

Dredge Meeting Notes 20230215

Video and online comments form are available here - <https://publicinput.com/TS53544#comment2220832>

Attendees of note: Supervisor McKay; Supervisor Walkinshaw; Supervisor Gross; Delegate Watts, Chris Herrington, DPWES Director; Jai Cole, Park Authority Director. Supervisor Lusk was notably not present and did not seem to be represented.

County staff rehashed what we had heard from Supervisor Walkinshaw's [announcement](#) and the 20230210 stakeholders meeting – The cost has grown to monstrous proportions and there is no good way to get the sediment out of the lake for dewatering, and the County won't suffer regulatory penalty, and the lake may convert to something like Huntley Meadows, so DPWES is letting the Park Authority deal with it as part of a resumed Master Plan.

Supervisors in general stated they shared the public disappointment and will continue listening for a future course.

Chris Herrington –

Dredging would mean higher taxes and less money for flood control and stream restorations.

The tone of the public commentary was not as heated as I had feared. Most comments were made via chat, likely because calling in is cumbersome in the format used.

Some public comments of note give the general tone of the discussion.

Dominik is our hero of the recent [sanitary sewer break](#):

Dominik Meade I think it would probably be similar to huntley meadows just more forested

Dominik Meade The sediment is probably the main issue with removing the dam

4 minutes ago



Dominik Meade It would kill the already low mussel population below the dam

Dominik Meade How would you stop the sediment from flowing down stream? How will we be able to protect the last remaining mussel population in Accotink creek that is below the lake? The lake provides a sediment capture point that allows the mussels to survive below the lake without being overrun by sediment and mussels going extinct in Accotink overall

Dominik Meade could you install new dams upstream of Accotink similar to what pohick creek has? This would help with a sediment issue and protect Accotink Lake

Names not given:

Numbers tortured to get the conclusion that the board wants. Another instance of the people and commissioners of the northern part of Fairfax sticking it to southern Fairfax county. Look forward to seeing which of the northern Fairfax Parks are in line for big expansions at our expense.

A cost change this large based upon changing assumptions demonstrates incompetence by County Staff. It's evident that County Staff and contractors are unqualified. Will someone be held accountable for this *up?

How can we possibly have any confidence in you and your department employees in the future after such a colossal failure with your planning projection? Do you understand you've lost the community's confidence with any future reports you present?

a minute ago

↩ Reply

Everyone here needs to remember this call the next time we go to the ballot box.

Fairfax County has always been able to fund projects they want to fund. It looks like the county is desperately trying to find reasons not to fund this project to save Lake Accotink.

DC and several MD counties offer incentives to replace non-porous surfaces (driveways and patios) with porous or semi-porous options. Is Fairfax Co considering this as a way to reduce the current/future non-porous surfaces that are impacting our watersheds like Accotink?

I appreciate the time and thought put into this reevaluation. Dredging just does not fit the definition of "sustainable". I think our money could be more wisely put toward recreation and environmental protection by moving in another direction.

Weren't all these concerns raised and resolved previously? I feel like we were strung along into believing that all these concerns were already considered and taken care of by many experts. Now suddenly an entirely new narrative is being told to us. Are there financial incentives being presented behind closed doors?

Is it just me, or does it seem that everyone on the panel, with the exception of Charles Smith, seem totally uninterested in this meeting?

would selectively dredging specific areas of the lake be beneficial to waterway maintenance...reduce the amount of sludge to move/repurpose to make it financially possible to keep lake from significantly changing wildlife or recreation?

I totally agree. I believe the county should offer home owner incentives to replace non-porous surfaces with permeable or semi-permeable surfaces

Can there be restoration of wetlands with native plantings, coupled with control of invasives immediately in the upper part of lake?

I love the idea of focusing on how we can restore the area to a more "native" ecosystem. I think our park can be an example of responsible and sustainable land management for the entire county. We can turn this into a great, long term study on wetland restoration for our children and grandchildren.

Allan Robertson, Save Lake Accotink Of course DEQ cannot compel Fairfax County to dredge Lake Accotink. And it is true that failing to dredge Lake Accotink will not result in immediate regulatory costs. As stated, Mr. Herrington's statement is accurate. But it is terribly misleading. If we do not dredge, the hundreds of thousands of cubic yards of sediment Lake Accotink impounds annually will enter lower Accotink Creek, and Fairfax County will be required to mitigate that astronomically higher sediment load at what ridiculous cost? The externalities, hidden costs, were conspicuously ignored in 2018. Externalities are being denied now.

Allan Robertson, Save Lake Accotink Respectfully, tying the cost of dredging to flooding homes is a dirty and rhetorical trick. Please do not show this community such disrespect in the future, Mr. Herrington.

Jen I. I think the park can still be a great community resource as a wetland park. Many of the facilities (play grounds; trail; carousel; mini golf; picnic areas) could still be available, at least that's my understanding. If you have visited Huntley Meadows, a local wetland park, many, many people visit it with their families or own their own every day. The decision to not dredge does not seem like a bad decision.

Jen I. I'm a little confused. Is the timeline below more or less what happened?

- 1) The county previously considered dredging Lake Accotink to remove sediment from the lake.
- 2) After further analysis, the county is now considering not dredging Lake Accotink because of the high financial cost as well as the negative impacts on the nearby community.
- 3) If the county does not move forward with dredging the lake, the sediment will remain in the lake, and some in this presentation say that leaving the sediment there would not be "that bad", to put it simply, because much of the sediment remains in the lake/Gunston Cove area rather than go to the Chesapeake Bay.

Is that pretty much the process? I do not ask sarcastically, just trying to make sure I understand what is going on.

Shep Has the County considered a levy of the multiple construction and other Earth disruption projects that have been approved by the BOD and other regulatory agencies? For instance, TRANSURBAN, VDOT, contractors responsible for earth disturbance from the I-495 Express Lanes, and now with the I-66 expansion project, continued commercial property development, continued residential property development, and sites and companies where known failures of erosion controls at development sites. These projects that have contributed to the velocity of run-off, and other earth disturbance activities all of which have directly lead to the rapid increase in sediment deposits in Lake Accotink.

SHEP The county staff and consultants have failed to consider all ingress and egress routes to the lake. When the lake was drained for installation of the main sewer line , an access road from the corner behind Rathbone Ct to the intersection of Hatteras and Queensberry was created. there are access points at the foot of Ellet and Inverchapel, behind the church on Inverchapel, the service road from Roiling road into the park past the Washington Gas Storage areas. Many other ways in and out. Neighborhoods can share this load for the benefit of the park.

Shep Can this issue be brought to a vote for Fairfax County residents and approval of a specific bond for this project?

Shep The Army drained that lake and put heavy equipment into the lake basin, trucking it out through the communities. They did not use hydraulic dredging.

Sally Patterson This has been so thoughtfully considered. We are in an unenviable position. And I thank you for inviting us into this process.

P.W. Boyd I agree with the recommendation not to dredge. I prefer the site to revert to a more natural state.

Ashley V If dredging isn't possible, I think it's important to keep all the functions the park currently has that are not Lake-based: the trails for walking - and running, biking trails, and perhaps updates to the existing park carousel, mini-golf, and playground. With the lake activities no longer possible, it would be important to replace this with something equally attractive to the community - perhaps a series of boardwalks like Huntley Meadows.

Cathy F 1. What is BOS' documented commitment to sustainability if we proceed with wetland plans? Where can we find documented confirmation from the BOS that the county doesn't already have plans and will not plan to sell wetland credits for development elsewhere in the county, from Lake Accotink's new wetland?

2. When the original options were presented to the public in 2018, the dredge option included both the initial dredge & ongoing maintenance. If that was the original option presented to the public, how in the world did they miss the costs of maintenance dredges in the estimate?

3. Does the estimate for maintenance dredge activities take into account all of the benefits from upstream restoration? Shouldn't those projects already lessen the amount of sediment to be dredged over time?

Daniel Cord Has an estimate been done on how losing this local amenity will impact property values of homes in the surrounding area? $\sim \$400,000,000 / \sim 400,000$ households in the county / 25 years = $\sim \$40$ per household per year. It seems to me that the park is worth far more than \$40/year to all of us.

ELISSA MYERS Mr. Charles Smith are you connected to the Charles Smith northern virginia real estate corporation? What in your opinion pro and con will this have on real estate values in the area

ELISSA MYERS Let me be more direct and clearer -- what are the corporate interests that benefit from the decision not to dredge? Are there companies/financial interests that will be served by the decision not to dredge?

John Hurley The staff deserve credit for their honesty on the cost impact. They could have just appealed to politicians and kicked it down the road. I would invite anyone who calls the future park a "swamp" should visit Huntley Meadows or Neasco Regional Park near Woodridge to see how wetlands can help communities.

Mark Kieffer Is the county bound to project the total costs for the dredging in the out years? Could we not look to do the initial dredging and then take additional time to determine if there are other options for the future? There could be changes in the future that we may not know about today (e.g., increased availability of dewatering sites).

Emily Slough How can we expect any healthy anything (since it hasn't been a healthy fishery for decades) when tons of toxic sediment/runoff from roadways is accumulating in the Accotink basin?

Richard Hildebrand To follow up on the dam question, can the dam be modified to allow sediment to flow through to reduce the amount captured in the lake? If that sediment will go down stream and be captured in the flood plain then there is no issue.

Richard Hildebrand Why is the comment period only 6 weeks? Are you trying to limit feedback? Many citizens don't know what is happening.

Tony Stirk Pulling out dams has improved the ecology in numerous rivers. Would that be the case here?

Eric A. Nelson Crazy question - any consideration to actually expanding the lake - build a new dam further down-stream?

Rachel G Mr. Smith mentioned about wetlands improving the diversity of wildlife (as opposed to a lake), but wouldn't the wetlands eventually be filled in with the silt? Meaning wouldn't wetlands eventually give way to meadow and then forest? Or would these wetlands be maintained to stay as wetlands?

Shelley Kahn No answer has been made to my repeated question about the consideration of the community's loss of the use of the lake? That is why I keep asking whether those presenting tonight live in this community?

Shelley Kahn Would heavy metal accumulation as a result of the silt being allowed to accumulate create additional health risks to this largely diverse community?

Fairfax County has always been able to fund projects they want to fund. It looks like the county is desperately trying to find reasons not to fund this project to save Lake Accotink.

6 minutes ago

 Reply

Shelley Kahn I absolutely and respectfully agree with this assessment. This is a very disappointing technical analysis that unfortunately does not take into consideration the high value of the lake to this community. Much credibility has been lost by not really keeping the community informed and by suddenly deciding to build in exponential cost overruns that are not necessary to keep the lake currently viable.

NapkinMathematician How can this leadership so easily shed their responsibilities? You have dragged your feet in making a decision for YEARS, then the estimate was horribly mismanaged. These mistakes are likely to result in the loss of this lake to this community. Who should we hold accountable for this loss?

NS You say sediment washing downstream is not a huge problem. I recall from the meeting a few years ago that silt going downstream was a huge factor as one of the reasons to dredge. Had no one actually measured how much silt was going to the Chesapeake?

Amy Gould Was there any chance of reusing this dredge material? Like in beach reconstruction?

John McKenzie Why not dredge to a lower depth, 6 ft? Why is 8 ft. considered the magic depth.

4 minutes ago

↩ Reply

NapkinMathematician Because 8ft puts it at such an expense, that they think we'll give them a pass on doing their jobs.

Emily Please answer this question: can we realistically expect Lake Accotink to become like Huntley Meadows, given the tons of water and sediment coming into Lake Acc that must be filtered before going downstream. Please address this matter.

Sandy Collins should the dredging not occur, what are the concepts being evaluated in terms of stream channel restoration or wetlands. These features can still be enjoyed by the community and should be emphasized as benefits in the public outreach and would still benefit the downstream segments.

Sandy Collins As the wetlands are developing what invasive species management would be implemented to ensure that the habitats that evolve are of benefit to wildlife and to the downstream aquatic community of Accotink Creek, including the freshwater mussel community that occurs in the downstream segment.

My comments and questions, all via the chat box:

AMITY
RESPECT
COOPERATION

RESTRAINT
UNDERSTANDING
SYMPATHY

I've known Supervisor Walkinshaw and some of the County staff for years and these are good people in my estimation. They may have fumbled the ball, but I can't interpret what I am seeing as subterfuge or bad faith.

We citizens of Fairfax County must focus on eliminating the sediment at its source, which is excessive stormwater runoff from our roads, roofs, and parking areas.

The County's Story Map is a useful interpretation of where we are and how we got here –

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/b85512da45b8420085167291998d19af?mibextid=kdkkhi&fbclid=IwAR1QWsetPB5kAGZpFsrcOqF3n9SnrnFMxNRutiNZC4yKp9RBMpYJZH2dk8>

Road-rail trucks? https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Road%E2%80%93rail_vehicle

Friends of Accotink Creek Comment: Early estimates for the initial dredge were \$30+ million. That rose to over \$60 million when the Board of Supervisors voted approval. Now the initial dredge estimate is over \$90 million. The \$300 million adds to that the cost of future decades of repeated maintenance... [See More](#)

Philip Question: If smaller annual dredges were done and the sediment were simply pumped over the dam into the stream, would that be any worse for the downstream creek than not dredging and letting the sediment flow over the dam on its own?

5 minutes ago

Hide

Allan Robertson, Save Lake Accotink That is an excellent question. If pumping dredged spoils over the spillway is unacceptable, not dredging is unacceptable.

Friends of Accotink Creek Comment: Fairfax County should undertake an examination of all floodplain parcels with an eye toward acquisition, easements, or incentives to enhance our stormwater, climate, Resilient Fairfax, and Environmental Quality Corridor goals.

Comments of note made via phone:

Delegate Watts – What will be the effect on the Chesapeake Bay? On climate?

Charles Smith – We are mitigating runoff wherever we can. The Long Branch central project is an example.

Caller – What would be the Gunston Cove impact?

Charles Smith – Not dredging would have no significant impact on the estuary. The addition of sediment to the estuary has been going on for decades without dramatic impact. On a call today with USGS, we learned that 82% of sediment is typically captured in stream systems. The Army dredged Gunston Cove once, but not Accotink Bay.

Gail Nittle (Springfield Civic Association) – Why project out so long into the future? Sedimentation conditions might change for the better.

Cathy Field (North Springfield Civic Association) – When can we expect sediment reduction from upstream projects?

Charles Smith – We have no horizon where we get enough reduction to prevent filling the lake.

Caller (wildlife rescuer) – How can we protect the wildlife, like possums and raccoons?

Charles Smith – We are working with Park Authority Natural Resources Division.

Note on screen:

Comments can be submitted through the [comment page](#), via email to F515@PublicInput.com. We value your comments and input. Information submitted will be compiled and used by Fairfax County to improve the Lake Accotink Dredging project. You will not receive a response to your comments. If you wish to ask a question and receive a response, please contact the project manager, email Charles.Smith@fairfaxcounty.gov.