

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?

- I believe we should not build on protected floodplains, and we should be consistent in that. If a proposal were to come before the Board of Supervisors with a request for a special exception to build on a floodplain, I would not be in favor.
- Fairfax County is fortunate to have a legacy of conservation, with much of our stream floodplains and riparian corridors protected as parkland.

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?

- Our natural spaces are part of what makes Fairfax County special, not just for humans, but also for wildlife. However, we face numerous challenges, habitat loss and fragmentation chief among them. The Conservation Corridors research and reporting by NVRC shows how critical it is to have connected wild spaces, especially for migratory species.
- Native plants are the foundation of a healthy, abundant and biodiverse ecosystem. Using native plants in County projects and properties is an important start. Projects like the native plant meadow behind the Government Center demonstrate the beauty of native plants and ecological importance of pollinators.
- Regional initiatives like the Plant NOVA Natives campaign, coordinated by the Northern Virginia Regional Commission, bring together many important organizations and harness the power of dedicated volunteers.
- I support the tireless and innovative work of the Fairfax County Park Authority to prioritize, promote and protect habitats. I also believe it is important to support the work of local organizations like Earth Sangha, Northern VA Soil and Water Conservation District, Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Fairfax ReLeaf, Virginia Native Plant Society and local chapters, ASNV, ANS, not to mention

Friends of Accotink Creek(!), and many others that encourage and promote private stewardship.

- I would support working together in Fairfax County, regionally and statewide to look at and support policies that help us all better use and promote native plants and other habitat and conservation measures in our own land and throughout our community.

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?

- I am proud that Fairfax County's tree canopy is over 45% and has exceeded the goals laid out in the 20 year Tree Action Plan. We have also been designated a Tree City USA for 35 consecutive years. I've always liked the idea of for every tree we cut down, plant a new one to replace it.
- In projects, minimize tree loss as much as possible, and replant when unavoidable.
- Support, celebrate and champion trees and the economic benefits of trees to help create a culture of tree appreciation in our community.
- Support and promote the important work of the Urban Forestry Division and many local organizations.

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?

- Sediment has been identified as one of the most probable stressors for stream life in Accotink Creek. Much of the sediment threatening aquatic organisms is coming from erosion of the stream banks as a result of heavy stormwater runoff from the watershed. When we undertake projects to slow down and soak up runoff upstream, reconnect streams with their floodplains, and replant along our stream corridors and throughout our watersheds, we can make strides towards

protecting Accotink Creek and other Fairfax County streams impacted by imperviousness.

- Fairfax County needs to continue to make investments in our streams. When we protect our local aquatic habitat, we are also protecting our drinking water sources and natural resources downstream, the Occoquan and Potomac Rivers and Chesapeake Bay, and helping us to meet our obligations and goals under the Chesapeake Bay TMDL.

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?

- Yes, this is a big problem. I believe improving stormwater management strategies with new development (and redevelopment), such as adding more green roofs, rain gardens and adding pocket parks will help absorb rainwater and reduce runoff. When developing, especially in Tysons, we need to be thinking about integrating nature into our plans, instead of creating more seas of concrete.
- When they receive more stormwater runoff from impervious surfaces, streams erode their banks and widen and deepen. Controlling runoff from hard surfaces as close to the source as possible, requiring stormwater controls as part of new development and redevelopment, (and ensuring that erosion and sediment controls during construction are implemented correctly and effectively) are all important pieces of protecting our streams.

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?

- I believe Lake Accotink is a valuable community asset that needs to be saved, maintained and protected. As such, I support the forebay option with annual dredging.

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?

- Yes, I would be in favor of the county eliminating single-use plastics at county facilities and functions.
- If enabling legislation were passed at the state level, I would support bag fees and other mechanisms that target behavior.
- We can also bring in and test innovative methods for capturing and removing trash in-stream. There would be a maintenance cost involved with that, which I believe would be worth it.
- Education through storm drain markers and other efforts that remind residents where their trash ends up if they litter on the street.
- We are indebted to our volunteer leaders and organizations who tirelessly pick up trash and organize volunteers, and it is time to step up and see what more we can do as a county.

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?

- This is a critical issue for both aquatic and human health. We need to support the Salt Management Strategy and ensure that it is fully implemented locally. For our efforts, tracking how much is used, using lower-salt methods like brining instead of rock salt, providing training and setting requirements for County employees and contractors, participating in any new training and certification programs that may come out of the Salt Management Strategy, and having a robust outreach and communication plan to reach property managers, businesses, and homeowners would be keys to success.

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

A – Now

B – 20 years ago

- Both A and B!

Providence District:

Providence District:

Blake Lane Park is a designated site for a school and construction planning has begun. A portion of Towers Park is also a designated school site. What solutions do you see to resolve the dilemma posed by the need to provide parks and open space vs. demand for new school capacity?

- Our schools, open spaces and parks are all priorities to the residents of Providence District. We are in need of additional capacity in the Oakton/Fairfax pyramids, and as Supervisor, I would help find alternate sites that are not currently being used as parks to help address this need. That includes a thorough review of all county-owned land, and identifying existing buildings or land that would be a better fit. I would do this in conjunction with the School Board reviewing possible programmatic and boundary changes.

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

Friends of Accotink Creek

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