

Gulf Branch Stream Restoration Community Meeting #2
November 6, 2019
33 attendees

The presentation included an overview of the project goals, existing condition, project scope and draft concept design, which will include stream restoration techniques like step pools, cross vanes, reinforced bed material, and floodplain reconnection. A summary of questions and answers is provided below:

How was the scope for the project decided? Did the budget govern scope of project?

- *The scope for developing the concept design was based on the condition of the stream and the areas in need of repair. The project currently has funding for the development of the concept and final design. Funding for construction has not yet been defined or allocated as of fall 2019.*

Concern about using the Broyhill Forest Park meadow as a staging area. The area is very heavily used by kids. Concern about impacts to recreation as well as safety and liability.

- *We will work with community members in the Broyhill Forest Park area to minimize disruption timeframes and impact to the extent possible, and to take concerns about safety into account in this process.*

Concern about the culvert near 37th Rd.

- *Confirmed that the issues with erosion around the culvert in this location are known and that addressing this is part of the scope and plan.*

Steps from Broyhill Park down to the stream have been repaired a few times. Will a redesign of the stairs be included in this project?

- *The tremendous amount and force of the water coming from the Broyhill Forest Park area causes erosion on the slope that washes out the stairs, as well as erosion around the pipe outfall into the stream. The team is currently looking at options for addressing the runoff coming through this area.*

Will the County do any immediate fixes for problem areas since the project may not be constructed for several years – to stabilize trees or exposed utility equipment?

- *If there is an immediate safety concern, especially with exposed utility pipes or equipment, the County will stabilize the pipe (e.g. with concrete). Unfortunately, hardening the banks around a vulnerable tree can cause other, unintended consequences by shifting the flow of water – including potentially causing damage to other trees – without providing a long-term solution. In larger storms, riprap around a tree is still subject to erosion from the force of water.*

Will fixing the trails further downstream towards the Potomac be included with the project?

- *As the trail winds closer to the Potomac, the stream reaches bedrock, and so will not erode further. Stream restoration uses heavy, earth-moving equipment to shape a new channel, so if the stream is stable, we would avoid extending the restoration into those areas, even if the trail is not in great shape. However, we will pass these concerns along to our colleagues in Parks. As the trail gets closer to the river, it enters federal parkland, which is out of our jurisdiction.*

Do we have tree condition and species information now?

- *Yes, we have tree size, species, and condition. Because the design contractor is still working on the limits of disturbance and grading, we do not yet have the removal information. We will provide that information at the next meeting.*

I see from the online comment summary that one of the important things for the area is that it remain natural. It seems strange to use construction equipment in a natural area.

- *Unfortunately, the steep banks and the exposed sanitary sewer pipes mean that we need to do a higher-level design here that protects the stability of the stream. Again, this will mean a short-term impact, but we do aim to have a longer-term benefit, stability, and biodiversity with replanting.*

Concern that stream restoration will increase water temperatures, and that changes will be exacerbated with climate change.

- *Based on our stream monitoring data, Arlington County's restored streams' temperatures and aquatic insect communities are just as good as our best unrestored streams. There may be temporary disturbance during and immediately after construction, but we don't see restoration having a long-term impact on temperatures or benthic communities.*

How will this project account for more frequent high intensity storms?

- *With climate change, we expect more frequent intense 100-year (or greater) storms. We are taking this into account as we are defining the practices for each area and overall design. The results of the July 2019 storm showed overall, our restored streams fared better than unrestored stream sections.*

Prior stream restoration projects have issues – how will this one be different?

- *Overall, our existing stream restoration projects have continued to hold the grade of the stream above underground utility lines and stay connected to the floodplain. There have also been lessons learned, including more planning for maintenance and other more technical best practices that have evolved and will be incorporated into this project. To learn about common myths and misconceptions about stream restoration projects in Arlington, please see: <https://newsroom.arlingtonva.us/release/myths-and-misconceptions-about-stream-restoration/>*

Some places in Europe or elsewhere in the United States are doing projects with smaller equipment or no equipment, are we considering that? Has Arlington done any lower tech stream restoration projects?

- *We heard this comment at the advisory group meeting as well. We will look at these comparisons and provide information about the feasibility, applicability and any implications this approach would have for the design and goals of the project.*
- *There was an early project that used coconut fiber logs and replanting to control erosion and protect stream banks. County staff installed the project (not a contractor), but we did use construction equipment to re-shape the stream banks from vertical to sloped. The channel was not reshaped. A backhoe was used to place stone along a section of stream bank to prevent erosion. There were no trees on the stream bank at the time of the project, but trees were planted as part of the project. There were no exposed utilities, so the stream bank was not raised and no step pools were installed.*

Will volunteers be able to participate in this stream restoration project??

- *In coordination with Parks and Nature Center staff, a component of this project can be native plant rescues, for which we would welcome volunteer support.*

Stop cutting meadow [in the Sanctuary area] too frequently. Plant wildflowers.

- *Thank you for this feedback. Any changes to the mowing schedule for the Sanctuary area would need to be coordinated with the residents there.*