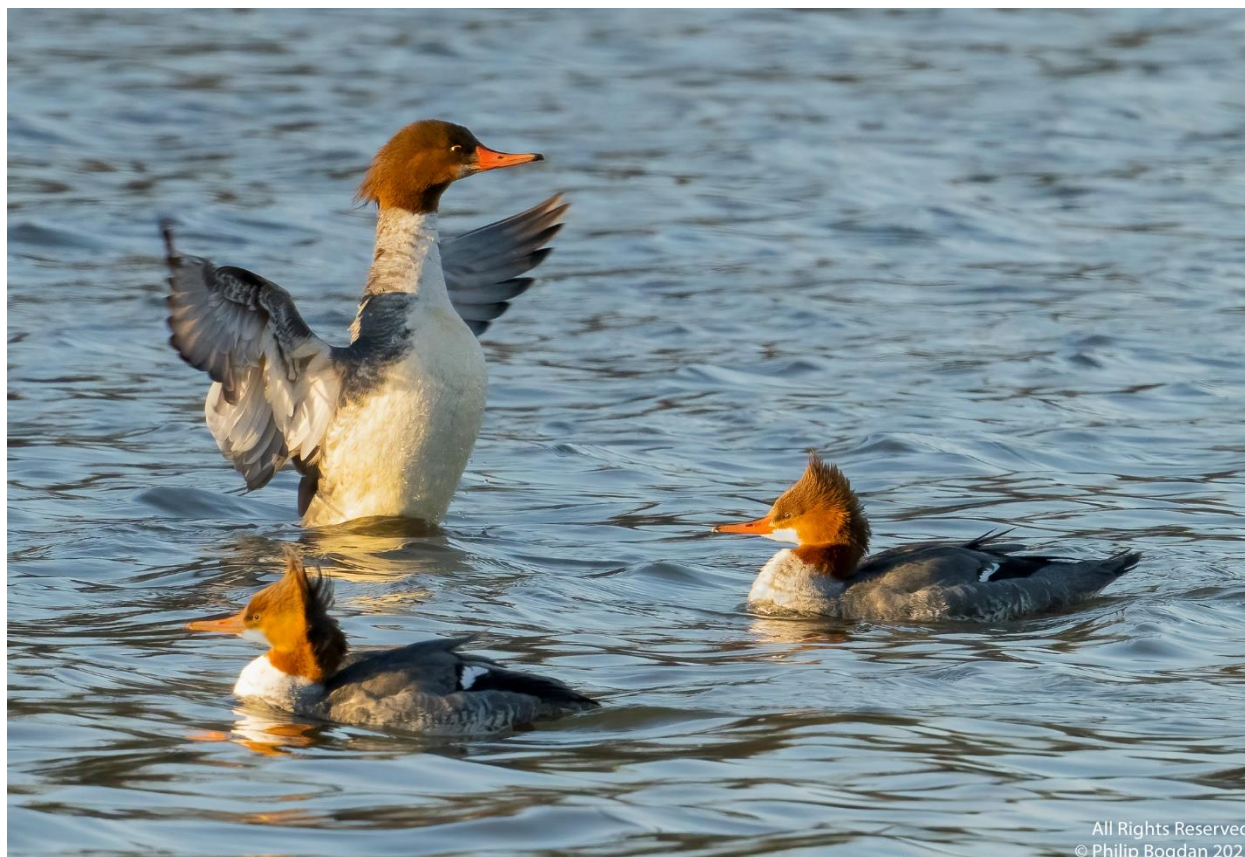




Friends of Little Hunting Creek

Spring 2021 Newsletter



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Thanks to Phil Bogdan for sharing his beautiful photograph of female Common Mergansers on Little Hunting Creek. They've left us now, migrating north to their breeding grounds.

UPDATE FROM THE PRESIDENT—*from Betsy Martin*

April 10 cleanup: As we plan our annual cleanup (part of the Potomac Watershed Cleanup sponsored by Alice Ferguson Foundation) we're facing an unusual "problem": scouting reports indicate much less trash than usual in many of the trashiest spots on Little Hunting Creek, once one of the trashiest streams in the county! It may be due to two new county programs that directly address litter: one is a trash trap the county installed behind Mount Vernon Plaza, and the other is a new program called Operation Stream Shield, in which the county pays homeless people to pick up trash from streams (see page 5; we'll report on the trash trap in a future newsletter).

The county may put us cleanup volunteers out of business. Personally, I would be happy to retire from the cleanup gig. It's been great to see less trash floating down the creek. Thanks to the county for these efforts.

Even so, there is still trash out there, and this year's cleanup will be April 10th, with cleanup crews working on land or by water out of Wessynton, Riverside Estates, Gum Springs, Stratford Landing, First River Farms, Fort Hunt Elementary School, and Colonel John Byers Park.



Senator Scott Surovell will also be organizing the Surovolunteers in his usual effort at the Janna Lee Avenue bridge, planned for May 1 (to volunteer, sign up at <https://bit.ly/creekcleanup2021>).

In future, we hope that the litter prevention bills that our local elected representatives succeeded in passing in the last General Assembly session will permanently

improve the litter situation in our beautiful creek. Kudos and thanks to Senators Surovell and Ebbin and Delegate Krizek, and others, for new laws that tax disposable plastic bags and give the county tools to get big box stores to better control their shopping carts and keep them out of Little Hunting Creek.

Preserving open space, improving creek access, and restoring wildlife habitat: As litter becomes a less dominant concern (we hope!), we can turn attention to more positive aspects of our mission.

As set out in our Articles of Incorporation, one goal is “promoting community access to the creek for recreation and respite.” It has become abundantly clear during the pandemic how much people of all ages need and benefit from spending time in nature, even if it's as simple as sitting on a bench looking out on the creek.

We have begun to invest in creating better community access to the creek in adjacent neighborhoods. In our first effort, we're partnering with the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust (NVCT) and the Stratford Landing Citizens' Association to make a wetlands parcel owned by the NVCT more inviting and accessible to nearby residents, by improving an informal trail, and installing a couple of benches—read about it on page 4.

We want to do the same in other neighborhoods, and we seek proposals from them to use FOLHC funds to improve access and enjoyment of the creek.

The idea would be to fund modest improvements in creek access for neighborhoods bordering Little Hunting Creek, focusing on a different neighborhood each year. The criteria by which we judge any neighborhood proposal we receive are:

- The neighborhood supports the proposal, and is willing to be a partner and contribute funds and/or organize volunteers' time to achieve it.
- The property owner (such as the Park Authority, or other county department, or the NVCT) is a willing partner in the project.
- The proposal advances two goals:
 - Improved access to the creek for recreation and respite. Only low-impact improvements will be approved.
 - Improved quality of wildlife habitat (for example, the removal of invasive plants, or installation of wood duck boxes or osprey platforms, or other improvements).

If you'd like to discuss—email info@folhc.org.

Join us—become a member! The last page of this newsletter is a membership application. Please fill it out and mail it in with your dues—only \$5 per adult, and \$1 per kid. What a bargain! We'd love to have your support and involvement in our efforts to preserve and protect Little Hunting Creek for the benefit of both humans and wildlife.

UPDATE ON SEWER LINE REPLACEMENT—*from Christopher Morgan (Chair of the Environmental & Recreation Committee of the Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations)*

Sometime this summer, the sewer line that crosses Little Hunting Creek will be replaced by Fairfax County.

This sewer line is a pipe placed at a slight decline which allows sewage to flow downhill, by gravity from homes in the Wessynton neighborhood to the pumping station located in Stratford Landing. At the pumping station, the sewage is pumped via a separate pressurized line south to the Noman Cole Pollution Control Plant in Lorton.

The current gravity line has been in place since the late 1950s and is scheduled to be completely replaced. The sewer line runs beneath the creek. In order to install a new line, about half of the crossing will be enclosed by a coffer dam, the water pumped out, and a 10-foot deep trench dug to install the pipe. The dams will be placed in two phases, each leaving half the channel open so that Little Hunting Creek remains navigable to boat traffic.

As part of the project, construction crews will occupy shorelines on both sides of the creek, and over 40 trees and assorted vegetation will be removed. In addition, the community boat launch in Woodland Park will be closed, and Stockton Parkway will be restricted to one single lane of vehicle traffic.

The contract has been awarded to Garney Construction. The contractor expects to have the first dams in the water no later than July 1st, 2021, although the project is currently nearly two years behind schedule and the exact timeline has not been published at this time. For updates, see <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/capital-projects/little-hunting-creek-sanitary-sewer-replacement-project>

LAND PRESERVATION

New Conservation Easement Preserves Open Space on Little Hunting Creek—*from Paul Siegel*



This view of Little Hunting Creek will never be blocked by a house.

Late last year Marilyn Shoaff and her family – original Stratford Landing residents on Stockton Parkway dating back to 1958 – placed a conservation easement on the creek-side lot across the street from their home. The easement protects the natural habitat by conveying the building and development rights on the lot to the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust. The Trust warrants that those rights will never be exercised or sold and the family retains private ownership of the lot.

The Northern Virginia Conservation Trust is a nonprofit land trust that has protected more than 7,000 acres of urban and rural places in the shadow of the nation's capital since 1994. The NVCT currently holds 115 conservation easement agreements and owns and manages 20 nature preserves throughout Northern Virginia.

The Shoaff family regards this preservation as a way of remembering their husband and father, Clark, and their love for the creek and its natural setting. It is a visual gift that the community can enjoy.

There are now three contiguous lots in the 8700 block of Stockton Parkway with this protection from development. These lots, in addition to the large lot owned outright by the NVCT next to the pump station, preserves a vista for the neighborhood that defines the natural beauty in Nature and the character of the neighborhood.

Saving River Farm—*from Greg Crider*

The NVCT and NOVA Parks (formerly Northern Virginia Regional Parks Authority) have joined in an effort to save River Farm to preserve public access to the property. The American Horticultural Society (AHS) has put the 27-acre property, which serves as their headquarters, up for sale. River Farm had been open for public access since it was acquired and donated to AHS in 1973. When AHS announced its intention to sell the property, there

was a broad effort to raise the funds to purchase it. Along with over 35 other organizations, the FOLHC Board signed on as a partner on www.SaveRiverFarm.com.

Please visit <https://www.saveriverfarm.com/> for the latest updates and more information on how you can help.

IMPROVING CREEK ACCESS AND RESTORING HABITAT

Improving Access to Northern Virginia Conservation Trust's Little Hunting Creek Preserve—*from Celia Boertlein*



The NVCT's Little Hunting Creek Preserve in Fairfax County protects two acres of tidal wetlands, located just south of the Fairfax County Pumping Station on Stockton Parkway. This property was donated to NVCT by 36 former neighbors for the benefit of the community. It is NVCT's vision that this property be well-known and well-used by neighbors for the enjoyment of nature.

To that end, the NVCT has partnered with the Friends of Little Hunting Creek (FOLHC) and the Stratford Landing Citizens Association (SLCA) to make this property more accessible and inviting for people to use. FOLHC and SLCA have donated funds to support the following improvements:



Have you seen this sign, and wondered what it means?

Better Signage: Right now, two small signs indicate the land is conserved by NVCT. A larger sign welcoming people onto the property and describing guidelines for its use could also let people know of upcoming events, identify plants or animals observed on the site, or provide information about tidal wetlands.

Trail Improvement and Maintenance: There is a short trail that is becoming overgrown and is steep in places. A maintenance plan would include regular trimming and evaluate the potential for installing steps in the future.

Benches: A couple of benches would make this property more inviting and accessible to neighbors.

Volunteers continue to work on removal of invasive exotic plants and vines from the site, including English ivy, Wintercreeper, and Japanese honeysuckle.

Please Help Free the Trees—*from Will Friedman*

Have you noticed trees covered in vines when walking or driving? Invasive non-native vines are choking our trees and reducing our already threatened tree canopy. Trees are vital to our existence. They give us oxygen, store carbon and stabilize the soil. They also support wildlife.

Non-native vines will eventually kill the tree if not removed. They block sunlight to the leaves that is needed for photosynthesis and the weight will weaken its limbs leaving them prone to disease and vulnerable to severe weather. English ivy is one of the most prevalent and easy to spot and remove. No ivy species is native to the United States.

We can't afford to lose these trees. There are several ways you and your family/children can help. Training is provided. Community service hours are available. Make this a family or group event. Once you are trained, you can help in your own neighborhood.

IMA (Invasive Management Area Program) is a county program
<https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/invasive-management-area>
 Call 703-324-8673

Friends of Dyke Marsh
<https://fodm.org/news/224-savetrees.html>
 email info@fodm.org, put "Invasives" in the subject box
 Upcoming training April 5th and 9th.

Friends of Mount Vernon Trail

<https://mountvernontrail.org/2021/03/18/become-a-weed-warrior/>

Friends of Little Hunting Creek

<https://www.folhc.org>

This is a tree I pass every time I leave my neighborhood. It took about 20 minutes to free it.



Thank you for your continued commitment to our community and Mother Earth. Feel free to reach out to me at WillFriedman04@gmail.com with questions or if I may be of assistance.

PROGRESS ON REDUCING LITTER IN LITTLE HUNTING CREEK



—from Emily Burton and Heather Ambrose, Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services.

Operation Stream Shield is a program created in 2019 through a partnership between the Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) and the Office to Prevent and End Homelessness (OPEH). Its mission is two-fold: to benefit the environment and to provide assistance for individuals experiencing homelessness. Operation Stream Shield provided part-time, temporary work experience to guests of the Eleanor U. Kennedy Community Shelter, Bailey's Crossroads Community Shelter, and The Lamb Center to help improve the water quality of local streams.

The workers help clean up areas that have been identified as litter hotspots. The facilities provide transportation, supervise the work, and track and report the number of bags of

litter filled during each clean-up. Operation Stream Shield plays a critical role in the lives of the participants, who are experiencing homelessness, by providing a nominal stipend, developing workforce skills that enable them to better compete for potential jobs, and helping them pursue a positive trajectory towards improving their circumstances.

Samuel A. is a participant in the program. He says it has made a difference in his life, “Being able to say I’m going to work today really lifted my spirits and gave me a sense of accomplishment for the day and the week.”

The program also helps the county meet its mandate to keep streams clean through the removal of litter and non-native invasive plant species, maintenance of the county’s pedestrian trail system, providing assistance to the county’s Noman M. Cole Wastewater Plant, I66 Transfer Station, and the I95 Landfill, and engaging in assigned special projects as they become available. Over the past year, Operation Stream Shield has collected over five tons of trash in the Mount Vernon District. Operation Stream Shield routinely collects litter and debris from the Janna Lee Bridge, Napper Road and Shaw Park Court and the area in and adjacent to Huntley Meadows. In addition, through a partnership with the National Park Service, clean-ups have occurred in both Riverside and Fort Hunt Parks.

Due to the success of the pilot and positive engagement from the community, the county took steps to ensure Operation Stream Shield became a permanent program in 2020 and added the Embury Rucker Shelter as a partner.

BOS Districts	Sum of Tons of Trash Collected
Braddock	0.56
Dranesville	0.25
Dranesville/Hunter Mill/Providence	0.04
Hunter Mill	0.19
Lee	2.09
Mason	1.34
Mount Vernon	4.76
Providence	0.87
Springfield	2.34
Sully	0.39
Grand Total	12.84

For more information, please email DPWESSTW-OSS@fairfaxcounty.gov, or call 703-324-5500, TTY 711.

To report a litter spot, please email DPWESSWMPTrashmail@fairfaxcounty.gov.

Friends of Little Hunting Creek, a 501(c)(3) organization
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/images2020/bylaws-rev2019.pdf)

(Signed) _____

Date: _____

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