

Excerpt from the Walkinshaw Advisory of February 9, 2023:

The Walkinshaw Advisory

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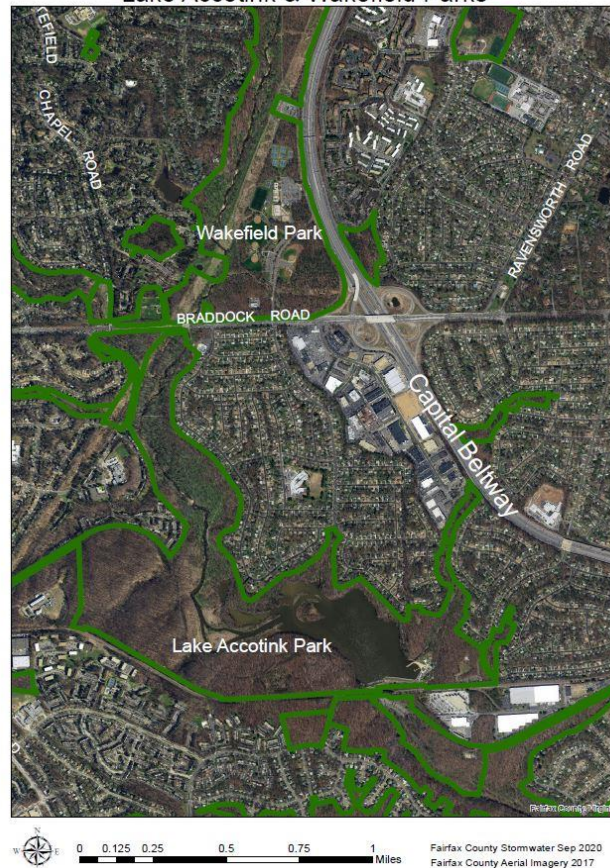
Dear Neighbor,

Lake Accotink Park is one of Fairfax County's most beloved resources. Its 482 acres of natural resources, trails, picnic areas, and waterfront activities draw hundreds of thousands of visitors each year. The 55-acre Lake Accotink, a manmade reservoir originally built by the U.S. Army in 1943, is a key feature of the park.

Because Lake Accotink is a manmade lake in the midst of a densely-developed 40-square-mile watershed, it has required regular dredging in order to remove sediment and prevent it from returning to its natural state. The most recent dredge took place in 2008.

Unfortunately, stronger storms and wetter weather have increased the amount of sediment entering the lake in recent decades. This is due to many factors, including the fact that our older neighborhoods were built without modern stormwater controls. In fact, in 2014 -- just six years after the previous dredge -- the Board of Supervisors funded a study to explore ways to address increased sedimentation. A robust community dialogue led by former Supervisor John Cook, along with the initiative of hundreds of community members, revealed strong community support for preserving the lake with additional dredging.

Lake Accotink & Wakefield Parks



In 2019, Fairfax County staff developed a dredging plan that was presented to the community and endorsed by the Board of Supervisors. That plan was to dredge 350,000 cubic yards of sediment, pump it to the Wakefield Park power line easement area to be dried, and remove the dried material by truck to a disposal site that was not yet determined, at a total cost of \$30 million. The intention was to also conduct periodic maintenance dredging to preserve the lake.

Unfortunately, additional analysis conducted since 2019 has determined that that plan is not feasible and that the costs and impacts of dredging are significantly higher than predicted at the time. Subsequent analysis has revealed that:

- 43% more sediment, totaling 500,000 cubic yards, would need to be removed in the initial dredge.
- The total cost for the initial dredge would be \$95 million, with estimated maintenance dredging costs of up to \$300 million over the following twenty years.
- The initial dredge would take three to five years to complete and subsequent maintenance dredging would take a full year every five years.
- The Wakefield power line easement area is not a suitable processing area. The remaining potential processing sites all entail significant community and environmental impacts such as tree clearing and dozens of truck trips per day through the nearby communities.
- A smaller lake separated from Accotink Creek would cost nearly \$200 million because more sediment would need to be removed and new fill dirt would need to be trucked in to construct the new dam. There is also a significant risk that the new dam would be eroded by the creek channel.

There are two key takeaways from this analysis. First, the annual cost to dredge and maintain Lake Accotink over the next twenty-five years would be roughly \$16 million per year. Second, the initial three to five year base dredge and subsequent year-long maintenance dredges conducted every five years mean that the park and surrounding community would endure significantly more disruption than originally anticipated. I know I and my colleagues are disappointed in this result as our first choice has always been to restore the lake to as close as possible to its original condition.

As a result of this analysis, Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services staff will present a new staff recommendation at the upcoming meetings. That recommendation is that the lake not be dredged due to excessive costs and significant community and environmental impacts. Instead, staff recommends restarting the Lake Accotink Park Master Planning process with an emphasis on engaging with the community to develop a sustainable vision for the lake and the park, which could include converting the open water of the lake to a managed wetland environment.

I know that this new recommendation will come as a shock after the years of work and community engagement that has gone into the plan to dredge the lake. But my priority is to ensure that we are fully transparent and share with you the unvarnished reality of the situation, disappointing as it may be.

Staff have prepared a [detailed storyboard](#) outlining the history that has led us to this point and the results of the analysis described above. I encourage you to review this information before participating in next week's meetings. Both meetings will include the same presentation, so you can attend the one that works better for you. After the meetings there will be an opportunity for you to submit comments and share your perspective on the information and recommendation presented.

Virtual Meeting: Wednesday, February 15 at 7:00 p.m. To access the public meeting, [visit the County's Public Works site](#) and click on the meeting link.

In Person Meeting: Thursday, February 16 at 7:00 p.m. at [Kings Glen Elementary School](#) (5401 Danbury Forest Drive, Springfield, VA).

I hope to see you at one of next week's meetings.

Yours in service,



Supervisor James Walkinshaw