What's Been Happening at Royal Lake?
SUMMER ACTIVITIES FROM AROUND ROYAL LAKE

LAKESIDE PARK - JUNE 18
CUB SCOUT PACK 1967
BOTTLE ROCKET ACTIVITY

WATER ACTIVITIES ON
THE LAKE THROUGH
THE SUMMER

BEFORE & AFTER OF THE
TRAIL WIDENING PROJECT NEAR THE DAM

This issue:

What's Been Happening
PAGE 01

Braddock Nights
PAGE 02

Survey Says
PAGE 03

Appreciation for Work at
Royal Lake Parks
PAGE 05

Restoration of Shanes Creek
Progress Update
PAGE 06

Community Trail Maintenance
Workdays
PAGE 07

Upcoming Events &
Announcements
PAGE 08

Fun With FORL
PAGE 09
Braddock Nights in Memory of Bob Lydick

BY PAUL & KATHY GROSS

The opening night of FCPA'S Summer Entertainment Series, Braddock Nights 2022 at Royal Lake Park on Friday, July 8 was a special event for friends and family of Robert H. “Bob” Lydick. Braddock District Supervisor James Walkinshaw took the stage and announced that the performance was sponsored by 13 organizations and by the Friends and Family of Bob Lydick. Supervisor Walkinshaw explained that Bob Lydick had passed away in 2021 and had always treasured the fact that his beloved home backed up to the natural world of Royal Lake and Lakeside Park. As a lifelong environmentalist, Bob explored the woods and lake with daily walks alone or with his daughters and wife.

When walking alone he always came home with a “fish and wildlife” report for his family. Bob further treasured Royal Lake as the extraordinarily beautiful backdrop for Braddock Nights concerts. Therefore, his family and friends started the “Friends and Family of Bob Lydick Fund” within the Fairfax County Park Foundation to support Braddock Nights in Bob’s memory. Supervisor Walkinshaw and Margaret Thaxton, Director of Development, Fairfax County Park Foundation, presented Bob’s widow, Susan, with a plaque in appreciation for the sponsorship.

Emcee Paul Gross spoke of Bob as a good neighbor and family friend who had carpooled with him to the Pentagon. Then Susan Lydick spoke, telling how much Bob loved Royal Lake and the Braddock nights concerts and how much he especially treasured the T-shirt he had won many years ago in one of the Braddock Nights ticket drawings. She said that due to his love of the concerts, the family had asked that the Family and Friends of Bob Lydick Fund be directed to support the mission of “Long live Braddock Nights.” Susan shared that Bob especially loved the music of Bob Dylan. In his honor the first two songs performed by the Thrillbillys were two of Bob Lydick’s favorites: Bob Dylan’s “You Ain’t Goin Nowhere” and “The Times They are a Changin.”

The Friends and Family of Bob Lydick’s substantial donation to the Fairfax County Park Foundation helps make it possible for three years of Braddock Nights performances.
Survey Says...

BY SARAH LENNON & PAUL GROSS

As many people who use the Royal Lake Parks are already aware of, an extensive effort was made by the Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) in April and May of 2022 to survey the views of the parks’ patrons. The results are in, and 433 individuals/families responded to the survey, which had questions concerning the environment, trails, community activities, playgrounds, tennis courts, basketball courts, soccer fields, and baseball fields.

Survey Highlights

On August 11, 2022, FORL held a community meeting to discuss the overall results, which can be found in a “Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) Spring 2022 Community Survey Report” June 2022 and the August 11 presentation. To review the survey results, please go to the FORL website: friendsofroyallake.org.

The report and presentation have a lot of detail; however, the top line findings are:

- Respondents universally agree that the lake and parks are a highly valued community resource
- A top goal is to preserve peace, quiet, and the natural environment
- Care of the environment is central to park patrons
- Respondents felt the need for additional upgrades for various park facilities.

Some of the details are highlighted below.

Background

Before we get into some of the specifics, a little background on why we did the survey and what will be done with the results. The FORL conducted another survey five years ago to gauge the views of the community.

The results of that survey and community discussion resulted in providing supporting documentation for the development of “Friends of Royal Lake Community Vision Plan for Royal Lake Parks” and a number of supporting documents that outlined proposed upgrades, enhancements, capital improvements, and maintenance actions. The proposed actions were for both county government and FORL volunteers. The FORL leadership then met with county officials to discuss the communities’ views and proposed upgrades.

The Vision helped justify and advocate for a number of infrastructure and maintenance upgrades that have taken place in our working closely with the Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA), the Fairfax County, Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES), and the Braddock Supervisor.

The 2022 survey will serve as the same guidepost for updating key documents and the continuing discussions with county leadership and management.

So what did the “FORL 2022 Survey Say”?

The new survey had two goals: (1) to understand how the community members used the parks and (2) to identify and prioritize further potential improvements and maintenance efforts from the perspective of park patrons.

The survey respondents were able to answer specific areas of interest and activities and skip other areas. We are confident that respondents are broadly representative of park users overall and by activities.

The survey asked respondents two questions related to their overall perspectives on the parks, as follows:
When I think about my top goals for Royal Lake, I am especially concerned about:

a) Preserving peace, quiet, and the natural environment
b) Creating more activities and amenities

➢ 94% of survey respondents agreed with the statement that a top goal is to preserve peace, quiet, and the natural environment.
➢ 39% indicated that their top goal for the park was to create more activities and amenities at the parks, while a significantly greater proportion -- 61% -- disagreed with that goal.

Responses to three additional questions about the parks’ environment and key sanitation topics support the desire to preserve the natural environment:

- Native plants: Nearly all (96%) who expressed an opinion agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: I would like more native plants to be planted to improve the ecology of Royal Lake.
- Garbage cans and pollution: 73% of respondents cited pollution and litter in or near the lake as a problem that merits attention. More than two-thirds of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that more garbage cans should be placed throughout the parks. This perspective was particularly pronounced among those respondents involved in Kings Park West soccer.
- Fishing lines: More than four-fifths of those expressing a perspective (83%) agreed that fishing lines being improperly discarded is a problem.

Survey Says... (cont.)

BY SARAH LENNON & PAUL GROSS

Trail use was the activity of greatest interest across the 433 respondents; 88% of respondents completed the trail section. The most common improvements that trail users requested were efforts to improve drainage in order to reduce the muddiness following rainy periods. More than 80% of trail users agreed with the statement, “I avoid the trail after a rainy day because it’s too muddy.” However, most trail users did not support paving the trail in most areas of the park. Another trail-related improvement suggested by survey takers is for there to be a trail from the top of the dam to the bottom and the repaving of the entrance trail from Richardson Court to the soccer fields.

Specific suggestions for overall improvements to the parks include:

➢ shade structure at both parks
➢ permanent toilet facilities or year-round porta-potties
➢ additional picnic tables at both parks
➢ additional trashcans at both parks
➢ a playground upgrades for older kids
➢ additional benches by playgrounds and ballfields
➢ Upgrade of picnic areas
➢ Improve drainage in playing fields

Finally, we would like to thank the six volunteer team of Paul Strasberg, Julie Strasberg, Shelly Tucker, Frank Cumberland, Suzanne Doherty, and Paul Gross who held weekly meetings where the team reached agreement on survey goals, designed a draft questionnaire, conducted field testing, finalized the draft and developed a broad-based plan for data collection. Also, special thanks to everyone who took the survey and provided valuable input to improve our Royal Lake Parks.

All Activities Feature Diverse Park Users – Many Improvements Requested
Appreciation for Work at Royal Lake Parks

BY MARY BOYER

On June 6, 2022, the officials at the Lamb Center held an appreciation luncheon catered by Pot Belly at Lakeside Park for all the work done by OSS (Operation Stream Shield) at Royal Lake and by Mary Boyer, a Royal Lake site leader. OSS operates from the Lamb Center, a daytime homeless shelter in Fairfax City providing breakfasts, lunches, showers, and laundry services, as well as medical, emotional, spiritual, and professional support. OSS workers earn $12 an hour for 4-hour workdays from 8 am to 12 pm. Two days are offered in the county and two in Fairfax City. Two supervisors are present while they are working.

At the appreciation luncheon, it was great to finally meet the Lamb Center office workers plus greet the IMA team and others who work on the Royal Lake environment.

The OSS group started working at Royal Lake on Monday, May 17, 2021, planting trees at Royal Lake Park where the concerts are held, and also at the boat ramp at Lakeside Park. I joined them in the tree planting and then was asked if I would like to work with them. We have worked together 17 times since then.

Their first job was clearing the hill next to the parking lot at Lakeside Park. While I was working at the park, a neighbor on Pommeroy complained about the park’s invasive plants moving into her yard.

I reported it to IMA and other site leaders and was told to make that an Eagle project. After waiting for months for this to happen, OSS took care of it. It was on June 30, 2021, that the Lamb Center workers had their first job on the hottest day of the summer at that point. They removed vines growing up all the trees and cut back all kinds of invasive thorny ground cover. A fallen paper wasp nest halted activity until my husband brought over some wasp spray. At that point, the OSS didn’t remove roots. That took workgroups for months doing 12 feet at a time and doing native planting as we went. Volunteers came from all over but our Kings Park West volunteers also worked on it. Thanks go to Kathy Gross, Kelly Katz, Connor Miller, and Greg Sykes.

The OSS has also cleared the area near the playgrounds at Lakeside, and next to the service road going into the park. They took down treesized, thorny, invasive multiflora roses on the hill next to the eroded culvert stream. They’ve taken English Ivy from the trees along Rabbit Run, pulled stilt grass and invasive plants from both sides of the lake, and planted native grasses, flowers, bushes, and trees. We owe them much gratitude for their many hours of work especially in rain, the heat of summer and the cold of winter.
Restoration of Shanes Creek - Progress Update

BY GREG SYKES AND PAUL GROSS

Shanes Creek is the westernmost of Royal Lake's two primary tributaries. It goes under Roberts Road and flows toward the lake. Previous FORL newsletter articles and messages during the planning process highlighted aspects of this creek’s restoration. As of May, we are now in the construction phase of the in-stream effort. Frankly, the stream looks messy and will be for quite a while, but the overall result will be a creek with improved water quality that benefits people, plants, and wildlife. Fairfax County’s Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) is undertaking this significant repair. This work will fix the problem of high-energy stormwater eroding the stream bank and dumping sediment into Royal Lake.

This effort:
- elevates the streambed so water does not cut deeper into the ground
- disperses energy from floods across broader areas
- reinforces the stream bank
- redirects the waterway in some areas
- restores the riparian buffer

It does not address the root causes: 1) too much upstream ground is covered by impervious surfaces and low-absorption lawns; and 2) more severe storms resulting from climate change.

The stream restoration is slated to be a 600-day project. The work is being done by Meadville Land Services, who were selected through a competitive bidding process by companies that specialize in stream restoration. The projected work hours for the construction team through the summer are Monday-Wednesday 7:00 am to 7:00 pm and Thursday 7:00 am - 11:00 am. Please remember these are the expected shifts and the big caveat of working outside is, weather permitting. They may be on-site outside of these hours, especially to perform emergency work.

We are all curious to see what is being done and what progress is being made—many of us are “sidewalk superintendents.” However, with ongoing construction, all of us need to stay out of the construction area and away from the equipment. The county put up a fence to mark off the work areas. For everyone’s safety, do not cross over, cut the fence, or enter the work area. Look at the effort from outside the boundary.

Common Concerns

Trails: The county is making an effort to keep the trails open as long as possible; however, we will have disruptions in normal trail usage. Where the trail will be permanently cut, a new natural trail will be added toward the end of the project.

Trees: One of the project planners’ goals is to have every tree removal be purposeful. The trees impacted are generally of low quality, meaning they are fast-growing trees in wooded areas that have low biodiversity and high invasive plant density. They will be replaced with high-quality native trees.

DPWES' website is a good source of information that will be updated as the project progresses.

Please note on the Fairfax County website, the project is officially called Rabbit Branch Tributary at Collingham Drive. Shanes Creek was officially renamed after the restoration project’s conception.
Community Trail Maintenance Workdays

BY ANDY KARP

COMMUNITY VOLUNTEERS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE THE TRAIL AROUND OUR WONDERFUL LAKE:
PLEASE JOIN US NEXT TIME, ON OCTOBER 29TH

The accompanying photos were taken on our two most recent trail workdays, in April and July of this year. As can be seen in the photos, about once every three months, community volunteers, organized by the Friends of Royal Lake, continue our tradition of working enthusiastically to improve problematic stretches of the trail. The volunteers have been of ages ranging from pre-school to retirees, and all have worked hard to assure that our neighbors can continue to have a wonderful experience every time they venture out into the park. We spread crushed stone over muddy stretches, puddles, and eroded parts of the trail, we cut back fallen trees and overgrowth, and we divert water runoff that erodes the trail. All this while enjoying the camaraderie of working with like-minded neighbors.

Please join us on our next workday, Saturday, October 29th, from 8 AM until 11 AM (or any part of this period that you are available). We’ll meet where the end of Chatsworth Court abuts the park (on Google Maps this is 5426 Chatsworth Court). If you have them, bring work gloves, cutting shears, a wheelbarrow, tampers, shovels, and rakes. For volunteers who can’t handle heavy lifting, there will be lighter-duty chores cutting back overgrowth that is intruding on the trail. We can use all the help we can get!
Upcoming Events & Announcements

Next Trail Maintenance Workday: October 29th 8am-11am

FORL will host Braddock District Supervisor James Walkinshaw at a community-wide meeting in October to discuss the survey findings and possible funding for significant projects in and around Royal Lake. Check the FORL website and Facebook page for more information as it develops, or email friendsofroyallake@gmail.com with any questions!
Fun with FORL Crossword & Word Search
CLICK HERE FOR THE ANSWER KEYS (WS) (CW)

Fun With FORL Crossword #2

Across
2. _____ & turf
9. best ______ at camp
11. a relaxing getaway
12. royal _____
13. ___ & steamy
15. use this to go whale watching
16. on the barbie
17. paddle this in the lake
18. put a worm on a hook

Down
1. lazy, hot, and _____
3. girls just wanna have ___
4. the kids are at the _______
5. planes, trains, & automobiles
6. you can find a lot of these in the OBX
7. "it's coarse and rough and irritating and it gets everywhere"
8. swim team meets here
10. source of light & heat
14. float or fly down a river
Fun With FORL Word Search #1

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Play this puzzle online at: https://thewordsearch.com/puzzle/3901427/