



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.

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*Our many projects to make the creek healthier depend on your support!*

Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – March 17, 2026

Next Meeting: April 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, Philip Latasa, Sandy Collins, Peter Clark, Kim Schauer, Avril Garland, Katy Johnson, Dave Lincoln, Brian Slawski, and Sue Kuiler, all via on-line meeting.

**AGENDA**



- *Represent FACC:*

- *[Community Associations Institute Expo](#)*: Dave said that at the WMCCAI Expo on February 27 and 28 he met many grounds and water management contractors and one community manager, and found all of them interested in Fairfax PRISM's initiatives. All expressed interest in the PRISM handout. They will use the QR code to look into it. The brochure was a big hit also among HOA and civic association board members, so hopefully we will see more inquiries.
- *Federation of Friends Meeting*: Avril said that the meeting of friends of parks groups on March 16 dealt largely with the Park Authority budget. She represented FACC's position in support of invasives control, natural resource management, keeping Hidden Oaks Nature Center open, and not building the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway.
- *Board & Brew*: Philip said that the purpose of the meeting on March 24 is to see if we can connect with experienced and motivated persons interested in becoming part of the FACC leadership. We have attended the event before with little result.
- *Daniels Run Cleanup*: Philip said that Daniels Run Elementary School is organizing a cleanup on April 10<sup>th</sup> 9:00 – Noon. Volunteers are welcome.

He also mentioned last year the school system had imposed new volunteer signup procedures that many volunteers may find too bothersome and intrusive. We still have not resolved how that will affect the corporate group we usually host at Daniels Run.

- *Earth Day Events*: Philip said Earth Day is April 22 and due to budget limitations, Fairfax City will not be hosting HisTree Day this year. So we are looking for other possible events. Gary said he would check about Annandale which had held events before that FACC attended.
- *[George Snyder Trail](#)*: Sue said that she had heard nothing new and felt for now the idea of building the trail as proposed is halted. Philip suggested that we might promote the on-street route of the George Snyder Trail by putting together a StoryMap. Kim said she could probably help.

Philip also said that we should check that the WillowWood redevelopment currently underway is putting in an at least 7' sidewalk. Katy and Sue indicated that they would followup on that.



### A start on the George Snyder Trail StoryMap?

- [Accotink Gorge](#): Philip stated that we presented both [written and spoken remarks](#) to the Planning Commission hearing for the Costco expansion. Other than introducing the potential pollution of a gas station at the edge of the Gorge, the plan seems to have benefits for the watershed, such as increased plantings, use of native species, stormwater control, salt control, and invasives control. But he felt that we really need to leverage these benefits into a longer term commitment by Costco to become a stakeholder in our ongoing Accotink Gorge project. The Board of Supervisors voted today on approving the plan. We do have some concerns with the staff report for the Costco expansion, which mentions County plans for a trail in the Accotink Gorge. Our submitted comments made sure that should not happen.

We also needed to clarify the staff report's provisions for access to the park. Although it mentions three parking spots reserved for Park staff and volunteers, that by itself is not enough. Dave said that he is in touch with Mount Vernon District staff to make sure our needs are understood. Supervisor Storck raised the question of public access and the Costco representative specified that there would be no problem with reasonable public parking to access the Gorge.

- [PRISM Extravaganza](#): Avril said that our events begin March 21<sup>st</sup>. Volunteers have begun signing up. She has been inviting elected officials, but none have committed yet. We have four events scheduled.

- [ActiveFairfax](#): Philip indicated that ActiveFairfax is in the last stages of being approved by the county. We submitted both written and spoken remarks. Our concerns were echoed by other environmental groups, such as Nature Forward, Northern Virginia Bird Alliance, and Friends of Huntley Meadows. We are all basically asking that paved trails be kept out of stream valleys in general and the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway in particular.

- [ActiveFairfax Public Remarks 2026](#)
- [Active Fairfax Letter 2026](#)

- [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): Avril said that on March 14<sup>th</sup>, we joined FCDOT's new [Trail Ranger](#) program to improve conditions on trails. The group worked removing trash and snipping vines on the Loisdale Road section of the Fairfax County Parkway Trail. This is one of the several existing routes that are alternatives to building the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway. Ryan Paul Johnson with FCDOT Active Transportation was coordinating it. We handed out some Cinder Bed Road Bikeway flyers and asked participants to contact supervisors. The next event will be April 11 on the same section of trail.

Dave and Philip made a presentation to the Mount Vernon Council of Civic Associations. There was some enthusiasm for taking action which we need to follow up.

FCDOT made a proposal to the Amberleigh HOA board for a connection to their community. We have long pointed out that among its many faults, the Bikeway bypasses the surrounding neighborhoods. The Board rejected the proposal, preferring that the whole project just go away.

The group of the interested will be meeting with the DEQ Permit and Compliance Coordinator tomorrow. Our purpose is to discuss the status of permits for the project and how DEQ is responding to some shortcomings we pointed out in the process.

We are planning to do another set of nature walks this spring in the Newington Conservation Site. Dates are TBD.

- [Friends of Lang Branch Stream Valley](#): Philip stated that Bryan lacks the time this spring to keep up with the annual Long Branch cleanup and with Follow the Water. We will explore ways we could help.

The cleanup is scheduled for April 18<sup>th</sup>, 9am-11:00am. Philip left this date off our own cleanup schedule so he could attend. Now we need to find organizers and hosts.

[Follow the Water](#) is more challenging. There is no date set. It involves setting bags in Long Branch before the event, then setting up tables and gear for students to open the bags and assess the invertebrates, then explaining to the students what they have found and what it means and how they can support their watershed.

- [Virginia Legislation](#): Avril said the majority of environmental bills we were interested in passed and are awaiting Governor's signing. Of special note, HB86, the mattress recycling bill passed, along with HB596, the animal crossing fund, and HB88 and HB388, the invasive plant bills. The ban on gas leafblowers failed.

- [Lake Accotink Dredging](#): Philip said that on February 20<sup>th</sup>, he met the project manager for the current iteration of Lake Accotink dredging studies. Natural resources staff from Public Works and Park Authority also attended. He made the point that the mussel population downstream must be protected. It seems that the Park Authority did a mussel survey of its own in 2023 and is planning another soon. I am awaiting more details.

- [Farm Pond Repairs](#): Philip said in a bit of long-delayed good news, the farm pond on the entrance road to Lake Accotink Park has finally been repaired in a way that looks like it will work. There has been a series of excuses, delays, and failed repairs since we first reported the failure of the drain pipe here in March of 2019.



***Progress at last! Slope stabilized and pond cleaned out!***

- *Nature Forward Stream Stories:* Avril said a representative of Nature Forward was at her IMA site on March 6<sup>th</sup>, conducting interviews with volunteers and trail users. These will be incorporated into a StoryMap that we hope to see later this spring.

- *Park Authority Budget:* Philip stated that he has set up a webpage of guidance on where and how to offer comments on the FY 2027 County budget. We have only a basic set of four points we wish to make:

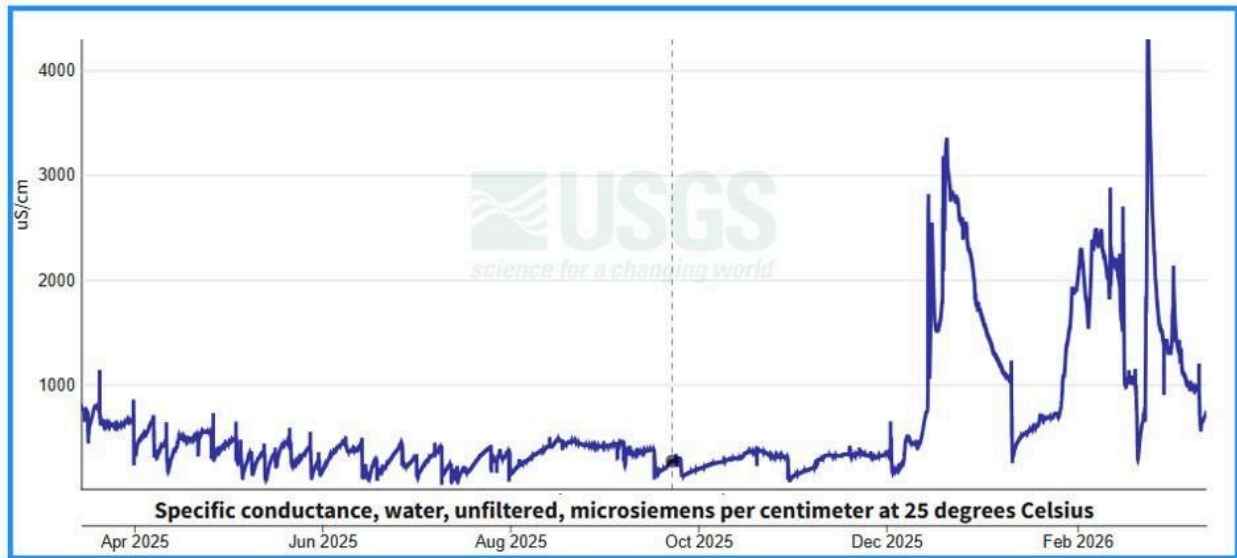
- DO NOT cut [Invasive Management Area](#) funding
- DO NOT cut [Natural Resource Management](#) funding
- MAINTAIN funding for [Hidden Oaks Nature Center](#)
- GET RID OF the waste of funds (\$18M+), forest, and rare wetlands that would be the [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#) !



Everyone should make the effort to be heard at the sessions in their district.

- *Bay Journal Interview:* Gary said that he and Philip were interviewed for an article on how road salt is impacting Chesapeake Bay. He provided information about data in the Clean Water Hub and how every major snow event causes chloride levels exceeding TMDL criteria.

Philp provided a graph from USGS which records in real time specific conductance which relates to chloride levels in the water.



**USGS gauge recorded appalling spikes in Accotink Creek water salinity this winter**

- **Environmental Boards Reorganization**: Philip talked about paragraph 7 of the County Executive memo proposes dissolving EQAC, the Wetlands Board, and the Tree Commission. A new Environmental Commission is proposed instead. Paragraph 6 proposes dissolving the [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Exception Review Committee](#) and passing its duties to the Board of Supervisors or Planning Commission.

Consolidation and streamlining are good, but given the recent affront of [4104 Woodlark Drive](#), now may not be the time for the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance Exception Review Committee to go. Now might even be the time for its duties to be expanded to review all RPA development cases.

For now we'll monitor things for impacts.

- **Kris Unger Memorial**: Sue said that since last month:
  - Mike managed to meet with the Parks Department arborist and gain his clearance to proceed.
  - But others decided a detailed vernal pool plan was needed, and should be reviewed by several City agencies.
  - Still working on how the plan will get done.

Fairfax Master Naturalists is proposing offering Mini Grants for projects. A grant could fund a vernal pool in Cardinal Road Park, which was among those locations we considered for the memorial pool. The Parks Department arborist said he could store the clay from digging out the Kutner Park site and that would spare the need for an artificial liner this location would otherwise need.

This is a brand new for Fairfax Master Naturalists, so there is no established process.

- **Website Updates**: Philip said that after a long hiatus, progress has begun on webpage enhancements by volunteer programmers on two fronts.

His great nephew needs high school service hours and accepted an assignment to do some of this work. He is currently working on converting our [contact form for County supervisors](#) from cgi format to php.

The IT professional who volunteered at last fall's stream cleanups has begun by working on updating our [contact form](#) and [event RSVP form](#) . He has also managed to change the alignment of our homepage to be centered on laptop screens. Let Philip know of anything you see that needs to be fixed or changed.

- *Donations*: Philip said we received donations of:
  - \$20.00 by check from the mysterious "American Online Giving Foundation" through Benevity, a bureaucratic go-between vetting non-profits for corporate donors.
  - Malini Sekhar \$41.31
- *Whither FACC*:
  - *FACC 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary*  
Sue is still working on the date/time/location.
  - *Annual Newsletter*: Philip said that sending ideas and photos to Beverley during the year did not work out so well last year. It becomes too much material for Beverley to consolidate at the end of the year. Starting now, we should make it the obligation of everyone to write their own articles about their own activities as they occur each month.