



Friends of Little Hunting Creek

Contents

| | |
|---|-----|
| Volunteer Efforts and Awards..... | 1,2 |
| Townhomes in Dogue Creek floodplain?..... | 1 |
| Progress on litter prevention..... | 3 |
| Local frogs and toads..... | 4 |
| Sanitary sewer line replacement..... | 5 |
| Join FOLHC! Membership application..... | 6 |

VOLUNTEER EFFORTS AND AWARDS

2018 Cleanup. Thanks to all 116 volunteers, who picked up 254 bags of trash and litter, 14 tires, 12 shopping carts, and 2,400 lbs of bulk trash from Little Hunting Creek this year. Thanks especially to site leaders Jasen Farmer, Susan Farinelli, Mort Isler, Dave and Ginny Rodriguez, and Barry Spangler (Riverside Estates), Bryan Birch (Gum Springs), Greg Crider (Col. John Byers Park), Scott Surovell and Philip Scranage (Janna Lee Ave., Mount Vernon Plaza), Will and Mimi Friedman (First River Farms), Celia Boertlein and Paul Siegel (Stratford Landing), and to the County workers who hauled it all away.

Next creek cleanup: APRIL 13, 2019. Save the date!

(AWARDS, continued on page 2.)

DOGUE CREEK NEEDS FRIENDS! Say “no” to townhomes in Dogue Creek floodplain—*Betsy Martin and Paul Siegel*

Just north of the Richmond Highway crossing over Dogue Creek and just west of the Sacramento shopping center, 8800 Richmond Highway has long been an eyesore and detriment to the community. But behind the overgrowth lies Pole Road Park, surrounded by, and inaccessible through, privately held property. The parcel along the highway is zoned “commercial”, and to its north lie two parcels zoned “residential, 2 dwelling units per acre”. All three parcels are almost entirely in the Chesapeake Bay Resource Protection Area

and the 100-year floodplain. They are recognized as part of the Dogue Creek Environmental Quality Corridor and protected by Fairfax County's Comprehensive Plan and several ordinances.



8800 Richmond Highway (*Covering the Corridor*)

At a July 19th public hearing, the Planning Commission heard a proposal to amend the Comprehensive Plan to allow 43 townhomes to be built on the property. County policy holds that such encroachment should only be allowed in “extraordinary” circumstances, and only where environmental benefits clearly outweigh harms. This development does not meet those standards, and approving the amendment would open the door to development in currently protected riparian areas and floodplains on Dogue Creek, Little Hunting Creek, and all over the county. County staff strongly recommend against the amendment: www.fairfaxcounty.gov/planning-zoning/sites/planning-zoning/files/assets/documents/compplanamend/8800richmondhighway/staffreport8800richmondhighway.pdf.)

If the Plan Amendment is approved, you might as well rip up the Comprehensive Plan's environmental policies and county ordinances intended to protect streams and riparian areas.

Betsy Martin and Paul Siegel testified against it (see www.folhc.org/images2018a/pctestimony-final.pdf), as did the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust and members of Friends of Accotink Creek.

Neighbors who understandably want to see the property improved, proponents who stand to profit from the development, and the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations testified in favor. The Commission seemed ambivalent, and postponed a decision until September 13th.

The best use of the property at 8800 Richmond Highway is as public access to Pole Road Park, Dogue Creek and its wetlands north and south of the highway, areas that are virtually inaccessible now. Pole Road Park should be a water trail and site for birding, fishing, and photography, and 8800 would be the perfect point of access. Yet options for preserving this land as open space, as the Comprehensive Plan calls for, were never explored. They should be.



Pole Road Park (*Betsy Martin*)

Just imagine—the commercially zoned parcel at 8800 Richmond Highway could be developed as a canoe livery/parking area/bait and tackle shop/concession stand or restaurant. People could launch there to canoe or kayak north to explore Pole Road Park. Once the new high Richmond Highway bridge over Dogue Creek is installed, people could voyage south to the Grist Mill (perhaps beyond), and return to the restaurant at 8800 for a beer or a meal while looking out over the woods and wetlands behind the property. It could be an “Old Angler’s Inn” in our own backyards—except, it would be enhanced by access to historical sites, such as the Grist Mill.

Proponents argue that this townhome development will help revitalize the Richmond Highway Corridor. However, it is inconsistent with the Embark Richmond Highway plan, a guiding principle of which is, “Preserve, enhance, and restore the environment by

minimizing the impact of development on the natural environment, including water quality and the ecological conditions of streams.” The Corridor is already underserved in terms of parks. The Embark plan says that 38 additional acres of parkland will be needed to serve the anticipated 40,000 new residents in the Corridor. It would be far better to “develop” this uniquely situated property so as to preserve and improve recreational access to the exceptional natural and historical features of Dogue Creek, which is currently degraded and ignored. That sort of development would better serve local residents, attract tourists, and do more for the local economy than building yet another townhome development. How will \$800,000 townhomes help local residents?

Before September 13, please let Planning Commissioners and Supervisor Storck know that you oppose Plan Amendment 2018-IV-MV2 to allow residential development at 8800 Richmond Highway.

Send comments to plancom@fairfaxcounty.gov and cc dan.storck@fairfaxcounty.gov. If you're a Mount Vernon District resident, say so.

AWARDS. At our annual meeting, the following awards were given:

The coveted **TRASHMASTER OF LITTLE HUNTING CREEK** went to Greg Crider and the volunteers working in Colonel John Byers Park, including Girl Scout Troop 900 and residents from Williamsburg Manor and Williamsburg Manor North.



Girl power! (*Greg Crider*)

The Little Hunting Creek Beautification and Environmental Improvement Award, to Rentz

Hilyer of the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, Kim Larkin, Robert O'Hanlon, Celia Boertlein, and 25 volunteers who worked diligently to remove invasive vines and deadfall and create a mulch pathway through the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust property in Stratford Landing.



Young volunteer (*Phil Bogdan*)

Finally, the Friends of Little Hunting Creek recognized **Robert O'Hanlon, Woodchuck and Heavy Lifter Extraordinaire**, for his extraordinary contributions to many years of cleanup efforts, including hauling out dozens of shopping carts and other weighty objects, grinding mulch to create paths, and generally doing whatever is needed to get the job done.



Robert O'Hanlon, hauling out Walmart carts in 2012 (*Betsy Martin*)

PROGRESS ON LITTER PREVENTION?

Trash Trap. The county is doing a pilot study to evaluate the effectiveness, cost, and effort to maintain a trash trap on Little Hunting Creek. A Bandalong Litter Trap will be installed, probably behind Mount Vernon Plaza.

The county wants to install the trap in a commercial or industrial location that is not immediately adjacent to homes or apartments and has easy construction and maintenance access. The county is still working on acquiring an easement to permit construction and maintenance. A stormwater maintenance contractor will clean out the trap at least once a month, and after rainfall events. Bandalongs are being used in DC, Montgomery County, and Baltimore, and they work! (see <http://stormwatersystems.com/bandalong-litter-trap/>)

Let's cross our fingers that the new trial Bandalong will soon be on the job, capturing trash before it floats downstream to us.



Bandalong Litter Trap in DC (*Stormwater Systems*)

Ban or Fee on Single Use Bags? Of course, what we really hope for is to keep all that trash out of the creek in the first place. One step to achieve that is a ban or fee on disposable single use bags, a proven way to reduce use and reduce plastic litter. To do that requires legislation by the Virginia General Assembly. This year, the Environmental Quality Advisory Council has thrown its weight behind a proposal to add such a ban or fee to the County's legislative agenda. If the Board of Supervisors supports the legislative initiative (Supervisor Storck has said he will) then the County would put its considerable weight behind a push to enact a disposable bag fee or ban. Maybe we'll finally get somewhere with this! Certain categories of disposable bags would be exempted, and we recommend that the County disseminate free, reusable

shopping bags to help reduce single use plastics, and alleviate any burden a fee or ban might impose on low income residents.



Plastic bags in Little Hunting Creek (Scott Surovell)

LOCAL FROGS AND TOADS—*Celia Boertlein*

When you ask people to tell you what sound frogs make, they often say “ribbit, ribbit.” But frogs and toads of Northern Virginia don’t actually say “ribbit.” It seems that Hollywood wanted frog calls for their movies and conveniently went out and recorded their backyard frogs. Thus, the Pacific Tree Frog got the job!

Frogs and toads serve as both prey and predator in wetland ecosystems and are good indicators of the overall environmental health of an area. And, the greater the number and variety of frogs and toads in an ecosystem, the better its health.



Green heron, a frog predator (Randy Myers)

Many previously large frog and toad populations have experienced large declines in the U.S. and around the world. To understand the scope, scale, and cause of the declines,

scientists take a census. And, what is the most accurate way to take a census of frogs and toads? By counting them, of course. But actually seeing them is sometimes nearly impossible. It helps that each species in our area has its own unique sound. When you hear one individually, it’s pretty easy to identify the species, but when you hear a whole chorus, it gets pretty tricky.

Frogs and toads comprise about 5,280 species worldwide, with about 27 species native to Virginia, and 14 potentially found in Northern Virginia. Here’s a little bit about the 14 species of frogs and toads which may be seen (or heard) near us, along with information about the season their calls are heard and what they sound like. With few exceptions, males call to attract the (normally) silent females and to advertise their territories. Sizes (lengths) given are from the tip of the snout to the outer edge of the vent.

American Bullfrog (*Lithobates catesbeinus*). 3.5-6” Calls late Spring into later Summer. Sound like a deep “jug-a-rum”.

Green Frog (*Lithobates clamitans*). 2.25-3.5” Late Spring-late Summer. Call is like a banjo string or plucking a taut rubber band.

Southern Leopard Frog (*Lithobates spehocephalus*). 2-3.5” Spring-Summer. Call like a series of chuckles followed by a growl.

Pickereel Frog (*Lithobates palustris*). 1.75-3” Spring-Summer. Call sounds like a rolling snore or an old porch swing.

Wood Frog (*Lithobates sylvaticus*). 1.5-2.75” Late Winter-early Spring. Sound like a duck or chicken.

American Toad (*Anaxyrus americanus*). 2-3.5” Spring-early Summer. Call a melodic trill, held a long time.

Fowler’s Toad (*Anaxyrus fowleri*). 2-3” Spring-early Summer. Call is a nasal, whiny call like an alley cat or “ET”.

Eastern Spadefoot (*Scaphiopus holbrookii*). 1.75-2.25” Late Spring-early Summer. These are especially recognizable by their elliptical pupils and their “sick cow” or mooing calls. They spend most of their lives under sandy or loamy soil, coming out only after rain events.

Historically found in our area but may now be extirpated.

Eastern Cricket Frog (*Acris crepitans*). 0.5-1.5”
Late Spring-late Summer. Call sounds like 2 marbles clicking together or a can of spray paint being shaken.

Spring Peeper (*Pseudacris crucifer*). 0.75-1.25”.
Call is heard only in Spring, and, not surprisingly, is a high-pitched peep.

Upland Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris feriarum*),
0.75-1.5” Calls are heard only in Spring and are somewhat like running your fingernail across the teeth of a comb or a floor creaking.



Green Treefrog (*Hyla cinerea*).
1.25-2.25” Late
Spring-Summer.
Calls are akin to the beeping of a clown car, rubber bands being twanged, or a traffic jam.

Gray Treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*).

Green Tree Frog (*Celia Boertlein*) 1.25-2” Spring-Summer. Call a fairly high-pitched rattle. Not known to be in Fairfax, Alexandria, or Arlington.

Cope’s Gray Treefrog (*Hyla chrysoscelis*). 1.25-2” Spring-Summer. Call zzzz-pause-zzzz.

The website “DC Frog Calls” has beautiful close-up photographs and recordings of the calls for the 14 local frogs and toads. <https://dcfrogcalls.webs.com/>

FrogWatch USA is the Association of Zoos and Aquariums’ (AZA’s) citizen science program. It provides individuals, groups, and families with opportunities to learn about wetlands in their communities by reporting on the calls of local frogs and toads. This is their 20th year anniversary. Volunteers are the foundation of the FrogWatch community. They are trained and during the evenings from February through August, they submit observations which become a part of a national online database. Local classroom training is available.

For more information about FrogWatch USA, check out www.aza.org/frogwatch.

We have seen and heard Green Tree Frogs, Spring Peepers, Bullfrogs, and American Toads, in and near Little Hunting Creek. What frogs and toads have you heard or seen?

Do you want to see toads and frogs in your own yard? Try creating habitat for them, by providing food and places for them to hide, live, and reproduce. You can:

- **Make a “toad abode”**, a small ceramic house for toads. You can buy one, or just turn a ceramic flowerpot upside down. Make sure it has a toad-sized crack or hole in the side for an entrance, or prop it up with a rock so the toad can get in and out. It is better not to have a floor because toads like to dig. Place your toad abode in a shady spot near a water source, such as a small pond or a saucer of water.
- **Create a meadow patch** that attracts the insects that frogs and toads like to eat.
- **Provide a pesticide-and fertilizer-free water source for tadpoles**. This could be a little pond 24” deep or less, without fish (fish eat frog eggs), placed where it will get a mix of sun and shade. Place woody debris, leaves, and vegetation around the edge with a few branches in the water. A 4-5” shallow area along the edge lets frogs enter and exit.
- **Keep cats indoors**. They kill frogs and toads.

UPDATE ON SANITARY SEWER LINE REPLACEMENT

The county is replacing a sewer line that runs under the stream bed of Little Hunting Creek. In May, soil borings in the creek and the eastern and western shorelines were taken using truck-and barge-mounted rigs. The borings confirmed that more structure (pilings) will be needed to support the new sewer line; gravel bedding will not be enough. The county is about 35% through the design stage now. They have a preliminary alignment that’s a little south and parallel to the current alignment. The county is also working on permitting requirements and looking at the staging of the construction work. No certain word yet on when that will be.

**Friends of Little Hunting Creek
2018 APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

The Friends of Little Hunting Creek is formed exclusively for charitable, scientific and educational purposes. "More specifically, the purpose...is to encourage the preservation of open space, restoration of riparian habitat, improvement in water quality in the Little Hunting Creek watershed, and to promote stewardship and opportunities for recreational enjoyment of Little Hunting Creek by nearby neighbors and the public. The Friends of Little Hunting Creek seeks to improve nearby neighborhoods by organizing and conducting community cleanups of trash and litter on the creek, by educating citizens about stewardship and litter prevention, and by promoting community access to the creek for recreation and respite."
-Articles of Incorporation.

Name: _____

Class of membership:

Junior (age between 12 and 18) ____ -- non-voting member, annual dues \$1.00

Class I (age 18 or over) ____ -- voting member, annual dues \$5.00

Address: _____

Occupation: _____

Phone number: _____

Send email to: _____

"I agree to abide by the By-Laws of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek, Inc."

(Bylaws are found at www.friendsoflittlehuntingcreek.org/images2015/folhcbylaws-revised.pdf)

(Signed) _____

Date: _____

Mail with your check to: Treasurer, Friends of Little Hunting Creek, 8707 Stockton Pkwy, Alexandria, 22308.

Questions or comments? Send an email to info@folhc.org.