



Friends of Little Hunting Creek

Everybody Lives Downstream

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Next creek cleanup: MARCH 28, 2020. Save the date!

2019 CLEANUP REPORT—*Betsy Martin*

This year, 118 volunteers picked up 223 bags of trash and recyclables, 6 tires, 4 shopping carts, 10 bicycles, and 3,335 pounds of bulk trash.

On April 13, volunteers picked up trash at 12 sites in Mount Vernon District, downstream of Richmond Highway, and on May 11, Senator Scott Surovell, Delegate Paul Krizek, and volunteers picked up trash at 3 more sites in Lee District, upstream of Richmond Highway.

Thanks to all the volunteers, especially cleanup site leaders: Mimi and Will Friedman (First River Farms), Ursula Birch (Gum Springs), Bob Enck, Paula Dubberly, and Judith McNelis (Riverside Estates), Celia Boertlein and Paul Siegel (Stratford Landing), Greg Crider (Col. John Byers Park), Nancy Engler, Allison Gunn, and Brownie Troop 53009 (White Oaks Park), Ben Cermak (Mount Vernon Plaza), Kim Fairchild (Janna Lee Ave. bridge), and Juan Mariscal (Audubon Estates mobile home park).

The indispensable, indefatigable Robert O’Hanlon again assisted with retrieval of shopping carts.



Brownie Troop 53009 cleaned up Paul Springs Branch at White Oak Park. They even recycled the water bottles they picked up! (*Nancy Engler*)

Trash conditions this year were low in some downstream areas, because upstream, in Gum Springs and beyond, fallen trees have blocked the creek, forming dams that trap trash. We are working with the county to try to get them to remove the trees forming the dams. When the county breaks up the dams, we hope to recruit a cadre of volunteers to catch the trash as it flows downstream. Stay tuned!



At this Gum Springs dam, the upstream water level was 4 feet higher than downstream (*Betsy Martin*)

The Potomac Watershed Cleanup coincides with spring break for Fairfax Public Schools, so many potential youth volunteers are away on family vacations. In 2020, spring break is April 6-10, and the 13th is also a holiday. At our annual meeting, we agreed to hold next year’s cleanup on March 28, which entirely avoids spring break.

A more serious problem: when Fairfax County workers came to pick up the trash, they found

hazardous materials in the piles of debris that volunteers had collected. Propane tanks were found on one pile from the April cleanup. A sawed-off gun in a paper bag and bullets tossed loose in the debris pile were found at the Janna Lee Avenue bridge. The workers called police, who confiscated the gun. These materials pose serious hazards to the workers, and to the public—imagine a child finding the gun and ammunition. Propane tanks and ammunition can explode in the trash trucks.

These items were not collected by our volunteers (I checked). We believe they were discarded after Saturday's cleanup, before county workers arrived Monday morning. We need to find a way for the county to pick up the trash sooner after our cleanup. Stay tuned for details.

The Friends of Little Hunting Creek and the Surovolunteers have collected 3,820 bags of trash and recyclables since 2006, when I started keeping records. That is nearly 4,000 bags of trash—an appalling accomplishment.

After coordinating the Little Hunting Creek cleanup effort since 2002, I've decided to retire from overall coordinator duties after we collect our 4,000th bag of trash and recyclables. That's only 180 bags to go!

If you would like to volunteer to serve as overall coordinator for the Little Hunting Creek cleanup, please email betsy@folhc.org. I will train you! Virginia Master Naturalists will receive service credits!

AWARDS. At our May 5th annual meeting, the following awards were given:

The coveted **TRASHMASTER OF LITTLE HUNTING CREEK AWARD** went to Robert Enck and the volunteers on Brady Street, in Riverside Estates. Six volunteers collected 28 bags of trash and recyclables and 20 pounds of bulk trash. That's nearly 5 bags per volunteer! They also retrieved (and returned) a ladies wallet with driver's license and credit cards in it. Riverside Estates turned in the best neighborhood performance, with 21 volunteers collecting 54 bags of trash—thanks to neighborhood coordinator Judith McNelis.



Keeping an eagle eye on Riverside Estates volunteers collecting trash from kayaks (*Steven Keat*)

Birds, fish, and other wildlife eat the plastic as it breaks down into smaller bits, and can starve or be choked and killed by it. The plastic we remove from the creek will not kill marine life in our creek or downstream. The eagles thank you!

The **LITTLE HUNTING CREEK DAM AWARD** went to Ursula Birch for stepping up to the plate in adverse conditions. Her husband Bryan, the usual Gum Springs cleanup leader, was unexpectedly called away, so Ursula stepped up to lead the cleanup at two sites. The Gum Springs cleanup is a challenge because of the dams formed by fallen trees. Ursula can often be found crawling out onto a dam to try to retrieve the trash.



Ursula Birch (on right) and another volunteer on a trash dam in 2017 (*Bryan Birch*)

Finally, the Friends thanked **Kim Larkin, Pathfinder and Dedicated Nature Lover, for service on the Board and to the Creek.** Kim served on the FOLHC Board of Directors since

2015, and she took the initiative to create a path through the lovely Northern Virginia Conservation Trust wetland property in Stratford Landing. She is a stalwart friend of Little Hunting Creek!



NVCT staff and Stratford volunteers led by Celia Boertlein cleared trash and invasive vines from NVCT property this year.

Sen. Surovell's cleanup was after the annual meeting this year, so no award for the Surovolunteers—but we thank them from the bottom of our hearts, and our muddy boots!



Scott Surovell's Cleanup in Audubon Estates.

CHANGES IN COUNTY RECYCLING—*Will Friedman, Student Member, Supervisor Storck's Environmental Advisory Committee*

Representatives from Fairfax County Solid Waste Management came to Supervisor Storck's Environmental Advisory Committee meeting last month.

They discussed Fairfax County's recycling program. Specifically contaminated recycling, bottle dumpsters and crushed glass.

When they sort through a batch of recycled materials, if they find one contaminating item that whole batch may have to go to the landfill instead of being recycled. A contaminating item might be a used diaper, plastic bag, a pizza box, used tissues, or broken glass.

Fairfax County is participating in a new, region wide approach to glass recycling. This has led to the creation of the Purple Can Club. Purple dumpsters are placed in locations in participating jurisdictions. The County is encouraging residents to collect glass separately, and bring it to a glass recycling site. (Glass is still accepted in household recycle bins, but it does not actually get recycled.) All colors of clean glass and jars are accepted, Find out what is accepted and the location of drop off sites here: <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/news/regional-approach-glass-recycling-leads-creation-purple-can-club>

Additional drop off sites will be added as the program is expanded.

Trucks take the dumpsters to Fairfax County's Big Blue glass crusher. "Big Blue," is the new Andela Pulverizer located at the I-95 landfill complex. It can crush 20 tons of glass per hour.

Crushed glass has many uses including use as road bedding, landscaping, stormwater facilities, and countertops. It is being tested as a road foundation at the I-95 facility, and has held up very well.

As citizens we all must make small changes in our own routines towards sustainable practices to reduce our ecological impact and protect Mother Earth.

COMING SOON—A TRASH TRAP!

This summer the county will install a Bandalong Litter Trap in the creek near the north corner of Mount Vernon Plaza, behind the China One Restaurant and Michael's. A stormwater maintenance contractor will clean out the trap at least once a month, and after rainfall events. The trap will be downstream of the last outfall from Mount Vernon Plaza, so should capture all the trash coming off the shopping mall. Dare we hope to see less trash downstream?



Bandalong Litter Trap in DC (*Stormwater Systems*)

UPDATE ON SEWER LINE REPLACEMENT

The county is replacing a sewer line that runs under the stream bed of Little Hunting Creek. The plan is to do half the creek at a time—build a cofferdam, dewater it, and install the new sewer line; then do the second half. The county is acquiring easements needed for the project, and is in permit review. Permitting was delayed due to the government shutdown, so the scheduled start of construction in July 2019 may be pushed back.

Current design documents are available at <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/sites/publicworks/files/assets/documents/projects/little-hunting-creek-sewer-project-95percent-drawings.pdf> It appears the main construction impacts will be felt in Woodland Park, and on Stockton Parkway between Waterford Road and 8707 Stockton Parkway in Stratford Landing. These will be the access points for

construction vehicles, and the location of the land and water staging area. Quite a few trees are planned to be removed on lots opposite 8613, 8615 and 8701 Stockton Parkway for a temporary construction easement. Trees outside of the permanent sanitary sewer easement will be replaced, but those inside will not be.

UPDATE ON DUCK HUNTING ON LITTLE HUNTING CREEK—*Claire Kluskens*

More than 15 years ago, duck hunters set up a blind on Little Hunting Creek, just offshore from Stratford Landing residences. People live nearby, and walk with children and their dogs. Kayakers and other boaters use the creek. Hunting here was not acceptable to Stratford Landing residents.

In response to residents' concerns, Fairfax County prohibited discharging firearms in Little Hunting Creek. The Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (DGIF) duly marked the prohibition on its paper maps and no permits to hunt in the creek were issued until the fall of 2018, when the DGIF paper maps were replaced by digital geographic information systems which (apparently) omitted the prohibition.

Last October, residents of Stockton Parkway became aware that hunters were using a floating blind (a jon boat) in the wide area on the Mount Vernon side of the creek. Hunters had been issued a state permit, under the defective geographic information system.

Stratford residents researched applicable laws, regulations, and federal land boundaries; secured allies; monitored events on the creek; and communicated with appropriate local and state government officials..

In response, Mount Vernon Supervisor Dan Storck obtained unanimous approval by the Board of Supervisors for his "Board Matter of November 20, 2018," authorizing "the County Executive to petition the State Board of Game and Inland Fisheries [BGIF] to adopt ... a regulation forbidding the placement of blinds, whether stationary or floating, within Little Hunting Creek and forbidding hunting migratory waterfowl within Little Hunting Creek." Fairfax County petitioned the BGIF, and in January, Deputy County Attorney Erin

C. Ward traveled to Richmond to formally present the County's petition for a regulation prohibiting hunting in Little Hunting Creek. Several local residents spoke or wrote letters of support, as did the Wessynton HOA.

The Board of Game and Inland Fisheries has declined to formally act on Fairfax County's petition. On April 12, 2019, DGIF informed Fairfax County that no regulatory change would be made at this time, but that the BGIF's Waterfowl Committee and the DGIF Law Enforcement Division recommended that "the Fairfax County firearms ordinance restricting the discharge of firearms in Little Hunting Creek [be added] to the DGIF Migratory Game Bird Digest and DGIF Website sections entitled 'Areas Closed to Waterfowl Hunting.'" Claire Kluskens and Randy Myers plan to follow up on this as it is unclear whether DGIF would still issue permits for blinds, despite Fairfax County's existing ordinance banning discharge of firearms in Little Hunting Creek.

Contact: Claire Kluskens at birdlady2011@icloud.com



Wood duck family (*Phil B.*)

**Friends of Little Hunting Creek
2019 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.