



## Email Exchange re: Lake Accotink Presentation December 10, 2025

### Raising New Concerns About Downstream Mussel Beds

To: Project Manages and Braddock, Franconia, Mason, and Springfield supervisors

February 5, 2026

Thank you for this update and clarification. However, it is alarming to hear that allowing sediment to bypass the dam is being considered as an expedient without calculating the detriment to downstream aquatic life.

If we proceed without providing for the survival of the last population of [freshwater mussels](#) in Accotink Creek, we will have failed in our role as trustees of the natural heritage patrimony of future generations. Such an oversight would also be a recipe for needing to start the dredge planning all over again - yet again.

The Friends of Accotink Creek have made the plight of the mussel population well known from the earliest days of the dredge evaluations. There is no excuse for not including the survival of that population in dredging plans.

Occasional sediment bypasses during high water conditions put stress on the mussel population, but thankfully, have not yet been enough to extirpate it. The only stretch of Accotink Creek where freshwater mussels are still found is downstream of the dam, precisely because Lake Accotink captures enough sediment to allow them to survive. Everywhere else on Accotink Creek, they are gone, smothered by the shifting streambed sediments generated by human activity.

No other habitat is suitable. We must either protect the existing habitat from the stress of increased sediment deposits or work with specialists to provide another suitable habitat. The planned Flag Run stream restoration could be designed to provide one such refugium.

Meaningful sediment reduction from the activities of the [Long Branch project](#), and all other stream-reengineering projects upstream, is frankly, a dream. The timescale for any beneficial effects is multiple decades and even then, no one will measure any actual benefit or detriment to the health of downstream aquatic life. If the mussel population is extirpated, no one will be responsible for anything other than shrugs of regret.

We also urge consideration of a couple other items not directly related to your present studies:

- The dam prevents the natural movement of aquatic species in the creek. Nature did not put a dam on Accotink Creek. Provisions for fish and eel passage should be integrated into plans for the future of the dam.
- Drains in the 1980's dredge spoils disposal area in the park have been failing for a decade without action in response to our alarms. This decline is returning that old dredge sediment right back into Lake Accotink and increases the likelihood of catastrophic failure of the embankment the next time we experience the remnants of a tropical storm.

**"Dominion over nature is a gift which has been given us yoked to the trust for its preservation." - Accotink motto**

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**Sent:** 1/27/26 5:29 PM

**Subject:** RE: Lake Accotink Presentation December 10, 2025

Please see our responses to your questions in blue. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions or comments. Thank you.

- A Sediment Bypass Pipe is a solution whose consideration the Friends of Accotink Creek have urged previously.

Although sediment bypass was initially identified as a potential solution to manage sediment deposition in the lake, the layouts developed for the smaller lakes, such as the 30-acre and 20-acre lakes, are expected to mitigate sediment concerns in these smaller lakes through the use of surrounding islands. As a result, sediment bypass may only be considered for the 40-acre lake, where no protective islands are planned to be incorporated.

Additionally, it is important to highlight that under existing conditions, natural bypasses have occurred over the concrete spillway during intense storm events. This was confirmed by a photo taken in July 2019, as shown below. Therefore, for the smaller lakes, this natural overflow over the concrete spillway will be preserved, eliminating the need for the design and construction of a separate bypass system, thereby significantly reducing costs.

Moreover, sediment concentration in any bypass system is expected to be further reduced due to sediment management measures planned for implementation immediately upstream of Lake Accotink, along with ongoing stream restoration efforts within the Accotink Creek watershed which also encompasses Long Branch.

- Annual, or even continuous dredging, carried out with small scale dredging equipment could provide an alternative to permanent sediment capture structures.

These will be evaluated in the feasibility study. However, availability of sediment disposal areas remain to be the biggest current challenge, both within the park and elsewhere.

- Pipelines or other bypass infrastructure should be melded into natural surroundings, leaving no unsightly scar on the natural landscape.

Agreed.

- Piping the sediment as far as the second downstream bridge on the Cross County Trail would spare the freshwater mussel beds, found nowhere else on Accotink Creek.

This will be taken into consideration during feasibility evaluations for the 40-acre lake.

