



FRIENDS OF Gwynns Falls/Leakin Park

1920 Eagle Drive, Baltimore, MD 21207
www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org

SUMMER 2020

Nature Art in the Park 10 Year Anniversary

by Heide Grundmann

Thanks to a small group of enthusiastic volunteer artists, their friends, and performers, 2020 marks our 10th year of bringing art to Gwynns Falls Leakin Park. We have placed creative installations made from mostly natural materials along 1.5 miles of woodland trails and in 2 meadows in the Park. As we head into our tenth, and possibly last year, we are overjoyed that our open-air exhibits allow people to experience art in a safe way during a time where traditional art galleries are off-limits.

In 2001 a professor and a 4th year graduating student from MICA approached FOGFLP and the Gwynns Falls Trail Council to create nature art installations along the Gwynns Falls Trail. We were delighted to learn about this new art form and gain a new partnership. Art on the Trail eventually faded away. But Doug Retzler, a visionary, artist and former participant in Art on the Trail, took the initiative to recreate the nature art show as Nature Art in the Park (NAP) and suggested the use of the trails near the Orianda mansion on Eagle Drive including the enchanting arched osage orange trail. There we created the annual NAP exhibition with social gatherings, teaching events, school tours and hands-on activities. We branched out to include the performing arts, namely music, dance, and even a newly-composed opera (RHYMES with OPERA)

about local historic events. Every Christmas we decorated a tree at the mansion with ornaments made from natural materials.

A fundamental characteristic of NAP is that the installations disintegrate over time, reminding us of the natural process of life. Those who view the exhibits year after year can observe and reflect upon the impermanence that surrounds us.

Over the years, we have applied for grants to provide the artists with a small stipend to cover material expenses and time. This year we are very grateful to have received a private anonymous donation earmarked to pay the artists for the appreciation of their efforts.

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Although we have certain deadlines, we continue to look for interested artists and performers to join us. Please spread the word. For more information and special dates, find us on Facebook (NatureArtBaltimore). The exhibits begin at the gazebo on Eagle Drive, which is a 5-minute walk from the parking lot adjacent to the tennis courts on Windsor Mill road.

Much appreciation goes to the NAP artists and planners, the Friends of Gwynns Falls Leakin Park, the Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks, Carrie Murray Nature Center, and Wild Haven Outdoor Early Education School for their partnerships

For more information about Nature Art in the Park please contact: Heide Grundmann at hgrundot@aol.com, Co-organizer of NAP and FOGFLP Historian.

We have Met the enemy, and He is Us

Conservation and Advocacy in the Park



By Tony Crute and Amy Stump

Our 1,200 acre park is under constant threat from climate change, deer overpopulation, and invasive plants and insects. But, ironically, it is taxpayer-funded public works projects that represent the most immediate threat to the park. This problem is not limited to our corner of Baltimore. Rec & Parks estimates that 5.5% of the city's forested parkland will be cleared over the next five years to accommodate public works projects. The majority of these are "stream restorations" funded by the stormwater remediation fees ("rain tax") paid by property owners. The idea is to turn small wooded streams into armored stormwater conduits, felling hundreds of trees in the process. Instead of funding measures that actually reduce damaging runoff, our stormwater remediation fees are bankrolling the destruction of forested stream valleys in the parks.

The Granite Pipeline

In 2013 BGE announced that it would replace the natural gas conduit that runs through the park. The new pipeline could not be constructed on the same path as the old line, and a 75-foot treeless corridor was required for construction (50 feet of which must remain in perpetuity). After much negotiation, all parties agreed upon a 2.2-mile route which minimized tree loss. Nonetheless, when construction concluded in 2019, 700 mature trees had been felled, and 20 acres of park land had been clear-cut.

To add insult to injury, the City was paid only a fraction of what this 20 acres of land was worth. BGE and the city were required to enter into a 25-year franchise agreement—in essence, BGE is paying to rent the portion of the park that holds the pipeline. The law states the City must undertake an appraisal of the land's value, and charge BGE accordingly. However, no appraisal was ever made public, and the final price tag—1.4 million dollars-- was felt by many experts to be woefully low. Our organization was greatly dismayed by the lack of transparency in this process, and we are concerned that BGE, a frequent contributor to many local political campaigns, got away with paying the citizens of Baltimore millions of dollars less than their park land is worth.

We filed a lawsuit against the city and BGE in April 2019. Our goal is to obtain a more favorable franchise deal for the citizens of Baltimore. Moreover, we want to remind our elected officials that they work for the citizens of Baltimore, not BGE.

You can read much more about this issue at our website (click on the News button), or peruse the Baltimore Brew's archives. A sincere "thank you" to the many friends who generously contributed to our campaign! As we eagerly anticipate our court date (now delayed by the pandemic), be on the lookout for phase 2 of our fundraising campaign.



Clear cut logs from the granite pipeline (photo courtesy of Sarah Lorde) (Above). Granite pipeline clearcut along Weatherdsville road. Pipeline (Below)



Stream Restoration in GFLP

DPW has targeted three small streams in Leakin Park for “restoration,” along with a dozen or so others throughout the city. The three streams currently flow through wooded parkland adjacent to Hunting Ridge and Rog-nel Heights. For reasons unexplained, the last five or six years have seen a huge increase in the amount of runoff piped into these streams, resulting in massive erosion of the streambeds. As a result, they are now classified as “degraded” streams by MDE, which allows the City to earn stormwater remediation credit by “restoring” the streams. The alternative would be to undertake the more complex task of slowing and filtering runoff before it enters the forest by modifying or removing impervious surfaces, planting vegetation, and installing retention ponds around paved lots.

The reconstructed streams are designed to slow the rate of flow and filter out sediment; whether they actually do that is debatable. But it is certain that any such benefits are outweighed when the project’s location requires clear-cutting irreplaceable urban forest land. For example, in order to rebuild a few hundred feet of stream between the 4600 blocks of Briarclift and Franklintown Roads, DPW plans to clear-cut a 25’-wide access road, removing 90 mature trees. The surrounding stream valley will be stripped of its precious topsoil and regraded. After the lumber and topsoil are trucked out and the boulders, gravel and fill dirt are trucked in, to be tastefully arranged in the brand-new streambed, 2-inch diameter trees will be planted to replace the lost oaks and beeches. Because the rebuilt streams typically require frequent ongoing maintenance (including needing to be rebuilt after flooding events), a treeless corridor is likely to remain permanently, inevitably introducing invasive plants and inviting dumping and other harmful human activities. In effect, three new zones of forest edge will be created, fragmenting and degrading this remarkably large area of high-quality but fragile urban forest habitat. Looking at these short stretches of narrow stream, it is impossible to imagine that leaving them alone could possibly cause enough harm to justify all the environmental damage caused by “restoring” them.

Whynot “restore” Dead Run, you may ask. So did we. We pointed out the massive erosion occurring there, and the relative ease with which it could

be accessed for construction without cutting mature trees or creating new edge. Stream restoration certainly can be beneficial in appropriate settings such as open fields and developed or damaged areas, where they can result in a net improvement to the surrounding habitat, and can easily be accessed for construction and maintenance. A 2008 project in Irvington appears to have curtailed erosion of the surrounding fields, and also added a wooded stream buffer. Parts of Dead Run would likely be ideal sites for a similar project.

In Stony Run Park, stream restoration has had mixed success. In the Roland Park portion, it appears to have saved the narrow lawns on its banks from further erosion, and the reconstructed stream’s artificial appearance is not offensive in a setting that is more backyard than pristine natural habitat. But below University Pkwy, where the park changes from lawn to natural forest and the terrain steepens, it’s been a disaster. Many trees felled, then more damage and tree felling when it had to be rebuilt several times after flooding events.

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Stream “restoration” at Chinquapin Run in Northwest Baltimore

In 2018, the forested areas being “restored” along Chinquapin Run in northeast Baltimore were wantonly destroyed by the low-bid contractor who miserably failed to meet even basic standards for tree protection and sediment control, ironically discharging tons of silt into the Bay, exactly the outcome these projects are supposed to prevent.

Unhappily, all this unnecessary tree-loss and destruction in GFLP would coincide with two other extremely damaging events that can not be averted: the BGE gas main replacement, and necessary sanitary sewer repairs.

Sewer Rehabilitation Project

But wait, there's more! In January we were informed that DPW will be repairing some of the sanitary sewer pipes that run through the Park. More disturbance, more trees cut--sound familiar? At least this time, the goal is environmentally sound, and might even truly help the Bay. However when the

buzz of chainsaws began in April, we couldn't help but wonder: didn't DPW just tell us construction on forested projects pauses in Spring to accommodate nesting season? While we hope that DPW contractors will try to minimize collateral damage, even the most optimistic among us have to admit: it is difficult to protect a wild park in an urban environment.

The Winans Chapel Preserving an Architectural Gem

Ed Orser

With the delayed addition of the access ramp, stairs and railings, the project to preserve the exterior of the chapel has been completed this May. A priority of the Baltimore Herb Festival from its inception in 1987, completion of the exterior work occurs at a time when this year's festival had to be cancelled due to the restrictions necessitated by the Covid-19 pandemic.

When potential funders were approached about the possibility of grants, a frequent comment was that this 1850s building was indeed "an architectural gem." Along with other features that date from the time of the Winans Estate—the Orianda mansion, carriage house, "honeymoon cottage," and water wheel--these remarkable reminders of another age do much to provide the distinctive character of Leakin Park.



On several occasions people have broken into song, their accomplished voices inspired by the acoustics of the interior.



Visits to the Winans Chapel have become an important feature of FOGFLP-sponsored Second Sundays in the Park, attracting visitors from throughout the City and region, and the chapel. On several occasions people have broken into song, their accomplished voices inspired by the acoustics of the interior. Several area musicians have volunteered to play their instruments for these open days, serving as veritable Pied Pipers attracting children and parents to the magical setting.

While Carpenter Gothic architecture has roots in the American architecture of the period, the wooden edifice has also struck a chord in the memory of visitors with European heritage, several from Eastern Europe and Russia remarking on memories of wooden religious edifices in their home countries. Similarly, carpenters on the project with Ukrainian heritage have commented on the fine craftsmanship and quality wooden materials that they have done such a skillful job of renovating.

If you haven't seen the chapel since completion of the final steps to the exterior preservation project, check it out. While the Covid-19 restrictions forced cancellation of this year's Baltimore Herb Festival, which would have brought many visitors, a great many area residents have viewed it as they discover the benefits of Leakin Park's walkways and trails in an era of sheltering in place.

Loss of a champion

Antonio Carpenter passed away in 2019. A long-time FOGFLP board member, champion of the Magnolia Grove, and creator of the Sacred Space, he will be sorely missed.

*His love and respect for nature
was a major motivation in his life.*

Antonio was always connected to nature--from his early childhood in North Carolina, to his discovery of the Leakin Park Sacred Space. His love and respect for nature was a major motivation in his life. The uncovering and salvation of the Magnolia Grove from choking vines is a testament to his devotion to the park. With the construction of a Hopi stone labyrinth and Cherokee stone ceremonial circle, a space was created where people could feel at peace and enjoy the spiritual sanctuary of nature. His final dream of creating a meditation garden will be carried out in his memory by his family and friends.



2020 Fogflp Board members

John Chambers

Craig Close, Treasurer

Tony Crute

Peggy Cummings (*new board member*)

George Farrant, 1st Vice President

Heide Grundmann, Historian

Karen Hull, Secretary

Alison Jane (*new board member*)

Jack Lattimore

Bridget McCusker, President

Dustin Meeker (*new board member*)

Jo Orser

Brenda Pinkney (*new board member*)

Amy Stump

Chris Wharton (*new board member*)

Zachary White

FOGFLP Board Charges On

In 2020 we welcomed several new board members, some of whom are longtime Fogflp members, and some of whom are relatively new to the area. We also bid a fond farewell to our retiring board members: John McCaul, Dick Fairbanks, Jerome Golder, and Joy Goodie. We thank them for their service.

If you are interested in joining the board, or partnering with our organization, contact us at info@friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org.

President's Podium

June 2020

Dear Friends,

Since the onset of the Covid-19 restrictions, visitors in Gwynns Falls Leakin Park (GFLP) have significantly increased. I am in the park almost every day and have been amazed at the number of people that I see. From morning to early evening, I see strollers, walkers, hikers, bicyclists, picnickers, bird watchers, gardeners, and explorers of all ages. I am hoping that as more people discover the park, they will continue to take advantage of all that the park has to offer. If you are looking for a new place to get outdoors during these unusual times, keep the park in mind and let your friends and neighbors know. Our trails never get too busy, and thus it is possible to enjoy the outdoors while also practicing safe social distancing.

Over the last few months, a small group of FOGFLP members has been meeting to explore the possibility of GFLP being designated as a member of the Old Growth Forest Network. This designation would enable the park to receive special recognition and provide further protection to the park from future threats such as logging, encroachment, and development. If you are interested in joining this effort, contact me (Bridget McCusker) on our website, www.friendsofgwynnsfallsleakinpark.org. You can find out more about the Old Growth Forest Network at oldgrowthforest.net.

I want to thank the membership for returning the mail-in ballots that allowed us to move forward with adding six new board members. I am delighted to report that 52 ballots have been received which is over half of those sent out. Statistically speaking, that's an excellent return! In addition to the ballots, we received a number of kind remarks from members expressing their gratitude for the work that FOGFLP continues to do year after year. Without you, we would not be able to continue our important work.

Lastly, I want to address current events, including the appalling killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and many others. FOGFLP stands in solidarity with people of color and we would like to raise our voices in favor of a world where black lives matter. Just as the natural world thrives on diversity, so does our society. As a Board, FOGFLP has been discussing how we can increase inclusivity in our events. Let me start by simply saying this: everyone is welcome in the Park, regardless of skin tone, ethnicity, or who you chose to love. We are happy you are here, and we hope the Park will be a sanctuary to you.

You will be hearing from us soon about the annual meeting so until then, stay safe and get outside.

Bridget McCusker, President

FOGFLP Creates New Model to Handle Construction Projects in the Park

Jack Lattimore

In mid-March FOGFLP set up a Task Force to respond to the impending damage to the park caused by DPW's Sewer Rehabilitation Project, SC977. The Task Force is composed of local stakeholders including FOGFLP, Windsor Hills, Dickeyville, and the Baltimore City Forestry Board. 2 members, Chris Wharton, a new Board Member, and Matt Rescott of the Forestry Board, currently work in the environmental restoration industry and are well versed in the type of construction that DPW will be doing in the park.

The Task Force moved quickly to request information from DPW. The Task Force has had 2 phone conferences with DPW and City Park officials. The 2nd conference call was arranged and hosted by Councilman Kristerfer Burnett. On 3/20 the

FOGFLP Task Force sent an official letter to Directors Garbark of DPW and Moore of BCRP. The letter was detailed and included a long list of our concerns.

Our work has paid off. FOGFLP has been invited to join the DPW Project Manager on Inspections and to attend Progress Meetings. This is an unprecedented level of cooperation between DPW and community stakeholders and nothing less than a new model of cooperation.

As the Task Force has been quick to point out, none of this negates the fact that the project will damage the park and might be shocking to see. But we know the details of the post-construction repair work, and will work hard to insure it is carried out. This sewer rehabilitation project will improve public health in the City and improve stream quality. From the start our motto has been, "We do not intend to stop the project. Our goal is to limit the damage."

Our previous treasurer, Joy Goodie, recently resigned her position due to family and work demands and our new treasurer, Craig Close, is currently re-organizing the books. On that note, I want to assure you that our treasury is in good shape and to thank you for your continued commitment to The Friends through your dues and donations. We are happy to keep so many of you as longtime members and neighbors and welcome new members from near and far. I don't want to misrepresent the figures at this point, and I am promising a full financial report when we hold our annual meeting in the not-too-distant future. We will be in touch when it looks like

- Trail Maps - \$750.00
- Banners to display in the park to provide contact info about FOGFLP - \$168.00
- Tuition Assistance to Carrie Murray Nature Center to send two student-naturalists to a workshop in Colorado - \$500.00
- Donation to Wild Haven Forest Pre-school & Childcare at Carrie Murray Nature Center - \$100.00
- Ongoing fees related to maintenance of the website and banking fees

Bridget McCusker, President

A black and white photograph of two barred owls perched on a tree branch. The owls are facing each other, with their heads slightly turned towards the camera. They have dark, mottled plumage with prominent horizontal bars across their chests and wings. The background is a blurred forest scene with tree trunks and branches.

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Check out our new website
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