

Watershed Questions to Fairfax County Supervisor Candidates – 2019

1. Resource Protection Areas and floodplains delineated along our streams and rivers are designed to limit erosion and protect our citizens from flooding. Yet these undeveloped protected zones offer a tempting target for developers hungry for low-cost alternatives to redeveloping in built-up locations. What can Fairfax County do to maintain protections along our waterways intact?

As Lee District Supervisor I would support maintaining the Board's policy of restricting development in EQC's and flood plains, only permitting construction in extreme circumstances where property, lives, or the environment are in danger.

2. Conservation corridors permit genetic flow of flora and fauna species between habitat areas, helping to prevent localized extinctions. What can Fairfax County do to preserve and enhance conservation corridors on county property, in county projects, and on private property?

I recognize the importance of conservation corridors. I would work with county officials, including the Soil and Water Conservation District Board to understand the state of our current conservation corridor stock, and solicit their advice and council on how to preserve and protect them. Additionally, it will also be important to involve the community, and environmental advocacy groups in these discussions.

In terms of the impact of new construction on conservation corridors, I would be a strong proponent of environmental impact studies, with the Board of Supervisors as the final arbiter of what projects move forward and how.

3. Fairfax County recently adopted the Fairfax Green Initiatives to address climate change. Yet every day, trees, Nature's simplest carbon sequestration device, are sacrificed in favor of asphalt which increases heat island effect. This is often done in the name of other environmental goals, such as bicycle paths or stormwater ponds. What can Fairfax County do to reverse the trend of tree cover loss?

As a starting point to addressing our County's tree cover needs, I would support a baseline policy of no net loss; meaning that for every tree that is removed or displaced, another tree it planted. From there, I would work with the County Arborist to ensure that we are thoughtfully and sustainably managing our tree cover resources in Fairfax County.

4. In 2012 Fairfax County successfully sued the EPA to prevent implementation of a proposed TMDL (Total Maximum Daily Load) plan to reduce sediment and erosion in Accotink Creek. A revised TMDL plan for Accotink Creek was approved in 2017. How can Fairfax County avoid further delay and move forward with meaningful actions to return Accotink Creek and similar impaired streams to health?

First, we should move to amend and improve the existing sediment management and erosion prevention measures that the County is currently taking, recognizing that our current approach is not sustainable. Next, the County has no choice but to appropriate funds for another dredging of Lake Accotink. However, we cannot dredge our way out of this problem. We must identify where the failure in our prevention systems lie, so that we are not faced with this problem again in another 15 years, or sooner.

5. Fairfax County is pursuing a program of stream restoration projects to reduce stream erosion. Yet the cause of the erosion lies not in the streams, but in upland built-up areas. How can Fairfax County directly address the excessive runoff from paved surfaces that is the prime cause of stream erosion?

I completely agree with this analysis. Fairfax County should always work to utilize low impact development techniques, such as the use of semi-permeable materials and porous pavers. Additionally, we should require runoff mitigation features in all new development that minimize the impact of runoff through by controlling the flow and release of storm water. This, among other measures, will help to ensure that we are doing everything possible to reduce and minimize the downstream impacts of stormwater runoff.

6. The future of Lake Accotink is being decided now. Sediment buildup from excessive erosion is accumulating in Lake Accotink at a rate that will require either costly dredging projects every 15 years or the removal of the dam, allowing the sediment to pass downstream. What is your position on the future of Lake Accotink?

Lake Accotink is a precious and unique environmental asset with both ecological and community value. I believe that it should be preserved and improved as much as possible, with a goal of returning it to its once pristine state. While regular dredging, or the removal of the dam are certainly options, the most cost effective and responsible solution is to address the upstream problems that are creating this crisis.

7. Streams in Fairfax County are plagued by accumulations of immortal plastic trash that originates on paved surfaces and flows down storm drains. Can Fairfax County lead by example by eliminating single-use plastics at county facilities and functions? What other solutions do you envision?

I have previously advocated for a plastic free Fairfax, and would do so as Lee District Supervisor. I would also plan to work with the Stormwater Management Division to identify a strategy for installing and maintaining refuse traps at our water outfall points, in order to prevent as much debris and trash from entering out waterways as possible.

8. Fairfax County is collaborating with Virginia Department of Environmental Quality in developing a Northern Virginia road salt management strategy to reduce salt contamination of aquifers, streams, and drinking water. What steps can Fairfax County take to address this issue?

The best thing that I could do as Lee District Supervisors is encourage and monitor this process, while contributing at the appropriate time once the requisite studies have been completed.

9. When is the best time to plant a tree?

A – Now

B – 20 years ago

These are both good answers, however if I have to choose, I would say that a tree planted today can be planted in a thoughtful way, and as part of a county-wide strategy, ensuring that it will still be here in 20 years.

◆ Think about your watershed as a candidate asking voters to put our future into your hands. ◆

Friends of Accotink Creek

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