



August 22 , 2008

## Restoration Project On Track

By Leslie Perales  
Observer Staff Writer

In the six months since the stream restoration project began in Reston, many area stream banks have been rebuilt and natural habitats have been restored. The project is scheduled to last about four to five years and includes restorations at 14 miles of area streams.

Wetland Studies and Solutions has completed much of the work on Snakeden Branch near the Hunters Woods Village Center and is on track with the project, said Nicki Foremsky, Reston Association's watershed manager. "It's going very well," she said. "Everything is holding up amazingly."

Improvements to the Snakeden Branch stream near Hunters Woods should run through the end of September, at which point workers expect to get to Soapstone Drive, Foremsky said. Wetland Studies will finish work on the Snakeden Branch ending at Lake Audubon in the spring, she said.

Restoration to the Glade stream is scheduled to begin next summer and work at Colvin Run stream is expected to begin in 2010, Foremsky said. Currently Wetland Studies is surveying the Glade area to determine what work it needs, she said.

On Tuesday morning, Wetland Studies President Mike Rolband, RA's Director of Parks and Recreation Larry Butler and Foremsky walked through Snakeden Branch with Robin Smyers, president of the RA board of directors. Smyers said she was amazed by how much the area had changed since the project's start.

At the groundbreaking ceremony in February, the stream bank was so severely eroded that the streambed was about five feet below the pathway. Trees and rocks were also falling into the stream then, but the area now resembles a quiet, green meadow with a shallow stream that meanders around rocks and under new bridges. "I'm awestruck," Smyers said. "I really am – I'm just blown away."

"It's amazing the vegetation that has grown up in the regions that were finished in April," Foremsky said.

Rolband said he often walks through the area on Saturdays and strikes up conversations with area residents who walk the pathways. He said he enjoys seeing people explore the newly improved streams and pathways and likes to educate residents about how the project will improve the area.

For example, Foremsky said a lot of soil currently washes downstream into Lake Audubon, raising the lake bed and causing RA to have to dredge the lake. Removing this sediment from

the lake is an expensive process, but the stream improvements should decrease the amount of soil that ends up in the lake, she said.

Additionally the habitat for wildlife around the streams is being restored, she said. "They can function closer to how they naturally should function," she said. "Instead of having very steep banks, we have the stream valleys."

Trees and pathways near the streams are also at risk of falling into the degraded stream banks, Foremsky said. "Hopefully it will reduce the amount of trees that fall over because they are being undermined by erosion," she said about the restoration project. "The end result is going to be worth it."

The improvements are estimated to cost between \$65 million and \$70 million, but RA and area residents are not paying for the project because it is funded through the Northern Virginia Stream Mitigation Bank. Foremsky will lead a walk of the Snakeden Branch stream from 10 a.m. to noon Sept. 27. The walk will start at the United Christian Parish Church parking lot, located off Colts Neck Road. Visit <http://reston.wetlandstudies.com> or [http://www.reston.org/Nature/n\\_stream\\_restoration.html](http://www.reston.org/Nature/n_stream_restoration.html).