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

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Friends of Accotink Creek Town Meeting – February 18, 2025
Next Meeting: March 18 (Third Tuesday of each month via on-line meeting: Login info will be posted with the meeting notice in the Friends of Accotink calendar.)

Present: Gary Bangs, Philip Latasa, Dave Lincoln, Beverley Rivera, Sandy Collins, Peter Clark, Susan Kuiler, Sue Kovach, Jay Kapoor, and Kim Schauer all via on-line meeting.

AGENDA

• *Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited Liaison*: Philip said that he was contacted by Lane Thurgood from Trout Unlimited. Lane said he would be our contact with them and he lives in the Ravensworth neighborhood. Northern Virginia Trout Unlimited

• *Represent FACC:*
- *Mount Vernon District Town Meeting*: Dave said that the meeting turned out to be a good crowd with lots of good conversations. With a 5' table, there was not enough room to display everything, but he did like the flexibility of the new trifold with hook & pile attachment. The new literature rack also worked well.

  Delegate Krizek talked with him about legislation he's been supporting, which provided an opportunity to talk with him about FCPA's limitations qualifying IMA Leaders, impeding more volunteers from using herbicide, etc.

  Likewise an FCPA Board member stopped and discussed obstacles such as environmentalists wanting to control invasives but are very opposed to herbicides.

  Supervisor Storck chatted, still very interested in access to the Gorge, and Dave got to tell him about associations working invasives, and Plant NOVA Natives' work to coordinate things.

Ronell Chatmon from Congressman Connolly's office and Peyton Smith from Supervisor Storck's office also stopped to chat.

Peyton Smith said the Costco zoning with offset to fund Gorge work is on hold for awhile. Costco is considering adding a Starbucks or something like that. He assured it hasn't died, though, just delayed.

- *Restoring Mussels to the Potomac*: On February 23, 2025 Potomac Riverkeepers will present information on their mussel project at Mt. Vernon Government Center. Given our connection to freshwater mussels, it is potentially valuable to be at this event and perhaps make connections.

- *Suzy Foster Retirement*: Philip stated that Suzy Foster will be retiring on March 7tk from Fairfax County. Her colleagues are organizing two events on March 6th in her honor:
  - A gathering from 1:30 to 3 pm at the Government Center.
  - An evening gathering from 4 to 7 pm at a nearby venue to be determined.

  Donations toward a gift card for Suzy are being accepted via Venmo.

  We may hope Suzy's retirement will enable her to once again become as active with FACC, as she was before.

- *WMCCAI Expo*: On March 7 & 8 Dave will attend the expo at the Washington Convention Center. This expo provided motivation for acquiring our new display materials. He hopes to gain some interest in watershed and environmental stewardship among homeowners associations.

- *Symposium on Innovative Park Stewardship*: Philip provided that on March 25 a webinar put together by Northern Virginia Bird Alliance, with a focus on building public/private partnerships will be provided virtually. Tuesday, March 25, 11:00 AM - 1:30 PM

  It may be worthwhile for several of us to attend and see what benefit may be had. The registration link is in the meeting reminder.

- *Leadership Fairfax Board and Brew*: Philip and Avril talked about the last Leadership Fairfax Board and Brew where we received limited interest, but hope we can try again. The event is intended to pair people looking to serve on nonprofit boards with nonprofits needing leadership skills and wherewithal. Maybe our new display items will make a difference. Dave thought he could attend and will check into it.
  Wednesday, 04/23/2025 05:30 PM - 07:30 PM
  Mason Government Center
  6507 Columbia Pike
  Annandale, VA 22003

- *HisTree Day* : Philip said that HisTree day will be April 26. It is a combined celebration of environment and history in the City of Fairfax. We've attended for the past couple years and he plans to be there again this year and would like help if possible. We may expect competing invitations around Earth Day. Saturday, April 26th, from 10am to 4pm at Historic Blenheim (3610 Blenheim Blvd)

- *Monthly Monday Eco Flicks*: Philip said that he came across this ongoing series of environmental films with panel discussions that are happening in our watershed. It seems like it may be worthwhile to be visible and make connections. The location is the Cinema Arts Theatre in Fairfax City.

• *Farewell Kris Unger*: Kim said that she was able to speak with one of the leaders of DC Inspiring Connections Outdoors , the program for disadvantaged children that Kris was active with and she has arranged for any donation we make to be recognized as being in memory of Kris.

Philip said that we discussed $1000.00 as a memorial donation from FACC. We do have one additional donation of $100.00 and he will contact a couple other people who expressed interest. The Board agreed to move forward as planned.

• *Website Changes*: Philip said that Jay Kapoor, the student who offered to do some webpage upgrades for us, has made a start at putting together a new picture gallery format. It's not quite ready to share, but looks promising. We hope other projects may follow. Jay introduced himself and said he was open to suggestions going forward.

• *Accotink Gorge*: Dave said that he and Philip met with Ronell Chatmon, Community Engagement Representative for Congressman Connolly. They had a discussion of the Gorge, went over our Gorge PowerPoint, and walked into the Gorge to see both areas badly affected by wisteria and not so badly. They emphasized that his office could best help by providing connections to other potential supporters of the project, particularly For Belvoir.

As discussed previously while at the Mt. Vernon Town meeting Dave stated that he and Supervisor Storck chatted. He is still very interested in access to the Gorge. Additionally, Ronell from Congressman Connolly's office and Peyton Smith from Supervisor Storck's office stopped to chat about the Gorge. Peyton Smith stated that the Costco zoning with offset to fund Gorge work is on hold for awhile. Seems Costco is considering adding a Starbucks or something like that. He assured it hasn't died, though, just delayed.

Discussing the Accotink Gorge with Supervisor Storck

• *Americana Drive Cleanup:* Philip said that they had the President's Day cleanup on Americana Drive. The 43 volunteers removed 125 bags, 7 tires, 2 heavy machine tires, 50 gallons of motor oil in various size containers, 5 gallons of cooking oil, 2 mattresses, 1 sofa, 1 toilet, and a guesstimated total of 1.5 tons of miscellaneous debris.

Our next cleanup will be June 6th, for Clean the Bay Day.

On February 4th, Supervisors Walkinshaw and McKay presented a joint resolution to the Board of Supervisors asking the County Executive to review the EQAC memorandum on illegal dumping and report back to the Board by the end of fiscal year 2025. Supervisor Walkinshaw also asked that the report propose any new strategies that could help mitigate illegal dumping. Here is a link to the resolution introduction at the Board meeting .

Thank you to everyone who contacted the Board of Supervisors in support of the resolution. Thanks especially to Brian for writing to the Supervisors and also Virginia Legislators on behalf of FACC. In response, Delegate Bulova wrote back to say that he and Delegate Watts will work together on the problem.

• *Potomac Watershed Cleanup*: Philip said that it is time to schedule our spring stream cleanups. He will be sending out a schedule for everyone's review.

• *Stream Stories*: Gary stated that as a followup to last year's State of Streams project, Nature Forward wants to tell the "stream stories" of the people who live around the five featured streams. It seems the plan is for us to conduct video interviews during events, such as stream monitoring or litter clean-ups. We would receive a $500 stipend. Kim, Dave, Katy & Gary have signed up for the online training March 27 at 1:30pm.

• *Lake Accotink Dredging*: Philip stated that Supervisor Walkinshaw's newsletter provided a discouraging description of the state of progress. Basically, we are still at the point of studying what should be studied and the dam assessment is stuck due to weather setbacks (as it has been for months). Any tangible action or solutions seem beyond anyone's grasp. We are going into the 9th year of this saga, with no end yet in sight.

• *Accotink Gravity Sewer*: Philip said that Fairfax County issued an Invitation to Apply for Pre-Qualification for this project, but no work is likely to begin before next winter, as far as we can tell. There doesn't seem to be anything we can do about this.

• *MS4 Action Plans*: Dave brought up that the four MS4 Action Plans for the Accotink chloride TMDL all have promises, with some schedule commitments. But it seems people are having a difficult time reducing salt use in the interest of safety. It is unclear what FACC can do at this time.

• *George Snyder Trail*: Katy said it appears that the new Fairfax City Council majority seems to see the question of asphalt vs. forest in a new light that favors preservation over paving.

The George Snyder Trail is a discussion item on the March 11, 2025, Council agenda. Now is the time to email the Councilmembers to let them know we support them in their defense of our woods and watersheds. More Details and Emails

City residents should also consider speaking about the George Snyder Trail and Pickett Road Connector Trail during the public comment period at the February 25th and March 11th Council meetings to show support.

Councilmembers have also organized a public walk along the George Snyder Trail walk February 28th.

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

• *Cinder Bed Road Bikeway*: Philip said that the Board of Supervisors will vote on March 4th regarding land acquisition by eminent domain of three parcels along the Bikeway route. The public materials available so far do not make clear exactly which parcels these are, except that they are commercial properties at the southern end of the route, not the more sensitive northern part.

Everyone who can is urged to speak at the March 4th hearing. There will also be an open public comment period until March 18th, and I will ask the board to approve written comments to submit on behalf of FACC.

• *Follow the Water*: Dave said after hearing about the Watch the Green Grow program at the Mount Vernon Town Meeting, he wondered if she could refer us to some educators that work grant-funded education like Kris used to do.

Kim said that It was Kris's and Jeanette's investment of time that developed Follow the Water. The challenge has been finding someone as dedicated as Kris to build the relationships, write the grants, deliver the programming, and manage funds.

There are already several existing programs that are similar to Follow the Water

-Watch the Green Grow

- the FCPA 4th/5th grade "At-School" MWEE that focuses on invasive species, erosion, and stewardship,

- the specific-to-schools-in-the-Lake- Accotink-watershed At-School MWEE that focuses on sediment pollution and stewardship.

- the long-standing 7th grade MWEE field experience program offered in stream valleys and lakefront parks every spring and fall

FCPA has certified interpreters and they always welcome funding for more stewardship programming at schools.

Philip said Get2Green is another program we might mention that is similar to Follow the Water. Although without any specific focus on watersheds, it is the school system's program of environmental activities in general at each school

Our own Follow the Water is still active, although not as active as we might hope. Bryan Campbell has been the main force keeping it going. It would be worthwhile if we could do more Follow the Water programs in schools, especially in connection with the Long Branch Central Consolidated Project whose long-promised public outreach campaign has yet to materialize.
Earlier Email Discussion

• *Fairfax City Forest Rescues*: Philip said that Fairfax City has begun its invasive management program. The first workday was in Van Dyck Park. Workdays are also scheduled in Kutner Park, where we have been relocating rescued native plants.

• *Fort Belvoir PFAS Discharge*: Philip indicated that Wild Virginia is hosting an online comment writing party to oppose permits for releases of stormwater contaminated with PFAS by Fort Belvoir into Accotink Creek. Fort Belvoir has found serious contamination by PFAS in and around its facilities. DEQ has failed to address the PFAS sources in its draft permit. March 6 @ 7pm: Comment party

• *Donations*: Philip said that we received donations of:

- $46.41 from Elizabeth Train - Resident in the watershed, Fairfax Master Naturalist, VA Cooperative Extension Master Gardener, Fairfax Tree Steward. Concerned about invasive plants harming our tree canopy
- $100.00 from George Kralovec through the ever mysterious PayPal Giving Fund. George is a mainstay of our Follow the Water program at Canterbury Woods Elementary School.
- $102.53 from Renee Grebe in memory of Kris Unger. Renee said "his life, and sadly also his passing, had such profound impacts on so many people. Thank you to Friends of Accotink Creek for lifting up the great work that he has done and continuing on too."

• *FACC Guest*: Philip said that *Anthony Amos* was supposed to be our guest tonight, but City business interfered, just as it did last month. Anthony was elected last November to the Fairfax City Council. Katy shared that he was no longer employed with Fairfax County Supervisor Herrity.

Several have expressed interest in meeting with Anthony. Below is a list of possible topics:

- George Snyder Trail, the February 28th Council walk, and the March 11th Council consideration
- Cinder Bed Road Bikeway and the March 4th hearing
- Accotink Gorge
- Accotink Gravity Sewer
- Americana Drive outreach Board resolution, immigration
- How to balance the Fairfax City "small town" feel with desire for density and mixed uses?
- How can riparian buffers be expanded with redevelopment, rather than reduced?
- Homelessness
- How will Supervisor Herrity's candidacy for lieutenant governor shake things up locally?

New FACC table runner displays our logo in a way that can't be missed