

## THE POTOMAC FLIER



[December 30, 2021](#) [News](#)

*Photo: Sweetbay Magnolia, Philip Latasa*

Audubon Society of Northern Virginia is urging the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors to protect important wetland habitat on South Long Branch, a tributary of Accotink Creek, by realigning the proposed Cinder Bed Road Bikeway, a commuter bikeway that is planned through the area in Lee District of Fairfax County. Please help us by [contacting](#) your Fairfax County Supervisor.

ASNV has been working with the Friends of Accotink Creek, Audubon Naturalist Society, and the Virginia Native Plant Society to prevent construction of a bikeway through sensitive wetlands, instead seeking a route away from special habitat. The area the proposed Cinder Bed Road Bikeway would traverse contains Coastal/Piedmont Seepage Wetlands, which have a [special status designated by the Virginia Department of Conservation and Recreation](#), near a globally rare Magnolia Bog. Magnolia Bogs are named for the Sweetbay Magnolias (*Magnolia virginiana*) which grow in them, along with a globally rare plant community. There are only a few dozen Magnolia Bogs in the world. They are only found in the [fall zone](#) in the Mid-Atlantic region. Once they were fairly numerous in our area, but most have been extirpated by development.



*Sweetbay Magnolia, Philip Latasa*

Magnolia Bogs depend upon water flowing through gravel terraces, then running into impermeable layers of clay and emerging in springs and seeps. Their unique hydrology makes them very sensitive to disturbance. Building a bikeway through the area would irreparably alter the hydrology and destroy the Magnolia Bog as well as acres of woods and wetlands. It would also open up the area to the proliferation of exotic invasive plants, such as Japanese stiltgrass, which will further degrade the habitat.

This large area of important, high-quality wetland and riparian habitat currently supports birds and other wildlife. In fact, workers at the Franconia Metro recently discovered [American eels in Long Branch](#). The project's harm to wildlife is compounded because the bikeway is proposed to be fully lighted from dusk to

dawn for its full length. The harmful and disruptive effect of artificial nighttime lighting on birds, insects, and many species of wildlife is well-documented.

The Cinder Bed Road Bikeway is intended to provide a commuting route for cyclists from Fort Belvoir to Franconia-Springfield Metro. ASNV fully supports reducing the number of commuters who drive their cars, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants. However, we oppose routing the bikeway through this very sensitive area, and favor instead any of the alternative alignments that have been identified. We are asking that the project be paused, and alternatives be evaluated.

It is surprising, and heartening, to find globally rare and healthy habitat, tucked away and hidden amongst the industrial development of Newington, I-95, and the railroad. The survival of this remnant proves that nature is resilient, if given half a chance. Let's not destroy what remains by building a commuter bikeway through it. Instead, let's find another location for the bikeway, and preserve and protect this special place. If you live in Fairfax County, please ask your supervisor to support rerouting the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway, to save this important habitat.

[#SaveCinderBedWoods](#)



Woodland, Philip Latasa