



## Bulletin of the Proceedings of the Friends of Accotink Creek

Our meeting notes serve as bulletins of our activities, interests, and discussions, supplemented by your submissions.

### Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – November 19, 2024

Next Meeting: December 17 (Third Tuesday of each month via

on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice in the [Friends of Accotink calendar](#).)

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**Present:** Gary Bangs, Philip Latasa, Dave Lincoln, Beverley Rivera, Sandy Collins, Brian Slawski, and Kim Schauer all via on-line meeting.



#### • Represent FACC:

- *Friends of Friends Meeting:* Dave attended the November 6, 2024 meeting of FCPA FOF group. Most of the “Friends” groups were represented. Much of the meeting involved FCPA personnel describing their programs. Of interest for FACC, John Burke indicated the IMA office is now fully staffed so more IMA site leaders can be trained. No timeline was given on this.
- *Fairfax Invasives Organization Interest Meeting:* Gary spoke about a November 15, 2024, virtual meeting held by Plant NOVA Natives exploring the possibility of a new nonprofit focused on invasive plants in Fairfax County. Dave and Philip also took part. A document was made sharing ideas from various persons about what may be needed. It’s apparent there is great diversity of opinion on how to proceed. More meetings are expected and an inventory of current efforts and organizations is to be compiled.
- *Tree Rescuers Photo-op with Legislators:* Philip talked about another recent request from Plant NOVA Natives was to have photo-ops with Virginia legislators engaged in invasives removal.

Tree Rescuers with Senator Marsden-Previously Gary and Dave met with Senator Marsden in Accotink Stream Valley Park near Byron Avenue Park in Springfield where he cut some asian bittersweet vines.

Philip met Delegate Kathy Tran at the Accotink Gorge and took some photos of her cutting nonnative wisteria vines. Once she got started, she couldn't stop.

The photos may be found on Plant NOVA and FACC's Facebook pages and hopefully will encourage their constituents to better control invasive species.

- [Dark Skies Day](#): On November 17, 2024, Philip did an FACC table for a [Dark Sky education outreach](#) at the Vienna Community Center, along with Avril. The two Town of Vienna parks in the Accotink watershed have bright lights on all night. The City of Fairfax has already adopted Dark Sky lighting and is transitioning its facilities now. He said that Avril has purchased some lightbulbs to give away and will probably seek reimbursement.
- [Cinder Bed Road Bikeway](#): Philip indicated that one of the group of the interested discussed the Bikeway with the Franconia District office. It seems that the boundary dispute with the railroad is dragging on so long that planning for the Bikeway is at a halt. Sadly the railroad extension will have an additional negative impact on this sensitive area highlighting even more why optional developments like bike trails should avoid these areas.
- [ActiveFairfax Meetings](#): This project identifies potential trails and sidewalks to improve safety in Fairfax County. Philip asked if any one was able to attend a November meeting? Public input is being accepted until December 20 via the online community [survey](#); or the [Interactive Network Map](#). We should all contribute to direct plans away from forests and floodplains, especially the Cinder Bed Road Bikeway and the line on the map through the Accotink Gorge. Philip will draft up comments to send in.
- [Accotink Gravity Sewer](#): Philip said that he had nothing new to report on the gravity sewer which seems destined to be built as designed.
- [Lake Accotink Dredging](#): Philip indicated that lowering the water level of Lake Accotink for dam inspection has been delayed by debris accumulated in the sluice gates. After the water is lowered a couple more feet, it may be a few more months before the inspection is complete.

Also, the FLAP meeting on November 18 featured a talk about the dredging projects from Stormwater Planning Director Joni Calmbacher and Public Works Director Chris Herrington. It was mostly a disappointing repetition of starting all over again with years of studies of the same facts and issues we have been considering since 2016. We did learn that USGS has put in a new monitoring station on [Accotink Creek at Old Keene Mill Road](#) which would be close to where we have been conducting [Salt Watch](#) readings. These stations [record conductivity](#) as an indication of salt content. This will hopefully provide a comparison of the condition of the Creek upstream and downstream from the lake.

- [Accotink Gorge](#): Philip said that our November 4 workday fell short as far as volunteers. We only had one person besides Avril and himself, as well as Park Authority staff providing herbicide treatment for cut vines. They worked in the same area we have been working for years. While all the large vines there are gone, the condition of the area was discouraging, with many small vines resprouting and a dense network of wisteria runners hidden under the leaf litter.

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**Like a malevolent Metro map, the devious wisteria vines crisscross the ground.**

The more positive aspect of the workday was that we were joined by Suliman Kayman, whom we met at the October 22 Leadership Fairfax event. He was filled with ideas and proposals for how to make the Accotink Gorge project take off. However, we have not heard from him yet.

Staff at the Franconia and Mount Vernon District offices are supposedly in touch about steps to bring the stakeholders together, and coordinating the Costco zoning proposal. Philip also asked Delegate Tran for her assistance.

- **[Fairfax Elections](#)**: Philip said that the Mayor and City Council elections in Fairfax City were the main interest for Accotink Creek this year. The future of forests in the City was an issue, sparked by the George Snyder Trail project. It was our hope that a slate of candidates running as independents without party endorsement would oppose further sacrifice of wooded areas.

That independent slate was [partly successful](#), taking four of the six seats on the City Council, but losing the Mayor position to the incumbent, an advocate of the George Snyder Trail.

With only one incumbent remaining on the City Council, and he having previously proposed a compromise trail route, we may dare to hope the bulldozers will not have their way this time.

## I ❤️ Accotink Creek and I vote!

- [Fairfax County's MS4 Permit](#): Philip stated that the Department of Environmental Quality reissued Fairfax County's MS4 Permit in January. The new permit requires the county to update its Chesapeake Bay TMDL Action Plan and submit it to DEQ within 1 year. DEQ asked FACC to comment and the comment period runs until December 4<sup>th</sup>. Sandy said she would see what she could do. [Chesapeake Bay TMDL Action Plan - Public Comment - PublicInput](#)

- [Americana Drive Cleanup](#): Philip said that we had our cleanup on Americana Drive November 11<sup>th</sup>, Veterans Day. We had 47 volunteers who collected 204 bags of trash, 30 windows, 23 tires, 4 auto bumpers, 2 toilets, 1 mattress set, 1 bathroom sink, 1 shopping cart, 1 trash compactor, 5 gallons of cooking oil, 25 quarts of motor oil, and an estimated 3/4 ton of miscellaneous construction debris.

We've been doing these cleanups for years. We do a reasonably good job of collecting the trash and leaving the area looking better each time, but we still don't have any progress to show in reducing the level of dumping in the first place.



The unfortunate level of disrespect Americana Drive receives

- *October Plantings:*
  - *Lake Accotink Park Pollinator Garden*  
Beverley said that plantings are underway at the new Lake Accotink Park pollinator garden located near Flag Run behind the playground. We are using a combination of plants provided by the Park Authority, some that are home grown, and seeding. The plantings are being done on the usual Thursday workdays.
  - *Kutner Park Rescues*

Philip said that plants being rescued from the Stafford Drive stream restoration project have been stored in pots over the summer. On several dates in October and early November, they installed most of these in their new home in a part of Kutner Park that has been cleared of English ivy over the past couple years. We had one workday with GMU students, one with Johnson Middle School students, and two for the general public. Also helping were two candidates for Fairfax City council who have adopted this spot and who have now also been elected.



GMU students and City Council candidates plant rescues in Kutner Park – [More photos](#)

- *Newsletter:* Beverley said that she is working on the 2024 newsletter, but she needs everyone's help in providing photos that will support stories in the newsletter.

- *Donations:* Philip reported the following donations.

- \$40 from Michele Sullivan, a teacher and Eco Team leader at Mantua Elementary School, who is interested in collaboration.

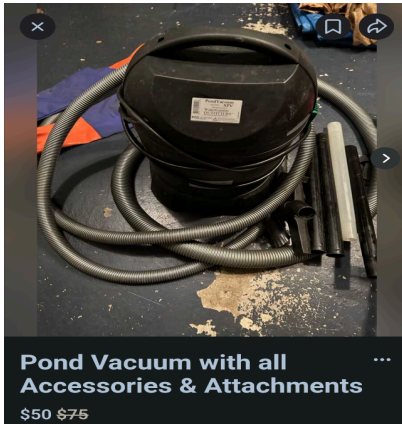
- \$50 from Helen Cook

- \$50 from Philip's niece

- \$500 as a grant from Philip's daughter's employer

- \$1500 from Riggs Cove Foundation.

There was one more donation, an unusual in-kind donation of a used pond vacuum pump. Kim spotted the pump for sale on NextDoor for \$50, but persuaded the owner to donate it. Its purpose would be to aid in the rescues Avril conducted this year, carrying buckets of stream water to a drying vernal pool at her invasives site.



- Whither FACC:

- FACC Elections: Philip said that in December, we will have our elections for Primary Conservator, Secondary Conservator, and Chronicler. Sandy is completing her third term as Primary Conservator, so is not eligible for reelection. Avril and Gary may each serve one more term. Definitely need a volunteer to be Primary conservator.



- Leadership Fairfax: Kim said that she attended an event hosted by Leadership Fairfax to bring together nonprofits with potential board candidates. Our table did not get a lot of interest – only two people stopped to talk, but one did take enough interest to follow up with a visit to our Accotink Gorge workday. It may be worthwhile trying again at the next such event.
- GMU Non-profits Study: Philip said that a student at George Mason University, who participated in some of our recent stream cleanups, contacted us with a series of questions for an assignment for a nonprofit course.