



LITTLE FALLS WATERSHED ALLIANCE

EDUCATION - ACTION - STEWARDSHIP

2021 Annual Report

2021: A Year of Adjustment

Wow - 2021 was quite a year! Never has the need for nature been so evident. With zoom, social distancing, masks, and a focus on work that could be done outside, 2021 was a year for discovering and developing new ways to care for our creeks, parks, and green spaces.

- ❑ We started **two new habitat restoration projects** – one in the **Palisades neighborhood** in Northwest DC, and one along the **Capital Crescent Trail**.
- ❑ We installed **permeable pavers to manage stormwater run-off** in the **Overlook pool parking lot**, preventing thousands of gallons of water from flooding the creek. (Thanks to funding from the Montgomery County Water Quality Protection Fund.)
- ❑ We received a grant to develop autonomous water quality testing robots. Three robots are planned for the Little Falls Branch.
- ❑ With the help of 16 LFWA-trained citizen scientists, we started a **fecal bacteria monitoring** program to inform the public of the safety of the creek for water play. Results from the tests were shared on our website and on local community list serves.
- ❑ Our **weekly individual pick-up days** with bag stations set up along the Little Falls Parkway continued for 6 months until we were able to host group days again.
- ❑ In the fall, we were able to host our very popular **Creek Critter Day** again.
- ❑ **Advocacy** was done by zoom, and we attended more meetings than ever before because we didn't have to leave our houses to get to them!

In spite of (or maybe because of) the challenges of the pandemic, we got a lot done. Looking forward to 2022, we have a new road salt monitoring program, Eagle Scout projects, and, of course, we will continue our advocacy for the watershed, our water quality monitoring programs, and our community workdays to clear non-native invasives and pick-up trash.



Executive Director

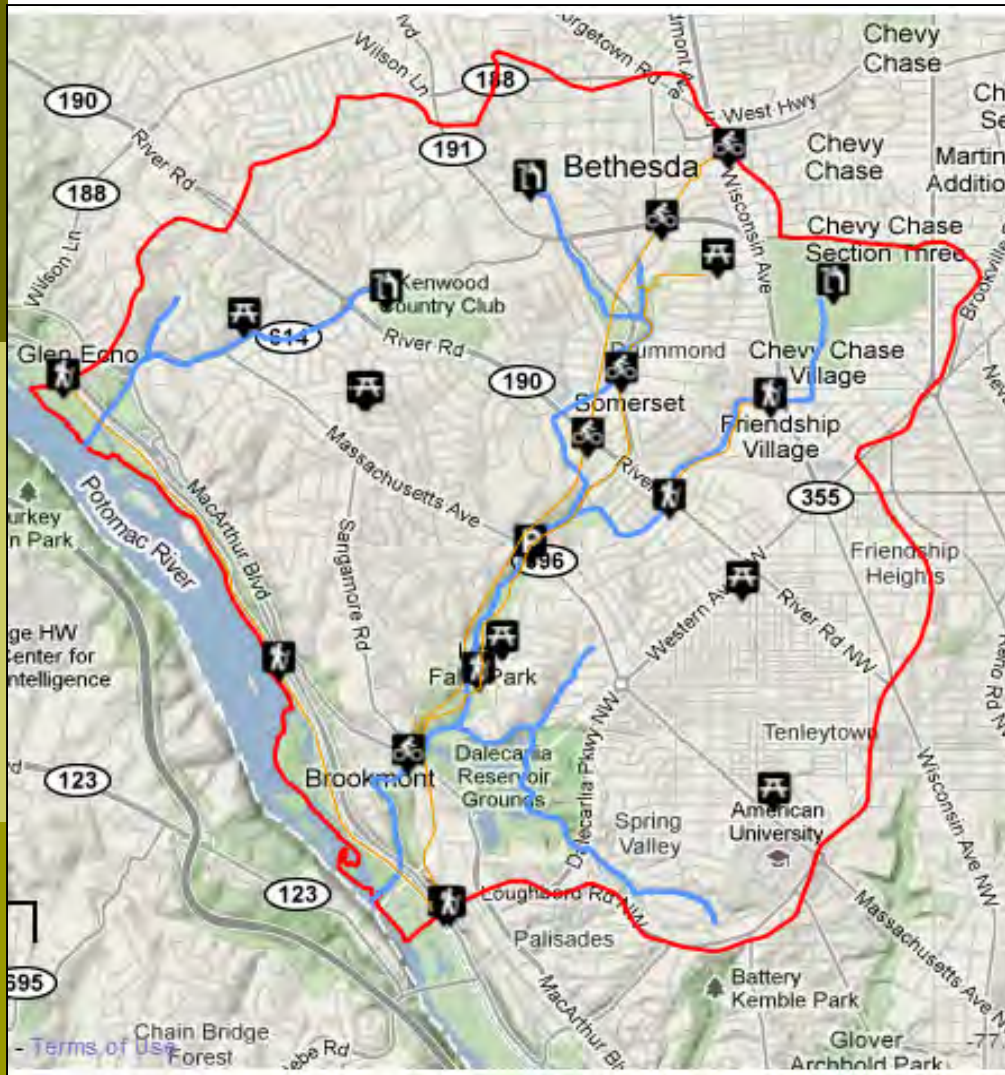
MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

Little Falls Watershed Alliance

- ❑ Little Falls Watershed Alliance is an environmental stewardship group, founded in 2008 by a group of neighbors committed to protecting the fragile natural environment of the Little Falls and Willett Branches and surrounding Little Falls watershed. Our mission is to ensure that the natural spaces in our area persist for generations to come. We strive to bring neighbors together in order to build awareness, improve the natural habitat, protect our community's natural heritage, and enhance the community's enjoyment of our creeks and wooded areas.
- ❑ From our first meeting, we have grown to over 5,000 members and engaged more than 7,000 volunteers in over 700 work days and other activities. Our volunteers have logged over 20,000 hours of service to the watershed.
- ❑ As stewards, we are committed to restoring the water quality, natural habitat and ecological well-being of the Little Falls Watershed. We focus on trash abatement, habitat restoration, and stormwater management.
- ❑ As advocates, we speak up for the needs of our parks and natural areas, and we advocate for clean water laws that are fair and enforced consistently.
- ❑ As educators, we work with neighbors, school groups, local businesses and other community members to educate through classroom activities, festivals, community work days and outreach events.



Where Are We?



- 9.5 square miles in Lower Montgomery County and Upper NW DC
- Three Creeks –
 - Little Falls Branch
 - Willett Branch
 - Minnehaha Branch
- Three Main Parks:
 - Little Falls Stream Valley Park
 - Capital Crescent Trail
 - C&O Canal

Stewardship

Trash Removal



- ❑ Partnership with Montgomery Parks and Montgomery County DOT. We provide volunteers with boots, gloves and bags.
- ❑ Hosted Individual Trash Pick-ups after the Pandemic cancelled group work days.
- ❑ Bags and gloves at two stations every Saturday starting continuing until June when we were able to resume monthly pick-ups – 37 events in all.
- ❑ 596 volunteers; 1,266 man hours
- ❑ 10,290 pounds of trash; 72 bags of recyclables

Stewardship

Invasive Weed Removal

- ❑ Hosted 24 community work days - 216 participants, 460 man hours.
- ❑ Worked with three eagle scouts to clear non-native invasives from local forested areas.
- ❑ Partnered with Montgomery County Public Schools to work in Forest Conservation areas, DC Recreation Centers, the Coalition for the Capital Crescent Trail, and with Montgomery Parks.



Stewardship

Westbrook ES Meadow

- ❑ Partnership with Montgomery Parks and Westbrook Elementary School (MCPS).
- ❑ Students from the elementary school grew trees and plants from seeds.
- ❑ Local neighbors maintain meadow.
- ❑ In its eleventh year.



Stewardship – Habitat Restoration

Norwood Meadow

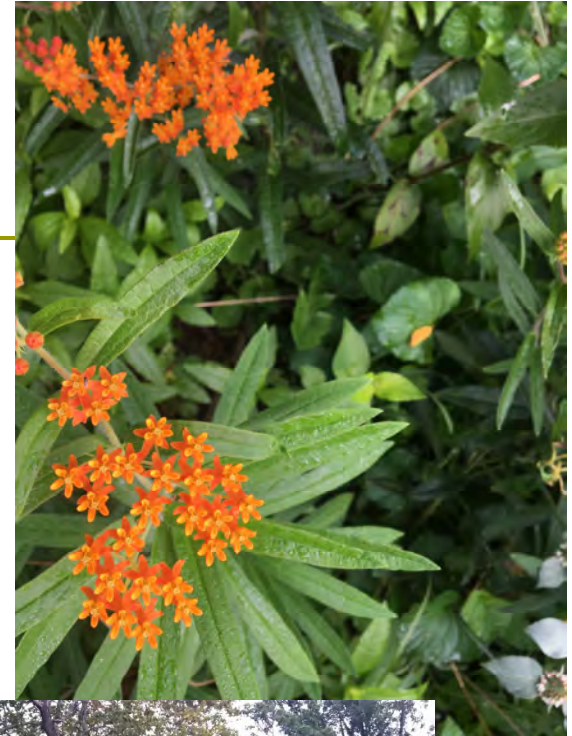
- ❑ Installed in 2011 in partnership with Montgomery Parks, funded in part by a grant from Whole Foods
- ❑ First meadow installed in a County park outside of Brookside Gardens.
- ❑ Ten community planting days have installed over 3,000 native grasses and wildflowers.
- ❑ Reseeded with wildflower seeds gathered from Montgomery County plants.



Stewardship - Habitat Restoration

Green Acres Meadow

- Neighborhood led; Partnership with Department of Transportation.
- Phase Two completed: Land cleared and 200 native wild flowers and grasses planted with help of community members and local Elementary School Environmental club.
- Phase Three completed: 15 trees and shrubs planted along the creek bank in partnership with DOT.



Stewardship

Water Quality Monitoring

Added two new programs to our ongoing Benthic Monitoring; 52 volunteers trained for three programs:

- Bacteria monitoring – 16 weeks during the summer.
- Salt testing – before and after major storms, in partnership with Salt Watch.
- Benthic Macroinvertebrate monitoring – quarterly, in partnership with Audubon Naturalis Society.

□ Bacterial Monitoring

- Building on Success of our 2020 pilot, expanded the testing period to June 2021 to September 2021, testing 5 locations for fecal bacteria.
- Trained and supervised efforts of 14 citizen scientists.
- Determined that in places, the fecal bacterial load is in the very high range.
- Working with local Riverkeepers and WSSC to investigate source of the bacteria.



Stewardship

Water Quality Monitoring

- ❑ **Benthic Macro-Invertebrate Monitoring:**
 - Monitor Little Falls Branch four times a year.
 - 13 person teamed trained to capture and identify macro-invertebrates living on the bottom of the creek.
 - Report data to partner Audubon Naturalist Society.
- ❑ **Salt Level Monitoring:**
 - Test salt level in four locations as part of national study on impact of road salt on waterways.
 - Data is reported to Isaac Walton League.



Stewardship

Water Quality Testing Robots



- ❑ Awarded a grant to develop autonomous water quality testing robots.
- ❑ Robots will be housed on the banks of the creek and move out into the water to test for 5 different pollution indicators:
 - pH
 - Dissolved Oxygen
 - Turbidity
 - Temperature
 - Total Dissolved Solids
- ❑ Data will be live streamed to a dashboard on the LFWA website and available for use by citizen scientists.



Stewardship - Stormwater Management

Overlook Permeable Pavers Grant



- Worked with Overlook Homeowners Association to install permeable pavers in two locations in their community pool parking lot.
- Pavers will capture the rain water that falls on the parking lot and return it to the ground preventing runoff to the street and to the creek.
- Awarded a \$33,000 grant in 2021 to install project. Funding for the grant is from the Montgomery County Water Quality Protection Fund.
- Installation was completed in Fall 2021.
- A show and tell meeting is planned for the spring.



Education and Outreach

First Day Hike

- For 2021, we developed a QR code first day hike because of the restrictions on large group gatherings.
- More than 350 signed up to get the QR code map.
- Stops on the way included information about the watershed and how residents could help the environment.



Education and Outreach

Creek Critter Days

As the restrictions of the Pandemic eased, we were pleased to offer a Fall Creek Critter event led by our stream monitoring team.

- ❑ Free family event to hunt for Macro-invertebrates.
- ❑ Attended by over 60 children and adults.
- ❑ Educates on stream health and engages public in stream ecology and understanding the need for clean water.
- ❑ Partnership with Audubon Naturalist Society.



Education and Outreach

Social Media, Community Events

- ❑ Publish monthly e-newsletter with information on environmental issues, native plants and events of interest. Newsletter is sent to 2,800 people on our mailing list.
- ❑ Speak to local garden clubs on issues facing the watershed.
- ❑ Active Facebook page with pictures of events and exchange of information on native plants, stormwater issues, events of interest.





**LITTLE FALLS
WATERSHED
ALLIANCE**

www.LFWA.org

May in the Watershed

Dear Watershed Friends,

These last six weeks have been tough. We are all adjusting to a new normal and becoming familiar with the term "social distancing". We have had to cancel all our trash clean-ups, non-native invasive removal workdays and other volunteer events. However, one thing that we have discovered is how many people are turning to trails and parks to exercise and to enjoy the respite, comfort, and pleasures that nature has to offer us. Whether you are walking in the Little Falls Stream Valley Park, or biking along the Capital Crescent trail, it is clear that the watershed is an important part of your day.

With this in mind, we offer a few suggestions below on how you can experience the beauty of the Little Falls watershed while social distancing and help us continue our stewardship.

Please stay safe, healthy and be mindful of the guidelines for safe outdoor activities.


 Sarah Morse
 Executive Director




Find a Hidden Gem

The Little Falls watershed is full of special places - ponds, waterfalls, creeks and little groves. While many people enjoy a walk along the Capital Crescent or the Little Falls hiker/biker trail, we challenge you to find a hidden gem, a special place off the beaten track.

Send us a photo of your discovery for us to post on our Facebook page, and we'll enter you into a raffle for a LFWA T-shirt. Send photos to info@LFWA.org.

Click [HERE](#) to see hidden gems our board members have discovered. Click [HERE](#) for some suggestions of places to hike in the watershed.

Have a Family Hunt for Macro-invertebrates!

The macro-invertebrates living in the creek tell you a lot about the water quality. We use the Creek Critter App at our family workshops and you can download it for an individual workshop. All you need is a net, a bucket, and a simple hand lens, and you can hunt for macro-invertebrates on your own or with your family. Visit [HERE](#) for instructions.



Advocacy

Willett Branch; Stormwater Management

Willett Branch Greenway

Since 2015, LFWA has been advocating for the formation of the Willett Branch Greenway, a new park and naturalized stream to replace the graffiti covered concrete culvert that is the current Willett Branch. The focus of much of our advocacy has been to ensure that development in the area of the new park conforms to the strictest stormwater management regulations. 2020 was an important year as the first parcel along the new greenway was approved as well as the new road for the development. Our work included submitting comments and testifying for strong stormwater management for the new building and road. We are proud to report that building will have 100% green stormwater management and the new road will be treated with a combination of green and structural methods, but with no need for a waiver.

Stormwater Partners

LFWA is a member of Stormwater Partners, an advocacy group for stormwater management regulations in Montgomery County. As a member of the group, LFWA has been involved in writing comments on the new stormwater (MS4) permit for both Maryland and for Montgomery County, advocating for implementation of a “no waiver” policy for stormwater management permits for new construction.

LFWA is also a member of the **Chose Clean Water Coalition**, **Montgomery Conservancy**, and **Trash-Free Maryland** and participates in their advocacy campaigns.

Partners in Stewardship

Over 30 community partners support our efforts including:

MOMs Organic Market, George Washington Freshman Experience, Accenture, Wedding Wire, Spark Post, Abt Consulting, Kind Deeds, Outdoor Illumination, Audubon Naturalist Society, Sidwell Friends Lower School, Cub Scout Pack 256, Cub Scout Pack 100, Montgomery Parks, UCG, DSG, Westland Middle School, the Democratic National Committee, Ledo's Pizza, Strosnider's Hardware, Westmoreland Church, St. Dunstan's Church, Westmoreland Hills Garden Club, the Citizen's Coordinating Council of Friendship Heights, the Chevy Chase Garden Club, Young Ambassadors for Community Service Programme (YACS), Montgomery County Public Schools, The Potomac School, and the Washington Waldorf School.



2021 Funders

Sara Anderson, Valerie Ashenbach, Farida Louise Assem, Matthew Babcock, Ken Bachman, William Baer, Tina Baker, Marion Ballard, Lynn Balzer-Martin, Robin Barr, David Batson, Lynne M. Baum, Megan Beecham, James Berry, Susan Besharov, Randy Best, Emily Best, Julia Blatt, Monica Bose, Jeanne Braha, Peter Brandriss, Tyler Bronder, David Brooks, Travis Brown, Arlene Bruhn, Michael Buening, Mark Burstein, Julie Burstein, Barbara Butera, Claire Callahan, Steve Carrier, Catherine Chumley, Nicole Cirrito, Peggy Cloherty, Wendy Cohen, Alisann and Terry Collins Foundation, Sarah Courtney, Colette Cowey, Laura Cutler, Naira Darius, Suzanne Dater, Neal Davies, Kimberly Davis, Jane Dealy, Mary Dellatorre, Janet Dence, Reid Detchon, Liz DeVoss, Marisa Diaz, Elizabeth Edmonds, Karen Edwards, Deborah Eichhorn, Victoria Elliott, Jennifer Engle, Diane Epperson, Marco Espinosa, Paul Fanlund, Julie Farkas, Mark Fernandez, Matt Fink, Irene Boardman Foundation, Lois Frankel, Lucy Freeman, Lisa Friedman, Jack Frink, Patricia Frye, Sylvia Fubini, Beck Fuentes Darling, Cinzia Furlanetto, Josiane Gabel, Pamela Gallagher, Bill Gates, James Gerard, Jesse Goodman, Spencer Gordon, Jr., Cynthia Green, Russell Green, Bill Gruen, Reza Haghighi, Julie Hamre, Donna Harman, Lindsay Harris, Eileen Hartzell, Marea Hatziolos Grant, Chip Heartfield, Dan Hirsch, Robert Holum, Caroline Hoover, Sarah Horsey, Neil Hurwitz, Dan Ianniello, Annie Ianniello, Robert Ives, Paul Janes, Harold Jordan, Hugh Kaplan, Maurie Kathan, David Kathan, Joey Kathan, Kim Kendall, Maureen Kennedy, Ann Kerwin, Susan Kessler, Marguerite Kingston, Alan Klavans, Ron Knipling, Marc Korman, Kathy Krieger, Gary Ladner, Bruce Lawson, Robert Lenhard, Allison Leotta, Greg LeRoy, Amy LeSueur, Noam Levey, Judy Lieberman, Matthew Liebman, Frank Linton, Ruth Lis, Laura Long, Katherine Lucas, Randy Lyon, Kristi Maasjo, Virginia Mahoney, Jen Mallon, Lisa Marcus, Susan Marinelli, Janeane Marks, Dana Martin, Elliot Maxwell, Alice Mayo, Jim McCallum, Milly McLean, Judy McLean, Michele McNally, Mary Ann McNamar, Craig Mellow, Dan Mick, Robyn Miller-Tarnoff, International Monetary Fund, Mikel Moore, Sarah Morse, Suzanne Mortimer-Crawford, Marie Moylan, Marie Park, Mark Pearce, Leilani Pearson, Maria Petrova, Harry Pfohl, Nancy Pindus, Richard Podolske, Eleanor Pomeroy, Julie Raffensperger, Douglas Rand, Meigs Ranney, Penny Ray, Amy Reichert, Suzanne Richman, Mike Riley, Amy Rispin, Sara Robinson, Michelle Roos, Mark Rose, Alex Rosenzweig, Amy Ross, Lauren Rubenstein, Linda Ruhl, Mary Saclarides, Peter Saligman, Iris Saligman, Frank Sanford, Lois Schiffer, Geraldine Schneeberg, Cynthia Schollard, Steven Schooner, Deborah Schumann, Janell Schweickert, Aaron Schwirian, Catherine Scott, Josh Seidman, Holly Seltzer, Sarah Shapiro, Marnie Shaul, Frank Sheed, Carolyn Sherman, Michael Siegel, Steve Silverman, William Simone, Jeffrey Slavin, Jack Sobel, Jeri Somers, Debbie Spielberg, Nessa Spitzer, Susan Spock, Maria Spottswood, Mary Staley, Jeremy Stanton, Seth Stern, Kay Stevens, Sally Strain, Kari Swenson, Ann Swett, Barbara Thackray, Karen Thornton, Jesse Travis, Jessica Gilmore Trevelyan, Tracy Truman, Matthew Tuchband, Maura Vanderzon, Liza Vertinsky, Steve Volkers, Myriam Vuckovic, Jenn Walen, Colin Warren, Howard Weiss, Kirby Weldon, Meredith Wellington, Ann Westerman, John Wheeler, Joseph White, L. Paige Whitley, Julia Wilson, Page Winstead, Barbara Woodall, Jim Wrathall, Danae Wright, George Wyeth, Ted Wyeth, Nathan Wyeth, Anne Yap, Theresa Zmola

Board of Directors

- Jack Sobel, President*
- Mikel Moore, Vice President*
- Randy Lyon, Treasurer
- Sara Robinson, Secretary*
- Laurie Fink
- Karen Thornton
- George Wyeth

* Returning officers