



## Bulletin of the Proceedings of the Friends of Accotink Creek

Our meeting notes serve as bulletins of our activities, interests, and discussions, supplemented by your submissions.

### Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – December 21, 2021

Next Meeting: January 18, 2022 (Third Tuesday of each month via on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice in the [Friends of Accotink calendar](#).)

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**Present (apologies for missing last names and any misspelling!):** Gary Bangs, Julie Chang, Sophia Chapin, Avril Garland, Philip Latasa, Edward Lee, Dave Lincoln, Beverley Rivera, Sue Kovach Shuman, Kim Schauer, newcomers Frank \_?\_, and Victoria \_?\_, all via on-line meeting, due to COVID 19 closures and precautions.

### Forthcoming Opportunities to represent FACC:

***Plant NoVA Natives Steering Committee Meeting:*** Plant NOVA Natives have a lot going on, - invasive removals, community education, and tree planting. Discussion focused on making a pitch for the Accotink Gorge and Cinder Bed Woods issues at the Steering Committee meeting, January 6. Avril plans to attend.

***Legislative Listening Session:*** Fairfax County's delegation to the General Assembly will hold the pre-2022 annual public listening session January 8. Following discussion of possible issues to bring up, **there was no action taken to attend.**

***EQAC Annual Meeting:*** This is a venue where we could speak on any environmental topic. Philip suggested we could make the point about needing to end deforestation, even when it's for things we really want. Submissions may be written, in person, or by video for the January 12 meeting. Philip will arrange the submission of a video.

***North Springfield Civic Association Meeting:*** As North Springfield residents, Katherine and José have offered to help. Philip plans to build a standard PowerPoint of watershed issues, plus dredging and the Master Plan.

***Mt Vernon Environmental Expo ([here's a link to the 2021 event](#)):*** The 2022 Environment Expo will be held on Saturday, April 23 from 10 am - 2 pm at Fort Hunt Park. We discussed the merits of various locations, having found the shelter location too close to live music to enable much conversation. Dave will register FACC for the event (The Supervisor's office has us on the list for a January notification.), asking for a heavily trafficked outdoor location, and will provide a large awning in case of rain.

***American Park Cleanup Day:*** February 21 (Presidents' Day)

### **FACC Subjects Discussed**

#### *Cinder Bed Road Bikeway:*

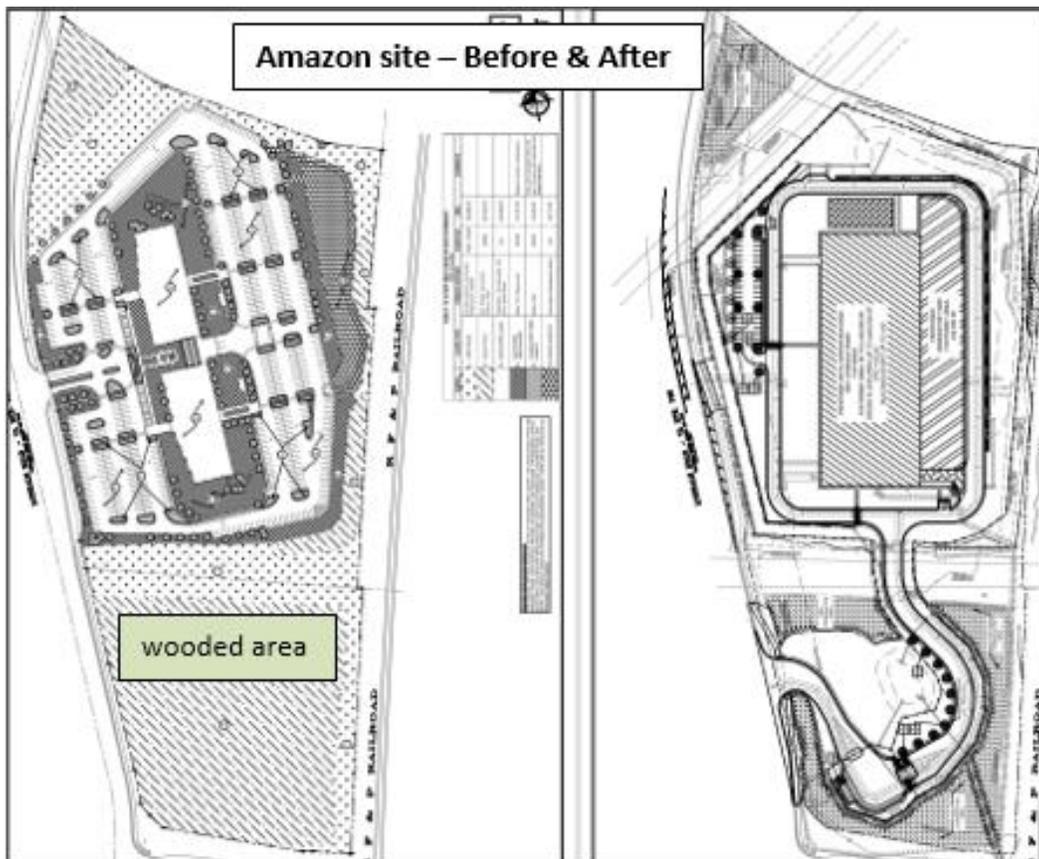
The group of the concerned (including Avril, Sandy, Gary, Philip for FACC) met with Supervisor Lusk December 15<sup>th</sup>. The group included representation from Sierra Club and Virginia Native Plant Society. Stormwater Planning was represented to describe environmental impacts. We made our own [presentation](#). The flame of hope continues to flicker, as Supervisor Lusk proposed a site visit in January. Philip has been scouting out an itinerary that will cover some highlights in an hour or two. We could really spend days out there to understand what is involved.

Philip engaged in leafleting at Kingstowne Library and along the streets and trails of the area. Avril persuaded several area businesses to display leaflets on their counters. One of these was [Nalls Produce](#), worth a visit if you are in the area.

Some of us also attended the December 8th meeting of the Fairfax County Trails, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Committee, where the Bikeway was on the agenda. Due to some miscommunication, the FCDOT presentation was off the cuff. Several of the members did ask some pointed and concerned questions and requested a repeat presentation dealing with environmental impacts. Philip also made a presentation.

While we try to defend these woods from further sacrifice, we learned of two new private projects in the Long Branch south watershed that will clear away larger areas of woods, but which we are powerless to change. Both of these are located on Loisdale Road, directly on the portion of the Fairfax County Parkway Trail that is an alternative to the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway. Both projects are potential sources of improvements to the Parkway Trail.

- [Subaru Dealership](#) - An addition to the series of auto dealerships that have located here in recent years. It looks like about 3 to 4 acres of trees will be lost.
- Amazon Data Center – This is 23 acres with almost 7 wooded, the rest already paved. Again, it looks like 3 to 4 acres of tree loss. [RZ 2021-LE-015](#) and [SE 2021-LE-010](#)



"How bicycles kill trees"

#SaveCinderBedWoods



Accotink Gorge:

Avril described the anti-wisteria workday held on November 24<sup>th</sup> with 13 volunteers. This time we also had herbicide support from the Park Authority. There is still so much more to do. Discussion covered ideas and options for more effective action. Next month's agenda will allot more time to considering ideas.

Patricia from IMA emailed me that FCPA has finally decided to herbicide the wisteria, lesser celandine, porcelain berry, fumewort, and ailanthus in the Gorge. She did not give me the area to be treated or a date. The work will be done by Invasive Plant Control, Inc., a firm based in Nashville, TN. On its site, IPC claims that its "seasonal staff" are mainly college interns or recent college graduates. For managing highly sensitive areas, it claims to keep staff on the site who can differentiate between desirable and non-desirable plants.

Avril asked Patricia, given the unfortunate performance of herbicide applicators at her and Beverley's IMA sites, whether volunteers could at least ribbon any native vines and native seedlings so the crews won't spray them too. Patricia agreed this would be helpful. She said, for our workday in the spring, cutting invasive vines from trees would reduce the time the crews would need to spend there. Our clearing multiflora rose and "blackberry" would also be helpful and save the IMA program the money needed to do any follow-up work in the area.

Kim said ribboning native plants might not be enough. We'd need to explain to crews what the ribbons are for. She suggested putting up signs a big sign or signs that clearly indicate that the ribbons on plants signify those plants that should NOT be sprayed to avoid any misunderstanding that the ribbons indicate plants that should be sprayed. It might be helpful for the signs to include leaf closeup and whole-plant photos representing the types of plants to be avoided/saved. We could also provide in a waterproof bag 8.5x11" copies of a page that has the photos of plants to avoid and closeups of their leaves and invite each sprayer to take one with them for reference as they spray. Kim can print the big signs and laminate the signs and handouts to make them more durable. Another idea would be to make signs/handouts with clear photos of the only plants that SHOULD be sprayed. Kim also suggested a friendly phone call to the spraying company closer to the time of year when Patricia says they are expected may yield info about the timeframe when their crew is scheduled to be in Northern Virginia. If they want to know why we are asking, we can say we plan to mark plants and provide reference materials for the crew to make their jobs easier and want to make sure we bring the materials/markers at the correct time.

Annandale Greenway:

Philip noted that the December 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Trails, Sidewalks, and Bikeways Committee also brought up the tantalizing possibility that the Annandale Greenway project will be extended across 495 to connect with the Cross County Trail. This would be an opportunity to fix a [badly eroding trail](#) that has been a problem since the 495 Express lanes were built years ago. Philip will try to obtain more information.

### [Americana Drive Cleanup:](#)

In the same northwest quadrant of the 236/495 cloverleaf where the eroding trail is located, we have the good news that VDOT has cleaned up the [chronic dumping site](#) and padlocked the vehicle access route. The next cleanup will be on Presidents Day, February 21, 2022.

### [Fairfax Water Grant:](#)

Philip reported that Fairfax Water has requested a progress report by the end of the quarter. He, Kim, and Avril will work on putting something together.

[Virginia Lakes and Water Association:](#) VLWA is offering grant money for watershed restoration projects. Further discussion tabled until January meeting. (see broader discussion topic about grant application and execution in “Whither FACC?” section below.)

### [Elly Doyle Award:](#)

The Elly Doyle Awards were presented November 19<sup>th</sup>, with recognition given to both Friends of Accotink Creek and to the groups of elders of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that has given so much support to Beverley at her Lake Accotink Park invasives site. Beverley, of course, gets the credit for bringing about both of these awards.

### [Environmental Excellence Award:](#)

Two friends of Accotink Creek also received the 2021 Fairfax County Environmental Excellence Award:

- Suzanne Foster, our longtime active volunteer.
- Jen Pradas, a leader of [Save Blake Lane Park](#) and an Invasives Management leader in both Blake Lane Park and Borge Street Park, in our watershed.

### [Braddock Citizen of the Month:](#)

The Braddock District Citizen of the Month for December is Amy Gould, a longtime supporter of Friends of Accotink Creek and organizer of the Americana Drive cleanups. Congratulations and many thanks, Amy!

### [Vienna Swim Club Project:](#)

Avril described the ongoing wisteria removal at the Vienna Woods Swim Club. The work is done on an *ad hoc* basis, and, as it is private property, volunteers are not prohibited from painting cut stems or roots with herbicide. However, the main point of the project is to educate club members about invasive plants and what they can do about it. The means for education outreach in this case is the Pool's quarterly newsletter which mentions the project in its fall issue. Avril will send the Pool another update in the spring. All private institutions and HOAs produce newsletters. (Interestingly, Plant NOVA Natives has started approaching large landowners to alert them about tree-killing, invasive vines, and offer brochures on the subject.) To further the education component, Avril sends volunteers Doug Tallamy videos. If volunteers show a good understanding of Tallamy's observations, they earn "extra-credit" service time. Avril's volunteers also gain service time by correctly identifying the invasive plants they remove. This project received mention in the Swim Club newsletter.

### [Stream Monitoring Results:](#)

Philip noted that on December 11<sup>th</sup>, Accotink Creek achieved its most pathetic biological stream monitoring results ever. Even deploying four nets, we only collected a total of 46 invertebrates. We can only hope this was a fluke. The group pondered possible causes without arriving at any conclusion, other than to keep an eye on future results.

### [Lake Accotink Dredging:](#)

Philip recounted news that Stormwater Planning is reconsidering a dredge spoils site in the industrial park adjacent to Lake Accotink Park. If it comes to pass, this would be the best

alternative for the habitat, but less felicitous for the neighbors who would have added truck traffic on that side of the park.

**[Bear Branch Restoration:](#)**

Philip has learned the Town of Vienna is planning a stream restoration on Bear Branch in Southside Park. We may learn more about the opportunity for a plant rescue in January.

**[Thompson Farm:](#)**

Farther downstream on Bear Branch, construction has at last begun on this 10 acre parcel of streamside open space which we advocated to preserve a few years ago. Here, too, a paved stream through the Resource Protection Area is a part of the project. From the looks of the construction site, that trail may go right along the banks of Bear Branch.

**[Route 50 Walkway:](#)**

This project will add 600 feet of impervious shared use path between Blake Lane and Stonehurst Drive on Route 50. Completion is set for next summer. When the whole Walkway is eventually finished, it will connect from 495 to Fairfax Circle. In locating details of the project, Philip found a rather useful map on [FCDOT projects](#).

**[County Redistricting:](#)**

Philip described the plans for Fairfax County supervisor district redistricting. The changes are few and small scale, but of note is the fact that Springfield District would no longer contain a portion of the Accotink Creek watershed.

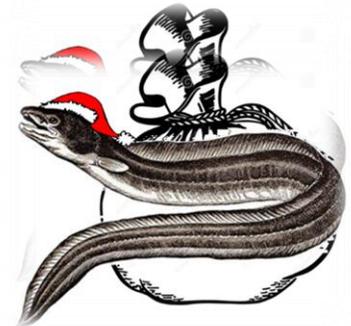
**[Virginia Bottle Bill Organization:](#)**

The Virginia Bottle Bill Organization got in touch through Philip and asked to add us as supporters on their website. They also asked us to let our members know about them. Since this is a perennial goal of ours, the proposal was approved without objection.

**[Christmas Gifts:](#)**

Philip celebrated the recent discovery of two gifts from Nature in Accotink Creek in this season of giving:

- A [report of otters sighted](#) in Long Branch central reached us. This is reminiscent of our Christmastime [otter sighting](#) in 2018.
- [American Eels](#) were found in Long Branch south, one of them perhaps the very eel featured in [The Night Before Christmas on Accotink Creek](#).



**[Donations:](#)**

We received:

- \$12.67 from the AmazonSmile Foundation for activity between July 1 and September 30
- \$25.00 from Paul Miller
- \$25.00 from David Reynolds, an Americana Drive cleanup volunteer
- \$25.00 from Jeanne Kadet, one of our frequent collaborators
- \$50.00 from Suzy Foster, well known to most of us as a longtime volunteer
- \$50.00 from Harry Jones
- \$100.00 from Mary Cortina, a frequent supporter and voice for the environment on the Planning Commission

- A very generous check for \$1,000 from the Riggs Cove Foundation in addition to their \$2000 donation in October.
- Yet another support donation of \$2000 from Virginia Lakes and Watersheds Association. Beverley appealed for general admin support and she got it!
- An even more generous check for \$2000 from our friend Betsy Martin of [Friends of Little Hunting Creek](#). We are also grateful to Betsy for the initiative she has taken in pressing the campaign on the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway.



A virtual toast to our exceptional Benefactors – “May this gesture of generosity be a sign of good fortune in the coming year for Accotink Creek and everyone in its group of Friends!”

**Whither FACC:**  
**Annual Newsletter:**

Our annual newsletter went out to coincide with Giving Tuesday on November 30<sup>th</sup>, and got a response in donations. We may hope its repeat distribution in December will also get results.

**FACC Elections:**

Our candidates for reelection to the offices of Purser and Conservator-at-Large are Beverley and Julie. All other candidates having failed to file by the deadline, both are reelected by acclamation.

**Website Modernization (WordPress Alternative)**

Sophia had put together a sample WordPress Website to demonstrate its functionality. The consideration for WordPress, whether through Hostek or not, is really to improve accessibility of our content (especially for mobile users) and make long-term upkeep and content creation easier. For example, so more FACC members can contribute timely articles and less coding would be involved on a day-to-day basis.

Sophia described the sample and the advantages of maintaining our website without the requirement to write code for each change or new element. The group discussed the advantages, pros and cons. There were reservations over the scale of the task of migrating our entire website to a new host and format unless it could be moved as a whole, permitting us to make incremental changes as time permitted. There was also some attachment to our existing layouts and formats, and caution: Philip recalled ruefully the disaster of the broken links following the Fairfax County website overhaul a few years back.



Sophia will contact our current host, Hostek, for feasibility/pricing, including the possibility of whole website migration.

Sophia notes that this is also an opportunity for FACC members to voice hopes for the website and content in the future.

**Grant Application Discussion:** Stemming from the topic of the VLWA grant opportunity noted above, and in light of generous donations to FACC, we discussed possibilities for expanding FACCs invasive control project into use of paid temporary employees, perhaps by use of a temp agency to find and employ college students during vacation months. Dave took an action to look into scope of such a project, trying to capture what cost elements and FACC labor requirements would entail. He requests information from the core group about past grant applications and the requirements of the VLWA grant opportunity. Further discussion tabled until the January meeting.