



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, 2015

Next Meeting: November 17, 2015 (Third Tuesday of each month)
Audrey Moore Rec Center, Senior Center Lobby

DONATE/SUPPORT

Present:

Philip Latasa
Heather Breiner
Sandy Collins
Kris Unger
Suzy Foster
Sue Schuman
Beverley Rivera

We were joined by a Park Authority photographer gathering images for the Elly Doyle Award

Upcoming events:

- Accotink Gorge Biotrek & Wisteria Workday, October 24, 2015
- Elly Doyle Award Presentation, November 20, 2015
- Lake Accotink Park Stream Monitoring, December 12, 2015
- Next FLAP meeting, January 21, 2016

Action Items:

- *Kris – Develop Lanier bioretention plan*
- *Philip – Submit I-66 comments*
- *Philip – Submit CCT paving comments*
- *Sue & Kris – Write annual summary of FACC activities*
- *Kris – Solicit NVATU contribution to mussel survey*
- *Kris – Solicit support and publicly air 495 landscaping issue*

FACC Subjects Discussed –

Funds/Mastenbrook Grant:

Philip described how, from September 22 through 24, biologists of Daguna Consulting conducted a [professional survey of the freshwater mussel](#) populations in Accotink Creek, guided and assisted by volunteers. We are awaiting the final report, but early results indicate the mussel population below the dam is about 10,000 individuals, that most of these are the Eastern eliptio, about 10% are the Paper pondshell (a Midwestern native likely introduced in fish stocking water), and there are also scattered numbers of the Eastern floater. The presence of juveniles estimated at two years of age indicates reproduction is occurring.

Happily, the biologists were enthusiastic enough to survey five other representative sections of the creek beyond the stretch below the dam we had originally proposed, but only one single mussel was found elsewhere, in Eakin Park downstream from Prosperity Avenue.



Causes of absence of mussels in other parts of the creek likely include increased dissolved oxygen below the dam, algae and plankton from the lake providing increased food, and the higher population of American eels which provide mobility to Eastern elliptio larvae.

The single greatest factor, however, appears to be the dam's role in capturing sediment. The streambed just below the dam is mostly covered with gravel and stones. Elsewhere along the creek, shifting fine sediments like sand and silt probably bury mussels and cause mortality in excess of reproduction rates.

Philip mentioned one survey volunteer with a zeal for eels had come from Maryland, where she runs Atlantic Kayak Company and the Piscataway Education Center. She has a small grant to run a pilot environmental education program in Virginia. We have suggested a number of schools and are waiting to see what may develop.

Discussion touched on the topic of laboratory mussel reproduction and its difficulties. Philip noted North America, and particularly the region around southwest Virginia is the world's richest in number of mussel species, many of them rare, whereas our local species are all quite common.

Kris noted eels reproduce in the Sargasso Sea, also the site of a trash gyre, which should lend itself to a stewardship narrative.

- International Coastal Cleanup:

Philip reported so far we have had 164 volunteers, including substantial support for the McLean High School Oceanography class, and collected 189 bags of trash. We have one more day, October 24th. One noteworthy find was an arrangement of avocados, cigar, corn, carnations, and coins left as an apparent spiritual offering. We left the food for the raccoons and accepted the coins as a donation to FACC, for are we not the "spirit" of Accotink Creek?



We have received our stipend from Project Clean Stream of \$738 following the spring Potomac Watershed Cleanup.

- Represent FACC:

Earth Sangha Open House Sept. 27th

Kris noted there had been a friendly reception and all went well.

Daniels Run Back to School Sept 28 & 29

Kris found this event to have been less than productive, with little parent interest.

Fall for Fairfax Oct. 3 & 4

Suzy praised the FACC contribution and the contrast made with other tents in terms of ability to engage kids in one-on-one connections. The weather likely lowered attendance some. Sue noted the competition with funnel cake for kids' attention.

Philip displayed the mystery bag which an unknown artist decorated with the FACC logo during the event. Suzy identified her as Rachel Griesmer-Zakhar, of Fairfax County Urban Forestry.



Suzy will check on possible whereabouts of FACC vests missing after the event.

- I-66 Project:

Kris noted discussions with John Mews, VDOT environmental engineer at the October 19th public meeting, where he shared some of our negative views of the 495 Express Lanes erosion and sediment control shortcomings. This has some promise as a positive connection.

Kris also recounted participating in the I-66 Corridor Coalition meeting with Board of Supervisors Chairman Sharon Bulova, where he got no response on questions of eventual cost to the county. Nor, it seems, will the county be acting on the 495 landscape issue (below).

Philip offered [I-66 comments](#) FACC could submit, which were approved without objection.

- Wakefield Park Stream Restorations:

Philip advised native plant rescues ended October 1st. Construction began the following week. Plants rescued likely number a few thousand, though no one counted. Most were taken by individuals for home use or private land restoration. Some went to Borge Street Park, in our watershed. Some are yet to be planted in Americana Park. We have learned that restoration will not be complete until spring 2017, complicating plans to return many to their original homes, as they have been squeezed into cramped containers intended for temporary survival. Suzy will verify whether the 2017 completion date applies to both streams in the project, or only the northern one.

- Wakefield Park Trail Paving:

Philip passed on the news that the Park Authority plans to pave all of the CCT from Braddock Road north to Accotink Parkway at Americana Park, about 1.5 miles. This comes on the heels of the one mile of CCT in Lake Accotink Park currently being paved. At a public meeting October 15th, bike advocates were out in force, but a surprising number were against paving, based somewhat on preference for rough surfaces, but mostly on lack of upkeep on recently paved segments. Surprisingly, one equestrian advocate was also there and spoke against paving. Philip also offered comments at the meeting along the lines of limiting runoff and preserving habitat.

Suzy raised the question of narrowing the trail. Philip advised this had been brought up at the public meeting, but eight feet is already the accepted minimum for two-way bike travel.

Philip proposed [written trail paving comments](#) for FACC to submit, which were approved with one edit and without objection.

- Accotink Gorge:

Philip anguished that the Wisteria Workday October 24th promises to be a flop. Our lead naturalist is out of commission, our backups had a family emergency, and we have no permission to cut anything without a memorandum of understanding, but we do have 14 volunteers signed up. The discussion did not offer any solution.

Kris observed the insurance costs would be about \$400 per year, and that Amy had explored various options to save the day. He suggested this was a “useful failure” which could be our talking point at the Elly Doyle Awards. Sue proposed a theme along the lines of “We would like to continue in the Accotink Gorge by ...”

Philip raised the issue of lunch brought up by one volunteer, but there was no resolution.

- 495 Landscaping:

Kris described revelations that the landscape contract with Ed's Plant World for 495 Express Lanes landscaping had been mismanaged and poorly overseen by VDOT. After expenditure of \$2.4 million, there had been little or no watering, 60% planting death, and 90% weed cover. EQAC will be meeting with VDOT in Dec/Jan on this issue and Kris expects we will be represented.

Kris expressed the view that Virginia Megaprojects has become something of a fiefdom within VDOT, observing the rules more loosely and being indulgent with contractors.

Suzy observed this may be a lever to put pressure on the I-66 project. Philip pressed the point of going to the media. Kris responded he would first approach our partners such as Potomac Riverkeepers and Coalition for Clean Water for possible involvement.

- Clean Virginia Waterways/Choose Clean Water:

Kris informed that the Audubon Naturalist Society is pursuing a Chesapeake Bay Trust Partnership grant and is including FACC as a partner. The Potomac Riverkeeper is also pursuing the same grant, with FACC as a partner, focusing on the "lower Potomac"

- Audubon Naturalist Society Coalition:

Kris noted this effort seems to be stuck in the stage of creating a webpage.

- Elly Doyle Award:

Kris reminded the award ceremony is November 20th. It seems we will not be able to give a presentation beyond our representation in the Channel 16 video, but there will be opportunities for social discussion and advocacy.

- Accounting:

Beverly presented a set of new forms to keep track of FACC funds. Reception was positive. She & Philip will arrange for her to have signature authority on our bank accounts and for statements to go to her address.

Philip asked for advice on the idea of a periodic appeal for donations. Kris suggested a December appeal in advance of tax season, based on Lands & Waters experience. Suzy suggested spring cleanup season and a poster or handout summary of our past year's activities. Sue and Kris will prepare such a summary, to be handed out at the Elly Doyle Awards.

Kris will send a letter to Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited, suggesting they contribute to the mussel survey.

- Lands & Waters Monitoring:

Kris described ongoing stream monitoring at Daniels Run with Fairfax High School and Daniels Run Elementary School students, aiming to provide a good science model for students and evaluate results of the recent stream restoration project.

- George Washington School Monitoring:

Philip shared recent contact with the George Washington Community School science teacher who bought out students to monitor Wakefield Run October 14th. Logistical and time issues prevented reaching the quota of invertebrates, but the students will return October 23rd to finish up. The teacher is interested in continuing long term. George Washington is a private alternative high school located in an office building in Kings Park shopping center.

- Tracking Volunteer Hours:

Sue recounted that she had sent forms to everyone to track volunteer hours for eventual use in support of grants and other purposes. She also mentioned we may deduct volunteer mileage at \$0.14/mile.

- Plastic Bag Bill:

Sue advised Senator Chap Petersen intends to reintroduce his [plastic bag bill from last session](#). Sue will check into how we may best support the bill.

- Fairfax Pickett Road Condos:

Sue described meeting with Fairfax City Parks Manager Greg Tonge in Thaiss Park (pronounced “taze”) regarding use of the \$40000 proffer by the developer, possibly as a wildflower meadow. Collaboration with FACC is a possibility.

- Falls Run Elementary School:

Kris told us about George Kralovec, interested in initiating a stream monitoring program at Little Run Elementary School. George joined the monitoring at Daniels Run (above) to gain experience. Little Run is immediately adjacent to Long Branch central.

- Mrs. Connolly:

Sue noted that the wife of Congressman Gerry Connolly has a walking club along the CCT in the Mantua area. Sue will make contact for possible collaboration.

- General Elections:

Kris discussed his and Flint’s participation as FACC representatives with the Fairfax County League of Conservation Voters to develop a list of endorsements, and observed the League plans to continue meetings with officials after they are elected. Discussion of some of the workings of the endorsements repeatedly was thwarted by confidentiality issues. Although confidentiality again prevented detailed explanation, Kris did imply that the “sushi dinners and Las Vegas hotel rooms” had not influenced the endorsements.

- FACC Elections:

Philip reminded that FACC elections for Purser and Conservator-at-Large will take place at our December meeting.

Philip Latasa

Friends of Accotink Creek
