Please join us for the annual meeting and a potluck cookout, and become a member of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek! This will be our first in-person annual meeting in two years. The last page of this newsletter is a membership application. Please fill it out and mail it in with your dues (or bring it with you to the meeting). The meeting is open to all, although only dues-paying members are eligible to vote.

The agenda for the business meeting is as follows:

- Approval of minutes from 2021 Annual Meeting.
- Budget report and vote on proposed budget for fiscal year 2023. The budget is here.
- Update on two proposed amendments to the Bylaws that will (1) modify the meeting quorum requirement to be the attendance of a fixed, relatively small number of paid-up members, rather than 51% of the membership, and (2) increase the number of directors by two additional members.
- Election of Officers and Directors of FOLHC. The current officers and directors have agreed to run again. The candidates for Officers and the Board of Directors of the Friends of Little Hunting Creek are:
  - Betsy Martin, President
  - Mort Isler, Vice President
  - Celia Boertlein, Secretary
  - Paul Siegel, Treasurer
  - Bryan Birch, Greg Crider, and Mimi Friedman, Directors

(You can read their bios here.)

After a brief meeting, we’ll adjourn for a potluck cookout (about 5 pm). Please bring a dish to share. We’ll supply burgers and hotdogs, or bring your own item to cook on the grill. Bring your kayak or canoe if you’d like to go out for a paddle on Little Hunting Creek. High tide is at 6:20 p.m. We’d appreciate knowing if you plan to come to the cookout; please email info@folhc.org.

Finally, we’ll walk down the block to visit the Little Hunting Creek Preserve, where the FOLHC, Stratford Landing Citizens Association, and Northern Virginia Conservation Trust have collaborated to improve habitat as well as neighborhood access.
Celebrating Trees

Plant NOVA Natives/Plant NOVA Trees recently launched a multi-year campaign to plant and preserve native trees in Northern Virginia to increase and protect our life-giving tree canopy. The Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) is asking Northern Virginia to plant 600,000 trees by 2025. Since most available land in Northern Virginia is private property, we won’t meet the goal without planting thousands of new trees in our neighborhoods and our own private properties.

Some residents in the Wessynton Community on Little Hunting Creek hope to counter the recent loss of trees to disease and severe storms and to maintain and increase the tree canopy there. One resident has “adopted” the Wessynton Forest area by planting native tree and shrub seedlings throughout the forest for the past several years with a large inventory of species.

A new Wessynton Tree Project is sprouting up, organized by residents who are interested in expanding the replanting of trees into individual homeowner’s spaces whenever they lose a tree or have to cut one down. A tree in a homeowner’s yard is as valuable as one planted in the forest. While just in the beginning stages, we hope this project will get everyone excited about replanting or replacing trees in their own yards and contribute to the overall tree canopy goal of Plant NOVA Natives/Plant NOVA Trees and the DEQ. The new tree project is voluntary.

Other communities along Little Hunting Creek may also be interested in considering a similar replanting plan. Together we can add many more trees to our watershed which would help improve water quality in the creek and provide valuable benefits as we all face the impacts of climate change. We CAN make a difference!

Did you know that trees sequester carbon, making them crucial partners in reducing carbon emissions? They help purify the air! Other benefits include:

- Providing shade in the heat of summer, reducing the air temperature nearby.
- Providing habitat and nesting sites for birds and other wildlife.
- Feeding the caterpillars needed to grow the baby birds.
- Soaking up rainwater runoff and cleaning our water.
- Providing a spiritual place for peace and serenity.
- Providing visual beauty.

Happy Tree Planting!—Submitted by Denise Freeland, resident of the Wessynton Community
2022 Cleanup Report

Thanks to all who volunteered for another successful Little Hunting Creek cleanup, held at the end of March and April. It was our 20th annual cleanup!

This year, eight cleanup crews worked on the downstream stretch of the creek from Richmond Highway south to the Potomac River (in Mount Vernon district), and three crews organized by Senator Scott Surovell and Delegate Paul Krizek worked upstream, on the north (Lee District) side of Richmond Highway.

In the nine sites south of Richmond Highway, 59 volunteers picked up 75 bags of trash and recyclables, 9 tires, and assorted other bulky items. Thanks to site leaders Donna Stauffer (Fort Hunt Elementary School), Bryan Birch (Gum Springs), Mark Miller (Wessynton), Greg Crider (Col. John Beyers Park), Mimi and Will Friedman (First River Farms), Paul Siegel (Stratford Landing), Jen Giunta and Bob Enck (Riverside Estates) and Brian McLaughlin (leading a new Stratford on the Potomac crew at the mouth of the creek).

All but one downstream site leaders reported that trash accumulations were low. That is very welcome news, and represents a great improvement from the past. We believe that the county’s Operation Stream Shield program (which pays homeless people to pick up trash in streams) and the trash trap are greatly reducing what's left for volunteers to pick up. The bag ban is likely helping too. Less trash means that some cleanup crews can turn their attention to removing invasive vines that overwhelm the trees in some otherwise beautiful areas along Little Hunting Creek. This year, crews tackled invasives in woods next to Fort Hunt Elementary School, adjacent to the pump station, and at First River Farms.

The story was not as encouraging in the sites north of Richmond Highway that were cleaned up by volunteers in Scott Surovell’s cleanup, organized by Kelsey Wright. At Janna Lee Avenue, Mount Vernon Plaza, and Grackle Court, 87 volunteers picked up 129 bags, seven bicycles, and nine tires, and (with the help of Robert O’Hanlon’s Tree Service) removed 11 shopping carts.

At all sites along the creek, there was still way too much bulky, heavy, difficult-to-remove debris. In addition to shopping carts and tires, volunteers hauled out beer kegs, lumber, a chair, church pew, shed doors, pallet, oxygen tank, street signs, fence, guard rail, mattress springs, DSL cable, and a radiator.

Still, the trash situation along Little Hunting Creek has noticeably improved. For those of you who like data (I do!), the chart below bears out this optimism. Since our peak trash years from 2013 to 2016, the amount of trash collected by volunteers has declined, even though our level of effort (as reflected by the number of volunteers) has remained relatively stable since about 2012. (The big increase in the number of volunteers and amount of trash collected starting that year reflects Senator Surovell’s organizing his cleanup north of Richmond Highway beginning in 2012.) For the past three years, we seem to have plateaued at about 200 bags collected each
year. Most of those bags are filled with recyclable beverage bottles, especially plastic water bottles. We may not reduce it much further until a bottle deposit law is enacted.

Thanks to this year’s volunteers (and all 1,950 who have volunteered since 2006!), site leaders, and our elected representatives, who have not only introduced legislation and adopted policies to address the litter problem, but even showed up to help pick it up. Thanks as well to the workers of the Solid Waste Management Division, who for 20 years have promptly hauled away the trash we collect.—Betsy Martin, President
Janna Lee Avenue

Col. John Byers Park

Little Hunting Creek Pump Station, Stockton Pkwy

Near Janna Lee Avenue
Improving Habitat and Creek Access

As reported in previous newsletters, the Friends of Little Hunting Creek has embarked on an initiative to improve neighborhood access to Little Hunting Creek. Our first project, in Stratford Landing, has been a collaborative effort with Stratford Landing Citizens’ Association and Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, owner of the two-acre Little Hunting Creek Preserve. Neighbors and NVCT staff maintain a wood chip trail through the wetland property. They held weekly sessions over the winter to remove invasive English ivy, Wintercreeper, and Japanese honeysuckle, and planted native trees. FOLHC donated $1,000 which, along with funds from SLCA, will cover the cost of installing two benches and improved signage. Volunteers are also installing three Wood duck nesting boxes.

The next access project we are working on is in Gum Springs. In March, several members of the FOLHC board toured adjacent properties with Gum Springs residents and Park Authority staff to evaluate possible access points. Stay tuned!

If your neighborhood also lacks access, we’d like to hear from you. Please email info@folhc.org with your proposal or ideas. We will judge any neighborhood proposal by these criteria:

- The neighborhood supports the proposal, and is willing to contribute funds and/or organize volunteers’ time to achieve it.
- The property owner (such as the Park Authority, or other county department) 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 considered.
Improved quality of wildlife habitat (for example, removal of invasive plants, or installation of wood duck boxes or osprey platforms, etc.).

Kudos to FOLHC members!

- **Will Friedman** (First River Farms) was named a 2021 Friend of Trees by the Fairfax County Tree Commission, for organizing tree plantings at Carl Sandburg Middle School and 20 other public schools. He also devoted himself to liberating trees in his neighborhood from invasive vines, and co-produced a video showing others how to do the same. Way to go, Will!
- **Scott Cameron** (Riverside Estates) was named by the governor to serve a four year term on the Virginia Water Control Board. Among other important duties, this board sets standards of quality for state waters, determines requirements for treating sewage and industrial waste, makes regulations to control pollution from boats, and develops coordinated state policy, plans and programs for the conservation and economic development of the state’s water resources. Congratulations Scott!
- **Paul Siegel and Betsy Martin** (Stratford Landing) received the 2022 Peggy Stevens Award from the Northern Virginia Conservation Trust, “in recognition of your enthusiasm, pride, and respect for your land that is a model in the community and a benefit to all the living things and people who rely on it.”

Do you have news or an article or a great photo you’d like to share with friends of Little Hunting Creek? Submit it to info@folhc.org for inclusion in the next newsletter.

**Protect the Buffer!** Is your property adjacent to Little Hunting Creek? If so, be aware that the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance affects what you can do on your property without prior permission from the county.

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**CHESAPEAKE BAY PRESERVATION AREAS**

**Protect the Buffer!**

Your property may be in a Resource Protection Area (RPA). Generally, no development, land disturbance, nor vegetation removal is allowed within 100-feet of a water body (known as the RPA boundary) without prior approval from Fairfax County’s Department of Land Development Services.

- This includes the removal of dead, dying or diseased trees and shrubs, noxious weeds, or invasive plants.
- Additionally, clearing, cutting of vegetation is **NOT** permitted nor is the removal of vegetation to create lawns.

Non-compliance with RPA restrictions is a violation of the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance and can result in penalties up to $55,000 per day. Violators are required to develop and obtain approval for an appropriate restoration plan.

**How can I confirm whether an RPA exists on my property?**

Visit the county’s Chesapeake Bay Preservation Ordinance webpage to view the interactive RPA map to generally understand the location of an RPA on your property. The determination of the exact width and location of the RPA boundary by a site-specific study may be required before the county can grant approval to start land-disturbing activities on properties in or near an RPA.

Learn more at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/landdevelopment/rpa
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:________________________________________________

Are you interested in volunteering for any of the following activities? Please check if “yes”:

____ Helping out with FOLHC website updates
____ Organizing annual cleanups in my neighborhood
____ Participating in annual cleanups in my neighborhood
____ Removing invasive plants in natural areas
____ Planting native trees and shrubs
____ Other—Please describe:____________________________________

What neighborhood do you live in? ________________________________

“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.