

Friends of Accotink Creek



To: Fairfax County Park Authority
Braddock District Supervisor
Park Authority Board

January 22, 2016

The Friends of Accotink Creek offer comments on the proposed paving of the Long Branch Stream Valley Trail. Our concern is with unintended environmental effects, particularly on our streams.

We concede that an existing hard-packed trail does present arguments in favor of paving.

Yet, all our streams are impaired by erosion caused by stormwater runoff from paved surfaces. Even while our county is spending many millions in corrective action to restore streams from the effects of paving, we still pave for roads, parking areas, and, yes, trails, without mitigation, without compensatory reforestation, without pervious paving material.

Our planet is on fire. However much we may wish it would go away, global warming is real and we need to act accordingly. The heat island effect of this additional acre of black asphalt cannot be escaped.

Whatever benefits may result from paving existing trails, carving new trails or other facilities in wooded areas works at cross purposes to county objectives of maintaining tree cover and countering climate change.

We call for policies of:

- Avoiding new trails or extensions of trails in floodplains, where they are certain to be battered by the greatest forces of nature to be found in our region.
- No net loss of habitat - no sacrifice of natural vegetated areas for trails or other purposes without compensatory replanting.
- The use of pervious paving wherever practical or, where not practical, employment of stormwater mitigation equivalent to that required of roads.
- Redirection of all transportation bike routes to surface streets, where the 9000 miles of paved roads in our county offer enormous potential to be knit into a bicycle-friendly network at lower cost.
- Inclusion of climate change consequences in all project planning.

As the largest holder of undeveloped land in our county, the Park Authority has paramount responsibility for its stewardship and preservation.

It is too easy for us to continue the pattern of issuing traditional paving contracts. It is time to reconsider and become the voice of our voiceless streams and habitats.

Wildlife and its habitat cannot speak, so we must and we will." – Theodore Roosevelt

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