

Clean Fairfax?

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Chair, Environment and Recreation Committee
Mount Vernon Council of Citizens' Associations
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We want to replace this...



With this—and keep it this way.



Photos: Betsy Martin

Before and after cleanups below Janna Lee Avenue Bridge, Little Hunting Creek, Lee District



In a nutshell...

1. Litter and trash can be found in every district.
 - In streams and waterways
 - Parks
 - Beside roads and highways.
2. Litter is costly and harmful.
3. Volunteers clean it up, but soon it's back.
4. Why? Current policies and laws do not deter littering.
5. We want to
 - Increase the recycling rate, and
 - *Prevent* littering and dumping, rather than clean it up after the fact.

1. It's in every district...

Fairfax County Government Center, after cleanup



Photo: Joe Sanchirico

Holmes Run, Bailey's Crossroads, Mason District



Photo: Dan Schwartz

Bull Run, Sully District



Fairfax County Parkland in Sully District (Bull Run Post Office Rd, Centreville)



Photo: Olivier Giron, Friends of Accotink Creek

Sugarland Run, Dranesville District



Photo: Keep Loudoun Beautiful

Chain Bridge, near Dranesville District



Photo: Dan Radke

Hunter's Branch, Springfield District



Photo: Friends of Accotink Creek

Old Courthouse Spring Branch, near Tyson's Corner, Hunter Mill District



Photo: Dan Schwartz

2. Litter is harmful

- Fairfax County residents don't like it.
 - 2/3 of Potomac watershed residents are bothered "a lot" by the litter they see.
 - 2/3 want state and local governments to commit more resources to doing something about it.
- Litter is correlated with crime.
- It harms wildlife, health and safety, and quality of life.

Wildlife is harmed

Heron entangled in fishing line.



Photo: Ned Stone

Geese nesting in bottle litter.



Photo: Betsy Martin

Butts are toxic.



Photo: Glenda Booth

Plastic bag litter in Little Hunting Creek



Photo: Scott Surovell

Litter ends up as marine debris.



Photo: National Geographic

Grand Canary Island, in the Atlantic Ocean

Storm drains choked with litter = flooding hazard



Photo: Dan Schwartz

Litter and dumped materials contain toxics

A car battery removed from this ravine leaked harmful chemicals into Accotink Creek.



Source: Friends of Accotink Creek

Dumped computer equipment contain lead, mercury, cadmium, brominated flame retardants, and polyvinyl chloride that leach into Long Branch, Lee District.



...and costly

- Harms tourism.
- Property values are 7% lower in a littered community (NAHB).
- 36% of business development officials say litter affects decision to locate in a community
- Estimated annual costs of litter cleanup: \$11.5 billion (Keep America Beautiful).
 - 80% paid by businesses
- Annual cost to VA taxpayers: \$5million (Clean Fairfax)

Tourist attractions on Potomac River despoiled by trash and litter

Jones Point, after a storm



Photo: Diana Handy

**Dyke Marsh National Wildlife
Preserve**



Photo: Ned Stone

Mason Neck State Park



Photo: Colin Riley.

Commercial areas degraded by litter and dumping

**Next to Walmart, Richmond
Hwy, Mount Vernon District**



Photo: Betsy Martin

**Roadside litter, Annandale,
Mason District**



Valuable recyclable material is lost to litter



Photo: Scott Surovell

Ravines and less visible locations are targets for illegal dumping of materials that are costly to dispose of

60 tires scattered along a railroad easement. near Long Branch, Lee District.



Source: Friends of Accotink Creek

Car bumpers dumped above Accotink Creek, Mount Vernon District.



3. It's never-ending.



Case study: Efforts in 2011 and 2012 to clean up one spot on Little Hunting Creek in Lee District.

Cleanup #1, April 2011.

Downed trees had created a trash dam.



Photo: Betsy Martin

25 volunteers picked up 77 bags of trash, 3 shopping carts, 1 tire

Delegate Surovell pitched in



Creekside Village Girl Scouts and leaders risked immersion



Photos: Betsy Martin

Cleanup # 2: July 26, 2011

1 volunteer picked up 10 bags.

BEFORE



Photos: James Lewis

AFTER



Cleanup #3: Nov. 2011

3 volunteers picked up 40 bags, 3 tires.

BEFORE



Photo: Betsy Martin

AFTER



Photo: Dan Schwartz

November 2011 Trash Survey results: 3,955 items of trash in 100' of shoreline

- 38 plastic bags
- 1,971 plastic bottles
 - 50% water bottles
- 32 plastic cups/lids/straws
- 43 plastic containers
- 1056 styrofoam
- 428 aluminum/metal cans
- 3 tires
- 26 oil/antifreeze containers
- 3 spray paint cans
- 6 lighters
- 15 “other” toxics
- 16 paper
- 24 fabric
- 135 glass bottles
- 11 foam rubber items
- 136 balls
- 12 toys

Same spot, a month later.
Yes, that's a bathtub.



Photo: Betsy Martin

Cleanup #4: April 2012

65 volunteers picked up 75 bags, 49 shopping carts, 12 tires.

Pulling out the bathtub



Retrieving trash



Shopping cart graveyard



Photo: Betsy Martin

Volunteers and Walmart shopping carts



Photo: Betsy Martin



Virginia Beach has an abandoned shopping cart ordinance

- The owner of an abandoned shopping cart has to remove the cart in 7 days or pay a fine.
- Applies to shopping carts on public property, streets, sidewalks.
- Could Fairfax County implement one?
- Delegate Surovell has a bill in 2013 session to give Fairfax County authority.

County workers load debris from cleanup #4



Photo: Betsy Martin

Cost to county of April 2012 cleanup

	Rate	Hours	Cost
3 Heavy equipment operators	\$48/hour	5	\$720
1 crane	\$48/hour	1	\$48
1 open body	\$14/hour	2	\$28
1 Rear Loading Packer	\$48/hour	2	\$96
Dump fee	\$53/ton	2 tons	\$106
TOTAL			\$998

Source: Fairfax County Solid Waste Management Program

Below the bridge, after cleanup #4



Photo: Betsy Martin

Same spot 5 months later,
before cleanup #5 (Surovell in October)



Photo: Scott Surovell

Cleanup results for one trashy site over 18 months

Cleanup	Volunteers	Bags of trash	Shopping carts	Tires
#1. April 2011	25	77	3	1
#2. July 2011	1	10		
#3. Nov. 2011	3	40		3
#4. April 2012	65	75	49	12
#5. Oct. 2012	30	51	37	13
Total	124	252	89	29

Context: In April 2012 this cleanup site was one of 10 on Little Hunting Creek.



More context: 2012 was the 10th annual cleanup conducted by Friends of Little Hunting Creek

Cleanup	Sites	Volunteers	Bags of trash, recyclables	Shopping carts	Tires
2006	4	27	105		11
2007	7	45	160		20
2008	4	27	70		3
2009	9	82	119		10
2010	10	117	227		13
2011	9	70	305	4	2
2012	10	169	296	86	40
Total		537	1,282	90	99

Broader context: 2012 Potomac Watershed Cleanup

- 25th annual cleanup sponsored by Alice Ferguson Foundation.
- 660 sites in MD, VA, WV, PA, and DC.
- 14,616 volunteers collected:
 - 262 tons of bulk trash
 - 1,566 tires
 - 185,300 recyclable bottles
 - 31,450 plastic bags
 - 37,600 cigarette butts

Questions

- Do we think this is an effective approach?
- Isn't it crazy to do the same thing over and over and hope for a different result?
- How about a policy that gets everybody to pick up after themselves, rather relying on people who do not litter to pick up after the litterers?

Why does trash and litter keep piling up?

- Current laws and policies do not deter litterers.
 - Litterers (correctly) believe they won't be caught.
- Current policies create moral hazard
 - Costs of littering are not borne by the litterer (or the producer)
 - Burden and cost fall on cleanup volunteers, government.
- Quote from focus groups with self-admitted litterers:
 - “I shouldn't really care about littering because somebody is going to feel good about spending their Saturday cleaning it up.”

Why? (cont.)

- Virginia's beverage industry and lobby groups resist laws to *prevent* litter.
- Current laws work great for them! They cost industry nearly nothing.
- They are happy to have me break my back cleaning up the mess up year after year.
- In fact, they take credit for my labor...

From Virginia Beverage Association's website



- “Virginia’s beverage industry contributes excise taxes that are collected under a special litter control and recycling tax used to promote cleanups and recycling. The over \$1.8 million in grants provided to localities over the last fiscal year produced more than \$14.6 million in matching funds and services all used to collect litter, promote recycling, and educate Virginians about keeping our state clean. **The return on investment when volunteer hours and other factors were considered was almost 1222%.**”
- Statistics for this bit of PR are from a report that VADEQ is required to produce annually under the law.



Photo: Scott Surovell

What can be done?

- MVCCA voted Oct. 26, 2011, to support a *Citizens' Action Plan for Litter Prevention*.
 - Friends of Accotink Creek
 - Friends of Little Hunting Creek
- 6 actions to be taken by Fairfax County, and 4 by the state legislature.
- **Immediately: Ask County staff to evaluate the *Citizens' Action Plan*.**
- **Put the Plan on the agenda of BOS Environment Committee.**

Actions for Fairfax County

1. Fully implement recycling in the schools.
 - **ASAP: put paper recycling bins in every classroom.**
2. Require businesses to recycle cans and bottles.
3. Adopt a litter control ordinance.
 - Arlington County imposes a fine of \$300 and requires trash receptacles in public places.
4. Conduct anti-litter public information campaigns, enforce litter laws.
 - **NOW: Sign Fairfax County up to participate in Litter Enforcement Month (April 2013).**
 - **Enroll police officers in training in litter enforcement.**
5. Ask the Virginia Litter Control and Recycling Fund Advisory Board to require litter receptacles in public places.
6. Require recycling at county events.

Steps for the legislature

1. Ban polystyrene and require biodegradable packaging for take-out food.
2. A beverage container deposit law.
3. Fee on single-use plastic or paper shopping bags, or authorize localities to impose a fee.
4. Raise the annual litter tax (which has been \$25 since 1987) to fund litter prevention, cleanups and outreach.

Why Not Act Now?

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With this—and keep it this way.



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