



November 21 , 2008

Snakeden Branch Worthy of the Next Generation

To the editor:

I am a member of Trout Unlimited, Bass Masters and have been an avid fisherman my entire life. This passion began as a child, playing in a backyard stream collecting crayfish, frogs, and salamanders and tracking mud throughout the house to show my family. Over the years this passion grew to an infatuation that led me to leave a highly prestigious job to pursue.

I agree whole heartedly that a walk down Snakeden Branch looks dismal. There is a tremendous loss of trees and vegetation that does not look appealing in any way. I also agree that in our lifetime we will not see trees that were nearly as tall and mature as the ones that were once there. The main reason for this is that many of those trees were hundreds of years old, and I do not think I can wait around long enough to see that. But the trees recently planted will eventually become just as established and pretty and our kids will be grateful for the things Reston Association has done today.

This stream was in bad shape. Very bad shape. I have walked these footpaths many of times, and to see the steep embankments and lack of buffers worried me not only about the health of our stream but also that of the rivers and bay it contributes to. When streams form a gorge like this there is nothing to slow it down when the rain falls. Rain water from all of the surrounding impervious surfaces rushes through taking with it even more dirt, forming steeper walls, as it flows to the Potomac. As we all know from walking the paths, the only thing left is steep embankments that are an eyesore, dangerous for kids to play around and even more dangerous for the trees that use to hold the dirt in place. What is left downstream is water that has come straight from parking lots that has not been filtered or oxygenated by any plants or animals.

I do not think it is fair that we look at this project at its beginning phase and question how it looks. That would be like looking at a house 2 weeks into construction and complaining about it not having walls and having trucks outside working on it. There are still trucks there. There are trees being cut down. When this project is complete the trucks will be gone, there will be better quality water, and more vegetation than there is now. The trees will grow back. The water that flows downstream will be filtered and have much-needed oxygen, making it more hospitable for fish and other wildlife. Our kids will be able to play in a cleaner stream with more animal life.

I would ask the citizens of Reston not to listen to rumors about the restoration but rather do some research. See how Trout Unlimited has restored streams in order to bring back Cutthroat Salmon in Colorado, Steelhead Trout in New York, or countless other stream restoration projects. If this is a "pilot project" I hope streams around the area do follow in

Reston's footsteps. Stream restorations work incredibly not only for bringing back the natural beauty of the stream but also the native plant and animal life. Call Nicki Foremsky, Watershed supervisor for Reston Association, and ask questions. I hope others will support this project.

Mike Bellezza

Reston

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Nov. 14, 2008

Stream Project is Re-Design, Not Restoration

To the editor:

With little involvement by its residents, Reston has received the so-called "gift" of a comprehensive stream "restoration" project that has been presented in a positive light as cost-free. The Board of Supervisors has even "honored" Reston for the undertaking, which is apparently a pilot project for much to follow elsewhere in Fairfax County.

Anyone who has recently walked the length of The Snakeden Branch Stream, the first site treated, may think otherwise. It extends from Reston Parkway eastwards past Hunters Woods Center and under Soapstone Drive to Lake Audubon, and a tributary extending from the Reston Golf Course down to Snakeden is the most recent area to be assaulted.

To see truckloads of mature tree-trunks being driven away (Where to? For whose benefit?) is sickening. To view the vast areas of cleared open space where previously there was the thick vegetation of our woods is devastating. The scale of what has been done is unimaginable, and pictures posted on the Reston Association's Web site do not begin to convey the reality. In the whole of Reston, thousands of trees are to be removed.

What we have been left with is a wide, shallow stream-bed lined with rectangular one-ton, non-native rocks (to slow down the pace of water), dotted with a number of pools of stagnant water (they don't drain for many days and are a sure mosquito source), flanked on either side by a 20-foot or greater empty space—and that is not counting the wide parallel access road bulldozed for passage of the heavy machinery needed to wreak such havoc.

Plantings done in these areas bear no relation to the native vegetation. We will not live to see the woods restored to anything resembling what they were. This is not restoration but re-design—the use of the term is a misleading euphemism for destruction.

What's more, basic causes of our streams' deterioration have not been addressed. Proper investment needs to be made in storm-water management from major sources such as the irresponsibly rebuilt Hunters Woods Center and the Reston South Park and Ride lot. Without this there is no guarantee that a few years from now the pre-"restoration" situation will not recur. Meanwhile, we know of no guarantee, especially in the present economic climate, that the Northern Virginia Stream Restoration Bank or Wetland Studies and Solutions, Inc., carrying out the project will continue to exist and that Reston will not be left holding the bill.

A hearing of the Design Review Board to approve the next stage of the project, scheduled for December in the upper reaches of the Glade Stream Valley, was set for, of all days, Election Day, when many of us were occupied at the polls late into the evening. Only a few of the residents living adjacent to the Glade received a copy of the application. Following a

petition, the review has now been set for Dec. 16 at 7 p.m.

Having seen the total lack of control of the Reston Association over the way in which this company has carried out its job so far, we cannot countenance a continuation of the project in our neighborhood. This kind of work should be done with the utmost sensitivity and a minimum of machinery. This company's interest seems to be to blow up the size of the project at our expense and to its profit. To do nothing would be much better than to address the problem by destroying our woods.

The next meeting on this issue is Dec. 2 at RA headquarters on Isaac Newton Square at 7 p.m. At this meeting will be Nicki Foremsky, RA's watersheds manager, the engineer of the project, the forester for Reston and others. The DRB will then meet on Dec. 16 to make their decision.

It is time Reston's residents woke up to what is happening. They should have a look at Snakeden, register with RA as affected parties, and express their opposition on Dec. 2 and 16.

Yonna Kromholz

Reston