, was there representing the County. FACC remarks by Philip at launch event is on [YouTube](#)

The report evaluated the streams on four categories of data – Water Quality, Biodiversity, Climate, and Access. All the streams achieved only a “Fair” score.

It is unclear yet how best to use this report to get FACC's message across.

- o *Earth Day Events, April 27, 2024*
 - *Mount Vernon Environmental Expo*, Dave reported that he and Sandy attended the event which had a good crowd. It was typical for the event with various organizations in attendance. They were able to talk with Supervisor Storck about Accotink Gorge and he expressed interest for public access to that parkland area. There will be followup with one of his staffers to further discuss the Gorge.
 - [Fairfax City HisTree](#), Philip stated that he attended and they gave away some 250 native plants rescued from the Stafford Drive stream restoration project. Goodwill and maintaining connections with Fairfax City are probably the most tangible benefits of attendance. HisTree is reported in [The Connection](#).
 - [Eileen Garnett Civic Space](#), Gary stated that he helped with a stream cleanup along Coon Branch in Manassas Gap Park in Annandale. This event was organized by the Annandale Greenway Alliance. Mason District Supervisor Andres Jimenez also attended. A small group of volunteers picked up approximately 6 large bags of trash in an hour. There are places

where significant amounts of trash has been left as well as trash washed into the creek from storm drains.

Several native azaleas were seen blooming along the creek bed, but unfortunately the woods along the creek are also being overrun by nonnative invasive plants such as [Japanese pachysandra](#) and burning bushes.



Supervisor Jimenez and volunteers in Manassas Gap Park

- o *CareFirst Equity Week*, Philip reported an upcoming event is on July 17, we are once again planning with our sister group Lands and Waters to host CareFirst volunteers from 10am-1:00pm. CareFirst will provide a donation, as they have in the past. Dave indicated he may be able to attend as well.
- [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): Philip said that the Virginia Native Plant Society will lead nature walks in the Newington Conservation Area along the proposed route of the Bikeway June 2nd and 8th. The intended audience is the residents of the Amberleigh homeowners association, which owns the land and may offer a small hope that their reluctance to grant an easement will stop the project. We also invited several supervisors, but so far have an RSVP only from a member of supervisor McKay's office.
- [Accotink Gorge](#): Dave reported that he met at the Gorge with a representative of MowCow landscaping to obtain an estimate for wisteria control. This is part of his idea of a pilot project FACC could finance and then point to as an example for potential donors.

He also learned our insurance company wants an additional \$500 annual premium for herbicide insurance, calling it a "pollution endorsement" if volunteers used herbicides.. We will be looking into this further

Another item of interest is that Margaret Fisher of Plant NOVA Trees found in the Virginia Code that "direct supervision" just means "direct responsibility". So, a holder of a commercial herbicide license

doesn't have to be on the site with the volunteers to fulfill the requirements of the new law allowing volunteer use of herbicides. Avril stated that while that may be the case, the City of Vienna is still hesitant to move forward with volunteers using herbicides.

Further Dave reported that on May 9, he, Philip and Gary accompanied Peyton Smith, from Storck's office on a tour of the Gorge. Several areas of interest were pointed out and discussed which would take further followup the the Supervisor's office.

- *Tree Rescuers RPA Permit:* Gary said that in a bit of positive news, an RPA waiver has been granted and Park Authority Tree Rescuers can go back to cutting vines and rescuing trees in RPAs. This is after Land Development Services had previously indicated that these activities would all need individual permits or waivers.
- [Potomac Watershed Cleanup](#): Philip said that we have completed our third Saturday of cleanups, with one more to go. We've had 118 volunteers so far.



Seen during the Potomac Watershed Cleanup: Our poor world – treated like trash

A group called the [Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Associations Institute](#) will have a cleanup at Thaiss Park in Fairfax City on June 8th. This is also a spot where we had a cleanup on May 11th. Dave and Avril indicated they may attend.

- [Americana Drive Cleanup](#): Philip said that we will have our next Americana Drive cleanup on June 1st, Clean the Bay Day. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation will have someone onsite doing live social media. As always, our real goal is to somehow encourage the neighbors to be responsible and not use this street to dispose of rubbish in the first place.
- *IMA Site Leaders Needed:* Avril said that more IMA site leaders are needed and there are lots of willing potential IMA site leaders whose approval is being held up. She suggested a letter to the Park Authority

from FACC proposing a pilot program of training by current site leaders as a remedy since IMA is only staffed by one person. Gary and Brian will work with Avril to send a letter.

- [Inova Redevelopment Pause](#): Philip said that Inova has dropped redevelopment plans that had threatened the wooded area on their campus on Gallows Road. This area is mostly in the Holmes Run watershed, but partly in the Accotink Creek watershed. [Annandale Today article](#)
- [Accotink Creek Assessment](#): Philip said that Fairfax City has conducted an updated comprehensive assessment of conditions along Accotink Creek and tributaries, resulting in recommendations for prioritized stream restoration projects. There was an in-person meeting to obtain public comments, but there is a delay in accepting comments online. Further information will be forthcoming.
- [Ashby Pond Turtle Rescue](#): Philip stated that Fairfax City is planning to dredge Ashby Pond by the end of summer. The City has arranged with [Hawksbill Hope Adventures](#), to conduct a trap-and-release turtle save before the dredge. Hawksbill Hope is mostly focused on sea turtles in Belize, but did recently lead a similar pond rescue in Prince William County. The operation requires a permit from the Virginia Department of Wildlife Resources. There will be opportunity for public participation, but all details are still pending.
- [Lamb Mowers](#): Beverley reported that Lamb Mowers returned to her yard this spring. It's not necessarily an impact on the watershed, but it produces great photos. Article and photos in [The Connection](#)



Further discussion explored whether these lambs could be used to remove English Ivy? Beverley was going to followup on the possibility.

- [Donations](#): Philip stated that we received donations of:
 - \$225 from his daughter's employer in matching funds
 - \$51.52 from Matthew Pepper – The odd amount indicates Matthew covered the PayPal fees.
 - \$40.00 from Elizabeth Murphy, who joined tonight's meeting