



2018 Wrap-up Report from Little Run Elementary:

The Friends of Accotink Creek's Watershed Engagement Program at [Little Run Elementary](#) has been completed successfully, with the support of volunteers and partner organizations including the American Association for the Advancement of Sciences, the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services, Earth Sangha, the Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley, and Little Run Elementary's Green Team. We met or exceeded all the goals/commitments in the grant, and have developed a solid model for a "Follow the Water" Watershed Engagement Program that can be implemented at other schools, and continued at Little Run Elementary.

Educational Component:

This involved leading watershed-related activities with both 6th grade classes for two years, including stream monitoring (chemical testing and macroinvertebrate surveys), presentations on watersheds and human impacts, campus schoolyard surveys, watershed walks down to Long Branch, and a conservation project - the creation of an on-campus native plant "Watershed Garden" that implements watershed stewardship principles.

- Campus Schoolyard Surveys: Led with 4 6th-grade classes.
- Campus Watershed Analysis: Presented to 2 6th-grade classes, provided as an ongoing educational resource.
- Stream Monitoring - Long Branch: Led with 4 6th grade classes
- Watersheds and Human Impacts Presentation: Led with 4 6th grade classes

- Watershed Garden Conservation Project: Accomplished, led with 4 6th-grade classes and 2 1st-grade classes. This component was complemented by an FCPS SSMG grant for \$1475 in 2017, for native plants, materials, and an educational sign, and an Earth Sangha Plant Grant in 2018 providing native plants.

Outreach Component:

- Schoolyard Conservation Workshops: These were focused on promoting awareness and support for the conservation and watershed education activities at Little Run, with support from Earth Sangha, the Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley, and Little Run Elementary's Green Team. Volunteers assisted in maintaining the Watershed Garden, we worked with school representatives to develop a campus map and plan for potential additional conservation projects on-campus, and created a folder documenting and describing the watershed awareness activities and conservation project.
- Watershed Awareness Workshops: We led 2 workshops in 2017, partnering with the Audubon Naturalist Society and the Friends of Long Branch Stream Valley in leading watershed tours of the campus and Long Branch for the community, using the watershed garden as an example of how conservation projects can benefit the watershed.
- Watershed Educator Workshops: We partnered with FCPS' "Get2Green" environmental stewardship program to plan and lead workshops for teachers and educators interested in creating, using, and maintaining schoolyard conservation projects. Earth Sangha's Matt Bright co-led the workshops,

contributing his significant knowledge of native plants and creating and maintaining successful conservation projects. The workshops were hosted by Frost MS and Woodson HS and included campus tours and a discussion of existing and potential projects.

Quantifiable Results:

(Stated commitments in the grant are presented here in quotes, as in "Stated Commitment")

Educational Component: Exceeded

"Approximately 55 students (two 6th grade classes) will participate in the 5...planned sessions of educational programming"

->We doubled the number of students reached by leading the "Follow the Water" program with both classes in 2017 and 2018, thanks to volunteer support and by using one educator instead of two for most activities. We brought in both first grade classes for the 2017 planting, and led a shortened program with a summer camp program at Little Run in 2018, reaching an additional 100 youth (approximately).

Conservation Project: Exceeded

"The conservation project will cover an estimated 500 square feet, planting 50 native plants"

->The watershed garden has been planted with over 150 native plants, and covers more than 500 square feet.

Watershed Outreach Activities: Met.

"The 7 watershed outreach activities are expected to reach 15-30 participants each, 105-210 participants in total"

->Turnout for these events varied from 5 to 30+ participants, but we did reach about 120 participants in total.

Matching funds: Exceeded.

"Matching amount to be provided by applicant: \$4,890"

->This was complemented by a supporting grant for \$1475 from the FCPS SSMG grant program, as well as donated time for stream monitoring and additional educational activities with a summer camp program at Little Run in 2018.

Lessons learned:

While we are pleased with the results of this program, and very appreciative of the strong support of our volunteers and partner organizations, we were not successful in creating a strong program primarily sustained by the local community. That may have been an unreasonable aspiration, and was not an explicit goal. The success of the program confirms that FACC has the experience and ability to lead these kinds of

programs, and that we can play an essential role in helping schools and communities connect with their local watershed in meaningful ways. Participant and partner feedback has been consistently enthusiastic and appreciative.

We found that our community engagement programs were most effective when they focus on youth and families. We got the best turnout from family-oriented activities, and presenting watershed information in youth-accessible ways often resulted in parents/adult volunteers participating in the teaching process by reinforcing and elaborating on the messaging, giving them a useful role. Providing value to communities in the form of engaging, enjoyable learning experiences for youth is an effective way to build watershed awareness. Opportunities for volunteer hours for youth is also appreciated.

In general, school communities are very receptive to watershed-oriented programming, but it's essential to build trust by respecting the school's planning and decision-making processes, by communicating with the school administration and participating teachers to ensure that actions and activities conform with the school's needs and expectations. This requires a significant investment of time, which the Fairfax Water grant supported.

Friends of Accotink Creek

><(((0>`·,.,,·~`·,·><(((0> *"Find just one other person who cares."* ><(((0>`·,.,,·~`·,·><(((0>·,·~`·,·,· ><(((0>