



AUTUMN 2021

Vol. 3, No.4

NEWSLETTER



Photo by Ann Karp (story on page 3)

IN THIS ISSUE

**ABOUT THE
SUMMER PARK
PROJECTS**

LOOKING BACK...

**INVASIVE SPECIES
MANAGEMENT AND
COMMUNITY**

**PARK VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES
OPEN AGAIN**

ROYAL LAKE PARKS BENEFIT FROM MULTIPLE SUMMER PROJECTS

This past summer saw a burst of recreational and maintenance activities in and around Royal Lake parks.

In addition to the return of the Summer in the Parks concert program, a Covid-19 related increase in the number of visitors enjoying the parks continued through these last months. The playground and ball parks are back in full swing.

The Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) engineered several improvements to the accessibility of park amenities to the public and made upgrades to the trails around Royal Lake.

The ongoing efforts by the Invasive Management Area (IMA) team to eradicate invasive species was accompanied by multiple plantings of native vegetation in newly cleared areas.

Friends of Royal Lake (FORL) sponsored trail maintenance days involving community volunteers to haul and spread crushed stone on sections of trail prone to being muddy after a rain.

This summer's hard work improves the experience for all visitors to Royal Lake today and into the future. Be on the lookout for how YOU can help with upcoming lake cleanup days and with trail maintenance projects.

Upgrades at Lakeside and Royal Lake Parks

by Paul Gross

Have you noticed the upgrades undertaken at Lakeside and Royal Lake parks? The Fairfax County Park Authority (FCPA) has paved the walkways to integrate fields and playgrounds to make them accessible for all park patrons. This helps bring Royal Lake Parks into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and allows easier access for everyone.



Work in progress....



...tah dah!



FCPA paved the trail from the Lakeside parking lot to the ball fields; created handicap entrance capability to the playground and to the bleachers for the base-ball field; installed small concrete pads to accommodate two wheelchairs at the soccer field. Some additional work was done next to the baseball field for improved drainage and the baseball dugouts were upgraded with a layer of stone dust.

Trail improvements were also made at Royal Lake Park. A paved walkway was added from the entrance to the park on Gainsborough Drive to the various park facilities including the tennis courts, exercise equipment, basketball courts, and playground. (Photo below)

Folks enjoying a walk on the newly paved trail

The new trail allows for a short walk in the woods that provides access to the park amenities without walking on the vehicle roadway. This paved walkway opens more of the park to more users. All the other trails in the park will remain in their natural state or will be enhanced with stone dust.



LOOKING BACK....

By Suzanne Doherty

Ten years ago, after an exceptionally wet month of August and after hurricane Irene blew through Virginia on the 20th, the ground was beyond saturated and the rivers and creeks full to capacity. Then, tropical storm Lee barreled up the east coast and got stuck here by a high pressure system. The storm brought bands of torrential downpours beginning on September 6 and lasting through September 9. In some of those downpours, rain fell at 4 inches an hour; in some places, 12 inches of water fell over those stormy days. There was widespread flooding throughout the area.

In the previous weeks, the Fairfax County Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) had begun updating Royal Lake flood control mechanisms. An earthen berm had been constructed at the southwest end of the dam. The lake water quickly rose over its bank and essentially swept the berm away. That work had to be re-done after the storm passed and current flood control measures were then put in place.

Residents of Lakepointe and Kings Park West remember that flood of 2011.



Photo by Angela Camp

“Water rose over the walking path for about 30 feet toward our yard. Some of us walked across Chatsworth Court to see that the dam was blocked by police or some kind of emergency vehicle to not have people cross over the dam.”
Judy Poinsett



Photo by Andy Karp

“The amount of water spilling out of the lake was pretty amazing...we watched the rising water punch through the work that had just been done by the county...in minutes, the barrier literally just dissolved in the rush of water.”

Philip Doherty

“My family was out of town when the rain was coming down in September 2011. We returned to find the park flooded. One particularly vivid memory: The portable outhouses had not been removed from the parking lot of Lakeside Park, and were thus flooded. Inevitably, the flood water was contaminated by the contents of the outhouses, including the water that covered the

playground equipment. Nonetheless, kids were happily diving off the playground equipment and swimming and splashing around in the contaminated water. Yuck! On a happier note, the flooded forest area provided a novel place to kayak around. I'm in my kayak in the photo on the front page!”

Andy Karp

AN IMA UPDATE

Lakeside Park: Changing the Landscape

by Mary Boyer

A few months ago, the ground near the lawn at Lakeside's parking lot was a tangled mass of vines climbing the trees, thorny bushes, and monstrous weeds. Last June, twelve workers from the Lamb Center came to help tackle the mess. The group cut and pulled invasive plants, filling fifty-one trash bags. The volunteers also dealt with angry wasps whose nest fell to the ground. The area was cleared except for roots.



Since then, the Lamb Center's efficient, hard workers have come two more times. They cleared both areas on each side of the entrance road. We give them a hearty round of thanks for their dedicated work on behalf of Lakeside Park.



Mary Boyer and Lamb Center volunteers

All summer, volunteers and I have had workday after workday yanking porcelain berry, Japanese honeysuckle, and Oriental bittersweet from the ground. We sawed down and pulled up the roots of Amur honeysuckle, Japanese holly, Bradford pear, autumn olive and rose of Sharon.

The Invasive Management Area program isn't only about eradicating invasive species. We've been planting native plants that need watering, watering, and more watering in the hot summer months. They also need plenty of weeding so the seeds have a clean place to land and take root. A big thanks to Kathy Gross who has done lots of the watering and weeding and to Greg Sykes who felled large Amur honeysuckle trees.



The area we worked on near the Lakeside entrance is quite large. We sectioned off twelve feet of land at a time to show we were making progress clearing the land and planting natives, albeit slowly. We are still working on this area as well as on other sections of trail that need our attention. To those scouts who need an Eagle project, we have plenty of opportunities that are manageable.



I try to get out every day to work on some [area](#). If you would like to help at Lakeside Park or anywhere else around the lake send me an email at: nickmaryanne@yahoo.com.

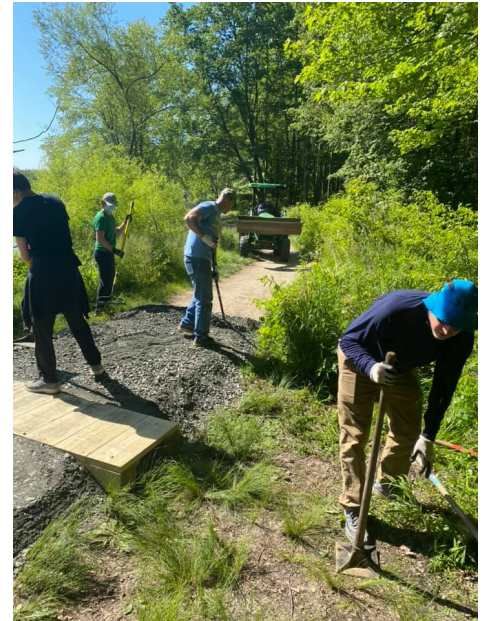
Volunteers help eradicate invasive species on the trails around Royal Lake. Photos by Mary Boyer

VOLUNTEERS WORK ON TRAIL MAINTENANCE AROUND ROYAL LAKE

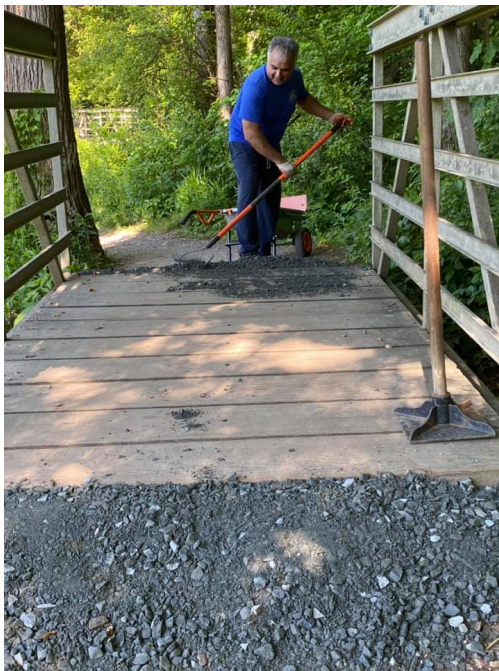
by Andy Karp

The Friends of Royal Lake organizes workdays every three months, when community volunteers help to maintain the trail around the lake. These workdays had been suspended for a year during the pandemic but began again last May. On all our workdays, all the volunteers have worked enthusiastically and productively. It's always a good feeling to work with neighbors to keep the trail around our beautiful lake in good shape for walkers and joggers.

On May 15th, community volunteers worked with staff from the Fairfax County Parks Authority (FCPA), to install three low-profile wooden culverts (see photo) not far from the Shanes Creek pedestrian bridge, in an area where water flows across the trail



when it rains. These culverts were working well until a very heavy rain in September caused the lake to rise a few feet in depth, completely covering the new culverts with water. Then the culverts, being made of wood, floated up and out from where they belonged, and eventually settled nearby after the lake water receded. On our next workday, November 27th, we plan to fix this problem in a more sustainable manner, although we are still discussing with the FCPA what is the best solution.



On August 21st volunteers worked on the trail in the general vicinity of the Lakeview Swim Club. The FCPA provided crushed stone (see photos) and the volunteers spread it over stretches of the trail that become muddy when it rains, over large tree roots that protruded across the trail, and filling in some eroded places between some of the steps on the trail. On our August workday, special recognition goes to Joe DiPietro, for going the longest distance with the heaviest wheelbarrow load, and to Jeff Gilles and Max Moxey, for continuing to work for another hour and a half after the other volunteers had left.

Community volunteers, supervised by the FORL team, are needed to do this sort of trail maintenance because the Fairfax County Parks Authority (FCPA) only has enough staff to deal with major trail work, such as replacement of deteriorating bridges. However, the FCPA provides all needed materials, such as crushed stones and culverts, and it approves all trail work projects before the FORL commits to them.

PLEASE JOIN US ON SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 27th.

We'll work from 9 AM until noon, but you can participate for any part of the three-hour work period. This will be a chance to join neighbors improving our trail while working off some of the calories from Thanksgiving dinner! All age groups are welcome. If you have shovels, rakes, tampers, and (*especially*) wheelbarrows, please bring them. Otherwise, just bring yourself! As the date approaches, we'll announce the meeting location on signs posted around the lake, as well as on Facebook @ [friendsofroyallake](#), [Nextdoor.com](#), and [www.FairfaxCounty.gov/parks/volunteer](#)

Shanes Creek Restoration Project — Significant Milestone

By Paul Gross

We have been talking about the Shanes Creek restoration project since the fall of 2019, when the initial assessment of the Creek's environmental health was completed by the Department of Public Works and Environmental Service (DPWES). After a very detailed assessment, the county determined that Shanes Creek had serious degradation, often diagnosed as "urban stream syndrome," and was a significant candidate for restoration and rehabilitation.

Excellent articles in the FORL newsletters of summer 2020 and winter 2020, were written by Fairfax County's Project Manager/Restoration Ecologist, Meghan Fellows. In these articles, she highlighted the water and environmental quality issues and the impact on the local environment, including wildlife, trees and other plants and with the eventual impact on the Chesapeake Bay.

(Check out the FORL website, friendsofroyallake.org to view the previous issues of the newsletter).

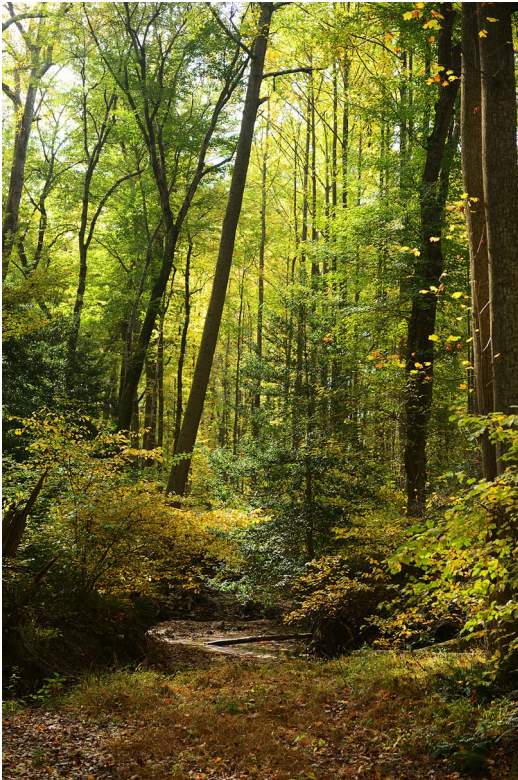


Photo of Shanes Creek by Greg Sykes

DPWES project manager, Meghan Fellows, now reports a significant milestone in the Shanes Creek Stream Restoration Project. The bids have been opened and the presumptive contractor has been selected to conduct the work - Meadville Land Services. After additional contract review and authorization, a notice to proceed will be issued. If all goes well, the stream restoration will start mid-winter 2021-2022, with an estimated construction duration of 18 months.

Please understand, Shanes Creek will be a mess during a significant part of that 18 months. However, the restoration effort will be worth the wait. FORL and the Park Authority have also been involved in this effort. An added bonus of the restoration project is that the trail running from Roberts Road to Royal Lake will be significantly upgraded.

Additional information is available at:

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/publicworks/stormwater/plans-project/rabbitbranch-tributaryrestoration-project-collingham-drive

FORL LEADERS TAKE TO AIRWAVES

Paul Gross and Sarah Lennon participated in a podcast—Braddock Voices—hosted by Braddock Supervisor James Walkinshaw. Paul and Sarah raised the profile of Friends of Royal Lake in the community by sharing information about the work done to help preserve and improve Royal Lake parkland. This Braddock Voices podcast can be heard on Youtube. For more information about Braddock Voices, go to Braddock@fairfaxcounty.gov



Action on the ball field looks like life is back to normal!
Photo by Paul Gross

ROAD RAIDERS BACK AT WORK IN THE COMMUNITY

by Tom McCook

Schedule of upcoming events:

October 11 (Columbus Day), 8-10AM. We'll clean up Royal Lake – Shane's Creek area, meeting at Gainsborough entrance. This is a large watershed that appears to just gather trash.

November 1 (Fall break – Monday) 8-10AM. We'll continue to clean up the Shane's creek watershed, meeting at the Roberts Road dam area.

December 11, Saturday 8-8.30AM. We'll clean up Commonwealth Blvd near Crooked Creek Park where there are traditionally significant amounts of fallen leaves and trash.

Please bring work gloves. Wear long sleeve shirts and long pants since we'll be walking and cleaning in park areas and you will need to protect against thistles, thorns, and poison Ivy. Tools and refuse bags will be supplied.

These are great opportunities for ALL of us. I look forward to working with young scouts & students as well as PARENTS, neighbors & retired team members. Road Raiders USED to be strictly an adult community action and recently has become more student oriented. Parents, I need your support! Retired neighbors – this is a great opportunity to work with the next generation and give back to our wonderful neighborhood.

Gold Star & Eagle Scout candidates –are you looking for a project? Let's get together and plan a project to support our parks and community. I'm ALWAYS looking for motivated young men & women in scouting to match up with needed park maintenance projects.

For more information contact Tom McCook at trmccook@gmail.com

Thank you!



From the IMA invasive species program to trail maintenance and clean up work days, volunteers are the backbone of efforts to keep Royal Lake parks safe and beautiful for all to enjoy.

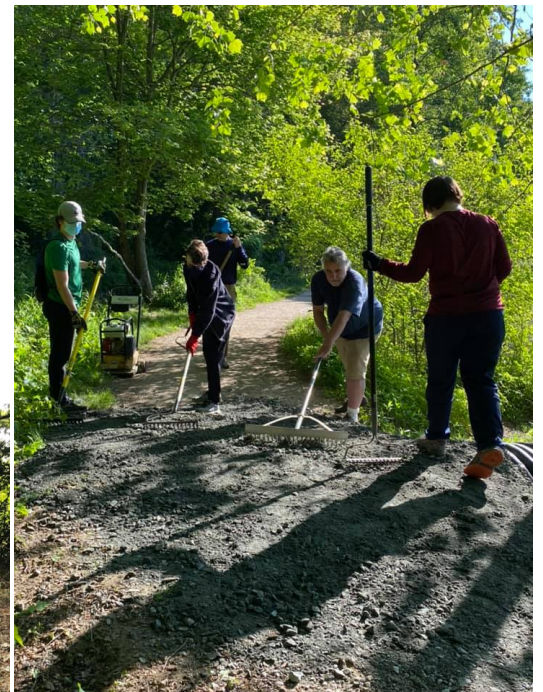




Photo by Stuart Chirtel

EDITOR: Suzanne Doherty

COMMENTS? SUGGESTIONS? IDEAS?

Contact Suzanne at
jewelboxgardensbysuzanne@gmail.com

