



Re: FCPA Budget and Invasive Management, a Force Multiplier (also delivered as testimony before the Board of Supervisors)

April 10, 2025

To: Chairman, Board of Supervisors

I'm writing in opposition to cutting Ecologist I from the proposed Parks Authority budget because the Invasive Management Area (IMA) function of FCPA is a force multiplier that is insufficiently funded for its vital function of forest preservation in Fairfax County. Tremendous returns on investment await adequate funding for the IMA to grow a volunteer force that must take on the vital work and support it with expert county management.

I am a Franconia District constituent, a long-time TreeRescuer in Fairfax Parks, coordinator of TreeSavers working in an HOA's common property (Davenport Community), and a Friend of Accotink Creek. My faith and background in forest management growing up dairy farming on 300 acres with productive hardwood informs my concern: I believe we have a sacred as well as humanitarian obligation to sustain and restore the natural world where we can, acting locally while thinking globally.

FCPA's mission to its human constituents is dependent on protecting Fairfax County's forest: Our natural habitat will become useless for recreational use within a few years if we citizens do not make a concerted effort to stop the die-off in our county. Upon native trees rests the whole of Fairfax County Parks exceptional services, all of which are short-funded.

Awareness is spreading: County staff has commendably spread awareness of the problem and searching for solutions, as in the beautiful Accotink Stream Park and the Accotink Gorge, whose unique native flora is being killed off by pernicious invasives. We watch in despair as discarded ornamental invasive trees, vines and ground cover kill off our natives, which have not evolved defenses against their aggressive crowding and strangulation. By neglecting native trees, we allow the whole web of life to die off in our neighborhoods.

Volunteer labor is critical: Many ask, "Why don't 'they' do something about those vines?" while the answer is "They is us." But we volunteers need help. I hope you agree that overcoming the invasive problem by county-funded labor is not affordable: Rather, it will take a force of volunteers, several dozens of whom are waiting for qualification under the IMA program to become Site Leads and organize teams of informed constituents to get the job done, managed by FCPA experts. Funding the IMA Program with forestry and ecological experts is investment in a tremendous force multiplier, because the IMA office must recruit and train volunteer leaders. IMA also trains TreeRescuers like myself, working individually in Parks property; We need encouragement and publicity to recruit more neighbors to be an effective force for good.

Shorting the IMA function has opportunity costs that would be impossible to justify as the problem becomes more visible to our human neighbors. Besides restoring the health of our forest habitats, the IMA Program and volunteers can reduce the liability from injuries and property as mature FCPA trees succumb to vine infestations just as one did just that recently in our neighborhood, crushing a car parked for the slug line.

Please prioritize FCPA's Invasive Management Area and TreeRescuer programs as you fight for good management of our beautiful FCPA property.

Sincerely,

Friends of Accotink Creek

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