



## 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 – September 20, 2022

Next Meeting: October 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:** Gary Bangs, Sandy Collins, Avril Garland, Tony Hill, Philip Latasa, Beverly Rivera, Juan Rivera, all via on-line meeting.

### Opportunities to represent FACC:

60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Lake Accotink Park, August 27, 2022: We were invited by the Park Authority to have a display at the 60th Anniversary of Lake Accotink Park. Avril, Beverley, and Philip manned a table at the event.. Avril provided a native plant giveaway. Philip observed that attendance was good, although it's not clear if any of our table visitors will have and sustained interest.

Fairfax Circle Small Area Plan: Philip reported on small area plans, which are districts in Fairfax City designated for special people and environment friendly planning. The Fairfax Circle Small Area Plan presentation on August 31st covered just the southwest corner (where Bowl America is located). This area is currently 100% impervious, borders 300 yards of Accotink Creek, and is paved right up to the banks. The presentation's promise of "Green infrastructure including restored RPA" gives hope for much improvement, so we need to stay involved as overall planning begins this fall.

Accotink Gorge: We have set a workday for October 31<sup>st</sup>, 9:30 – 11:30 AM, a Teacher Workday. We discussed places to post announcements, such as churches, and The Connection. Philip has posted the notice in Volunteer Fairfax. (NOTE: Wear your Halloween costume if you can join us.)

Drive Electric Week, September 25: Avril will be staffing a Sierra Club table at this event at George Mason University. Amongst all the vehicle displays, the Sierra Club table will be promoting electric outdoor equipment as an entry level first step toward electric vehicle ownership. Avril noted that outdoor equipment in this country burns 3 billion gallons of gasoline per year.

International Coastal Cleanup: Philip noted that turnout in our first round of cleanups on September 17<sup>th</sup> was disappointing overall, with only a total of 9 volunteers for the day. We did have groups from the Bahai Community of Fairfax and Sierra Club Great Falls Chapter. It may have been just as well we didn't have more volunteers at the Fullerton Road site, COSTCO has installed a new fence along the perimeter of their parking lot, making access to the creek much more problematic. This fence will do much to stop trash from blowing off the parking lot, but is not high enough to prevent all deliberate littering. We will probably be well advised to find a replacement location before spring.

Americana Drive Construction Trash Dump: Our cleanup is still scheduled for November 11<sup>th</sup>. We talked last time about the possibility of using Juan's trail cameras to collect whatever video we

could on Americana Drive. Juan sees theft of the equipment as very possible. He also warned there are laws about unannounced recording of people on public property. He advised three steps:

- Placing signs
- Soliciting VDOT interim permission
- Installing cameras.

Juan will check his information on the legalities. Philip will review previous information from VDOT regarding obtaining permission.

### **FACC Subjects of Interest Discussion:**

***Native Plants vs HOAs:*** The group discussed Sandy's tribulations with her HOA's vendetta against her native plant garden. "Ugly!" "Weeds!", they cry. Subjective and arbitrary standards of attractiveness allow HOAs everywhere to impose whatever conditions may suit the whim of current board members.

***Long Branch Central Project:*** The stakeholder advisory committee for the project met September 16th to review more detailed versions of project plans and sequences. Sandy and Philip attended ( [Meeting Slide Presentation](#) [Meeting Slide Presentation](#) ) Sandy observed some encouraging talk of concern for minimizing floodplain woodland and analyzing sediment sources and project results. The USGS is establishing a chain of eight monitoring stations on this tributary to help accomplish that goal of results analysis.

Philip noted there was little talk of any upland projects away from the stream or of the public education element that was much talked about before. He suggested that since there will be no further opportunity for general public comment, we had better make our contribution to the October 7th meeting count toward jumpstarting public outreach.

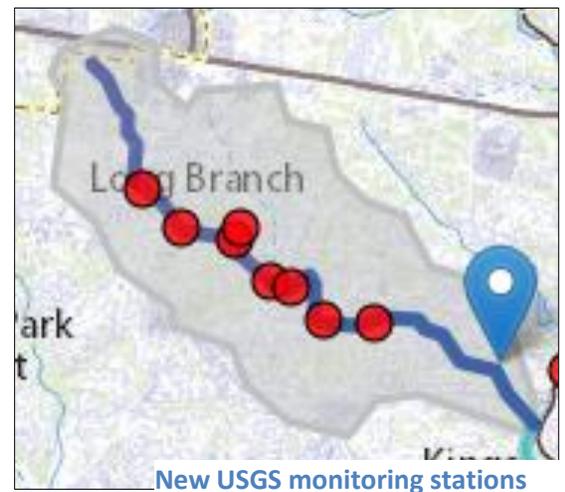
Project cost is \$40 million, to be mostly funded by a Virginia Clean Water Revolving Fund loan to be paid over 20 years. Funding should be secured by the end of next year, and the projects done over 8 years. The meeting host advised the public participants, "You're here to beat us up." Philip asked us all to think about how we may best accommodate that request.

The group will meet again October 7th.

***I-66 Outside the Beltway Replanting:*** The I-66 Outside the Beltway project is far from complete, but is at final grade in many locations and some western express lanes have been opened to traffic. We need to make an effort to influence the replanting plan. Philip explained the project runs from 495 to Gainesville, and the main opportunities for replanting are in the Nutley Street and Chain Bridge Road cloverleaves. The Friends of Holmes Run, whose watershed also includes a bit of the project, are ready to collaborate. We need ideas for others we can ask to join. Philip asked if anyone is interested in taking the point. Avril is willing to assist. She suggested the Friends of Nottoway as another collaborator.

***Hatmark Branch Gone Dry:*** A neighbor's post on NextDoor let us know the Hatmark Branch tributary went dry in East Blake Lane Park in August. This is a perennial stream with a Resource Protection Area. We had about 1.5 inches of rain earlier in the month, so it seemed surprising. An inquiry to Stormwater Planning Division prompted a gratifyingly thorough investigation, but only reached the conclusion that the dry weather in late August was the cause.

***Fairfax City Elections:*** The questions to Fairfax City candidates we discussed last month have been submitted jointly with the [Fairfax City Environmental Forum](#). We have one response. Philip is



linking them to our elections page as they are received. There will be a [meet-the-candidates forum](#) September 28<sup>th</sup>, with neighborhood candidate events following.

**Accotink Avenue:** The City of Fairfax is requesting input on changing some street names and a neighbor suggested that Old Lee Highway be changed to Accotink Avenue. We urge everyone who lives in the City to submit a survey in support of this great idea. The County has its Accotink Parkway, Accotink Drive, and Accotink Road, but they are all small and in obscure locations. If this new Accotink Avenue would be a large and highly visible thoroughfare.



**Mason Bee Houses:** Last year, a scout project installed three mason bee houses in Lake Accotink Park, one of them in Beverley's Invasive Management Area site. Two of the houses were damaged by animals or vandals. Philip refilled them with tubes and installed a stronger protective mesh to deter animals. To deter vandals, we are going to try informative signs, in English on one side of the house and Spanish on the other. The design is awaiting approval by the Park Authority, which will also produce the signs.

The illustrations are courtesy of our friend Elaine Sevy.

<p><b>MASON BEE HOTEL</b></p>	<p><b>Mason Bees</b> are species of solitary bee in the genus <i>Osmia</i>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Bee Kind</b> - Mason Bees are gentle and friendly. Females use their tiny stings only when harmed.</li><li>• <b>Bee Caring</b> - Female Mason Bees build homes of mud for their eggs and larvae in holes in wood or plant stems.</li><li>• <b>Bee Quiet</b> - Mason Bees are active only about six weeks in early spring.</li><li>• <b>Bee Helpful</b> - Mason Bees are excellent and valuable spring pollinators.</li><li>• <b>Bee Busy</b> - Mason Bees can visit up to 2,000 blossoms a day.</li><li>• <b>Bee Blessed</b> - More than a hundred species of Mason Bee are found in North America.</li></ul>
<p><i>Bee Happy</i></p> 	

**Water Caltrops Control:** We have had three water caltrop removal days in Lake Accotink, all involving arduous toil in quagmires of astoundingly deep and sticky mud. Disposal is by dragging the heavy tubs to the highest driest accessible point nearby and leaving the water caltrop in piles to compost. Either there is much more this year than last, or last year's scouts were not observant enough. There is still more to remove. The Park Authority may schedule more removal days, or if not, we should try to do our own. Avril inquired whether seeds are being collected for research, as last year, and Philip replied that it had not been requested.



**The Assembly Reforestation:** The Assembly is a townhouse community located just north of the disaster of the [Northfax West](#) development. A board member contacted us with plans to remove invasives and reforest mowed areas amounting to about one-tenth acre. Their budget is limited, they don't know their invasives, and their landscapers are not oriented towards invasive removal. They are looking for advice, free plants, funding, and persons who can guide volunteer invasives removal.

**4309 Holly Lane:** Sue and her husband discovered this dubious home construction site while bicycling along the Cross County Trail just south of Americana Park. The entire site is exposed and unstabilized bare soil, including piles of loose soil, on a steep slope. It is sure to cause erosion and sediment failures as soon as enough rain falls. Most of the soil piles are pressing against the silt fence on the downhill side of the slope, compromising its integrity. All this is just yards from the banks of Accotink Creek. A complaint I filed on September 6th is still listed as open on the County [construction complaints map](#).

**Donations:** Philip reported that FACC received these donations:

- \$500 as an employer volunteer grant from Philip's daughter's employer.
- A \$50 gift card Avril obtained from Merrifield Garden Center and used for potting soil and other plant giveaway supplies.
- \$40 from Brian Slawski
- \$40 from James Gillespie (the neighbor who suggested the Accotink Avenue street name)

**Whither FACC:** We will have FACC board elections in December for Primary Conservator, Secondary Conservator, and Chronicler. All incumbents are eligible for reelection. Get your campaign committees organized now!



**Website Modification:** [WordPress Alternative.](#) We are still in need of a webmaster to continue work upgrading our web site.