



Comments Regarding the Future of Lake Accotink February 22, 2018

To: Fairfax County Park Authority, Supervisor John Cook, Supervisor Jeff McKay, Supervisor Pat Herryty, Supervisor Sharon Bulova

The Friends of Accotink Creek wish to “wade into” the Lake Accotink Park Master Plan by offering our comments on the topics of Connectivity and Lake Sustainability:

Connectivity

We are neutral on connecting upper and lower parking areas, but caution that measures should be included to provide substantial discouragement to through traffic, such as limiting connectivity to weekends only or imposing a significant detour. Of course, we also stress the exigency of no net loss of tree cover or habitat for any such project.

Connectivity brings up again the possibility of moving much or all of the lower parking lot. The parking lot at the dam has been damaged more than once in recent years by tropical storm flooding. Relocating all or part of the parking lot out of the floodplain could avoid future damage and allow revegetation of the riparian corridor. One possibility for relocation is exchanging the locations of this parking lot and the upper field near the Heming Ave entrance.

Lake Sustainability

None of the options is ideal. Retaining the lake is a substantial financial cost to taxpayers and leaves a barrier to wildlife movement. Breaching the dam would reconnect the stream for wildlife movement, but would incur the loss of the community value of the lake, sacrifice the wetlands at the head of the lake, and certainly cause the extinction of freshwater mussels in Accotink Creek.

The 2015 Daguna Consulting [freshwater mussel survey](#) concludes the sediment capture by the dam is the only factor maintaining alive the last population of freshwater mussels in Accotink Creek. Any solution to the future of Lake Accotink must avoid the extinction of this population.

Any solution which retains the dam should study practical means of providing for fish passage.

An additional outside-the-box option suggested by a member of the public at the January 22, 2018, public meeting was to install the [forebay far upstream](#), under the power lines at Braddock Road. This is an option worth exploring and offers these possibilities:

- Avoid the issue of neighborhood truck traffic during dredging
- Avoid a new truck road through forested areas
- Reduce sediment buildup in the lake
- Avoid wetland destruction
- Would be eligible for MS4 points
- Could take the place of stormwater ponds proposed for the Braddock Road widening project, saving both taxpayer funds and tree cover.

We urge study of this option, in cooperation with the FCDOT Braddock Road Project and the Stormwater Planning Division of DPWES.

In the analysis of alternatives for Lake Accotink, any choice that alters or removes the lake must account for the cost of alternate means of capturing the same amount of sediment as the lake now does. The current draft TMDL Report states on page 3-37 :

o "This 39% reduction from baseline conditions is lower than the reductions necessary for Long Branch and Upper Accotink Creek due to the 47% trapping efficiency of Lake Accotink that was discussed in Section 3.4.7. TMDL allocations in Chapter 4 are based on these assumptions. While the TMDL does not prescribe that the Lake will be maintained exactly as has been done in the past, it does assume that there will be an average sediment removal of 47% provided by dredging, or an equivalent management practice"(7)

Three cents of every Fairfax County property tax dollar are currently dedicated to stormwater controls and these funds are tapped to maintain other lakes. For technical reasons that are hard to understand, the same funds are not available for Lake Accotink, despite the significant sediment capture. There must be some solution to overcome the objections to use of stormwater funds for this lake which is obviously functioning as a stormwater facility in all but name. It is beyond our degree of expertise to know where that solution lies, but we urge that it be pursued at the highest levels of county government.

Many citizens have suggested rail transport for disposal of dredged sediment. Although the obstacles to such a solution are clear, we urge further exploration of this option. [Road-rail](#) trucks offer a possible means of accessing the railway.

*"The effort to abate the degradation of urban stormwater runoff and streambank erosion in Accotink Creek must be as comprehensive and integrated as the process of degradation."** Fairfax County's [Accotink Creek Watershed Management Plan](#) includes a number of projects that will reduce sediment entering the lake. Among these are Area Wide Drainage Improvements such as AC9302 and AC9303 to address stormwater runoff at its source. Acceleration of these projects in the immediate vicinity and then proceeding upstream should be incorporated into plans for the lake's future. The costs to both the taxpayer and the environment constitute an emergency calling for an "Accotink Creek Project" as driven as the Apollo Moon Project.

Public meetings and supporting materials should point out the example of [Lake Barcroft](#), where residents voted to create a Watershed Improvement District, paying additional amounts each year to support their lake. Those who care about Lake Accotink and live nearby may be sufficiently motivated to explore this option.

Less directly connected to the topic of lake sustainability, but nonetheless critical, is designation of Lake Accotink Park as a natural resource park like Huntley Meadows, consistent with the park mission described in the Fairfax County Comprehensive Plan, the FCPA Natural Resource Management Plan, and the General Management Plan for Lake Accotink Park. Nature is not gone from Lake Accotink Park, but needs our dedicated conservatorship to nurture its health.

Friends of Accotink Creek : : www.accotink.org : :

"Dominion over nature is a gift which has been given us yoked to the trust for its preservation."

P.S. - If the dam is breached, we really must make an event of it and employ explosives.

* [Managing Urban Stream Sedimentation Accotink Creek, Virginia](#) p. 20

