

FRIENDS OF ACCOTINK CREEK NEWSLETTER 2025



Launch of Fairfax PRISM, FACC donated \$1,500 to get their Virginia Department of Forestry grant underway.

2025 has been another busy year for FACC, as we celebrate our [20th anniversary of caring for the environment.](#)

For more than 20 years, FACC has been removing trash from our waterways, monitoring pollutants, advocating for and constantly working to preserve imperiled areas such as the beautiful Accotink Gorge; which is home to many rare native plants but overrun by thick, invasive Wisteria vines.

FACC has also spent 20 years reporting serious stream pollutants, for example, the

shamefully neglected entrance to Lake Accotink Park where sediment continues to gush into the waterways, as well as salt streams caused by excessive winter salt usage.

FACC continues to educate our youth through involvement with Follow the Water Programs, and promoting weekly invasive management removals at multiple sites. Cleared sites are then planted with native trees and shrubs, protected from deer browse by metal cages; they will provide our future forests.

Some of these areas, currently flourishing, include plants rescued from areas such as those from the collaboration with the Chesapeake Climate Action Network, to remove invasive vines from trees at Loisdale Park and from other local areas where plants would be removed, which would contribute to stream pollution, erosion, and lack of plant diversity.

Of note, IMA leaders who have undergone training have been recently permitted to apply herbicide, previously restricted. These efforts are now seeing a notable increase in the effectiveness of their efforts. Meanwhile FACC's tree rescuers continue to work in local neighborhoods.



Trees and shrubs at the IMA site are caged to prevent deer browse.

FACC celebrates 20 years of Advocacy:

On Conservation Lobby Day, FACC's Avril Garland traveled to Richmond to advocate with legislators on bills of interest to FACC, visiting each legislator's office, **140 in all.**

Friends of Accotink Creek pursued opportunities for watershed advocacy, regularly addressing public bodies and programs in writing and in person, such as:

- *The Board of Supervisors*
- *Fairfax City Council*
- *Vienna Town Council*
- *Park Authority Board*
- *Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council and Department of Environmental Quality*

Topics addressed included Fort Belvoir PFAS contamination

- *Lake Accotink dredging*
- *Park Budget Cuts*
- *Plan Forward*
- *Braddock Road widening*
- *Gallows Road Study*
- *ActiveFairfax*
- *Transportation Priorities Plan*
- *AT&T Site development*
- *Illegal dumping*



Jeanette Stewart has worked to establish an outdoor teaching area at Daniel's Run Elementary School Here is the new replacement for the reading rowboat..

FACC is also involved with stream monitoring which involves monitoring the health of local waterways. Also very current this time of year is salt watches from areas being oversalted.

Pictured is Daniel's Run Elementary School where an old wooden rowboat used for outdoor reading was no longer usable. FACC replaced it with a longer-lasting fiberglass promoting many more years of outdoor education.

FACC supports educating future protectors of our waterways through volunteer mentoring, and MWEE programs.

Tabling events this year involve outreach to the public collaborating with programs such as:

- *HisTree Day*
- *Garnett Civic Space Earth Day*
- *Leadership Fairfax Board and Brew*
- *Earth Sangha Open House*
- *Mount Vernon District Town Meeting*
- *Providence District Bike to Workday*
- *Mount Vernon Summer Palooza*
- *Latino conservation awareness day at Lake Accotink Park*
- *Washington Metropolitan Chapter Community Associations Institute Expo*
- *Springfield Bridge Walk, Braddock District Climate Action Conference*
- *Climate Action NOW Monthly Monday Eco Flicks and*

- *Homegrown National Park lecture sponsored by Faith Alliance for Climate Solutions*

Cleanups and Repairs:

This is probably the worst part of our newsletter: recording how much trash FACC coordinates volunteers to pull out of our waterways:

Two hundred and twenty volunteers removed 193 bags of trash during the **Potomac Watershed Cleanup**. Volunteers included Providence Supervisor Dalia Palchik, groups from Highlight Technologies, and Marshall High School Key Club.



Elected officials join invasives control

With the [Americana Drive Cleanup](#), the Board of Supervisors are to order a study of the illegal dumping issue [February 4, 2025 Board of Supervisors Meeting](#). Our 59 volunteers removed 208 bags of trash, including a guesstimated 2.3 tons of miscellaneous debris, mostly construction items. Americana Drive has long been a dumping ground for construction workers who won't take the drive, or expense, of going to the legal landfill.

FACC works along 12 adopted stretches of Accotink Creek, and during the **International Coastal Cleanup** - 198 volunteers collected 230 bags of trash, 5 tires, and 4 shopping carts. Our collaborative volunteers included groups from Jack and Jill of America, Alliance of Youth Leaders in the United States, American President Line, Scales & Tails (a Washington-Liberty H.S. marine biology club), Girl Scout Troop 50103, Clark Construction, American Turkish Friendship Association, and Rotaract eClub District 7610.



Trash collected during the International Coastal Cleanup

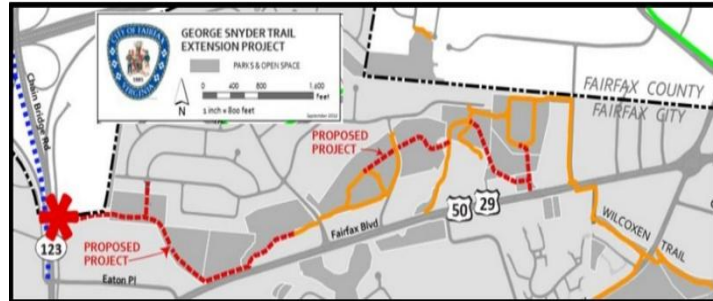
In more issues that FACC is monitoring:

- The [Accotink Gravity Sewer](#) is proposed to run the entire length of the Hunter's Branch tributary from Nottoway Park to the junction with Accotink Creek and the Cross County Trail. It would install an entirely new sewer line parallel to the multiple existing lines. The **damage** to the woods and wetlands along Hunters Branch will be extensive and will limit habitat. See photos of the amphibian egg masses in vernal pools in the path of the [Accotink Gravity Sewer](#).

Other issues that FACC is monitoring include the **Lake Accotink Dredging**.

Please visit our website for a full listing of projects [FACC](#) has been working on during 2025, such as:

[George Snyder Trail](#) - One resident's testimony before City Council says it all, making the plea for preserving the natural treasures of Fairfax City better than all our other statements combined



Proposed path of the George Snyder Trail



Repairing Signage along the trail

- Maintenance repairs on our signage at Americana Park.



- [Follow the Water](#) – FACC worked closely with the Friends of Long Branch



Stream Valley encouraging students to learn about their environment.

- [Fairfax Elections](#) and [Conservation Legislation](#) - We continued our yearly practice of informing the public and our elected officials about watershed issues and encouraging support for legislation and policies to support preservation. See the

Braddock District Supervisor candidates responses to our questionnaire on our [Elections](#) page.

- [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#) - what a complete street should accommodate.
- [Accotink Gorge](#) - volunteers are always needed to assist with the



removal of *Wisteria sinensis* (Chinese wisteria) vines, which are rapidly killing our canopy trees. Feel free to join us to remove invasives, refer to FACC's website for invasive management days. It's steep, but even if you're just pouring coffee, you're helping.

A heart-wrenching goodbye to our beloved [Kris Unger](#). Kris led students through trails adjoining their schools, commenting on the value of pollinator gardens on school grounds, encouraged students to dip barehanded into tubs of soil, introduced them to the outdoor world around them, he is sorely missed as a fellow educator, and a Friend. FACC made a \$1,000 donation to a cause that Kris, in the name of education, was dearly dedicated to.

Work is underway for a memorial, an expansion of the Kutner Park vernal pool, which Kris played a part in installing. The memorial will incorporate educational signage designed by the 7th graders at the adjacent Johnson Middle School, and make the memorial portion of the sign a simple discreet bronze plaque. We miss Kris as a local educator, and Friend.



Kris at Lake Accotink



Kris at an American Park cleanup, making himself comfortable among the abandoned dumped trash.



Fighting the invasive wisteria at Accotink Gorge. Observe the thickness of the invasive vines.



DONATE

*Our many projects to make the creek
healthier depend on your support!*