

Lubber Run Watershed Group



January 2?, 2022

Dear County Board Chair Cristol, Arlington County Board Members and County Manager Schwartz,

Our civic leadership Group is writing today to highlight critical stormwater-related issues in Arlington County. These issues create significant costs, safety concerns, aggravation, and heartache for many citizens.

BACKGROUND

In the fall of 2021, the Lubber Run Watershed Group (LRWG) was formed by the presidents of the six civic associations within the Lubber Run watershed: Arlington Forest, Ballston, Bluemont, GlebeWood, JM Langston, and Waycroft-Woodlawn. This group was modeled after the Torreyson Run Watershed Citizen Task Force that organized in 2019 following the widespread flooding and devastation in Westover caused by the July 8, 2019, rainstorm. The LRWG is supported by the Arlington County Civic Federation and the aforementioned Civic Associations. The goal of the LRWG is to identify stormwater-related concerns within the Lubber Run watershed and to provide input to various county organizations and staff to ensure mitigation projects are prioritized and funded.

THE LUBBER RUN WATERSHED

Lubber Run watershed has been identified in the 2013-4 Stormwater Master Plan and since as one of the top watersheds in need of priority attention as a matter of County policy.¹ Based upon data gathering by our members, we believe that a multi-faceted solution will be required. As we approach the definitional stages of the 2023-2032 CIP planning, the LRWG requests that you budget for the solutions for the issues identified below:

1. **Remediation of flood issues in the Waycroft-Woodlawn/John M Langston area of the Lubber Run Watershed** – from the Virginia Hospital to the Ballston Pond - to include funding of new stormwater pipes along public right of ways and a new detention vault placed within Woodlawn Park. While the detention facility will be of great help to downstream portions of Lubber Run and beyond, upstream solutions to flooding are still needed.
2. **Erosion control and channel maintenance along Lubber Run** – the creek banks along N. Abingdon are eroding at a very fast pace due to the high rate and volume of water that is jettisoned out of the quarter mile aggregation and acceleration tunnel running from the Ballston Pond to Wilson Boulevard. We believe the fast-moving water likely increases sediment in the water, creates an MS4 (municipal separate storm system) key concern, and causes property loss. This effort may include procurement of property, stream bank reinforcement, tree maintenance, tree and debris removal from the stream, and clarification of easements and access points.

3. **Continued effort to prevent homes along N. Abingdon, N. Albermarle, and Wilson Blvd from being moved into a 100-year flood zone by FEMA.** This could include LOMR updates, additional analysis, and further pond or stream work (including daylighting) to reduce flows coming out of the Ballston Pond.
4. **Adoption of new regulations and/or better enforcement of existing regulations to curtail the impacts of above ground stormwater as well as underground water flows caused by new large development (commercial and large private homes).** These measures must include improved stormwater impact analysis and public communication for future site plans. Consideration should be given to providing financial relief to people whose homes are already affected by water issues from building.
5. **Improvements to under capacity storm drains and addition of new overland relief** within the watershed as called out as part of the January 23, 2013, Stormwater Capacity Analysis for Lubber Run Watershed ³.

NEED FOR PRIORITIZATION, FUNDING

LRWG is aware that many stormwater mitigation projects are not being completed due to lack of prioritization and funding. The funding issues must be resolved expeditiously to prevent further harm to our residents. At present, many residents are paying a very high price for the development that has occurred in Arlington over the past 75+ years, which is now exacerbating our stormwater issues.

As noted within Arlington County websites, development decisions allowed for gullies, streams, and floodplains to be filled in or paved over². Streams were undergrounded ², and today the Lubber Run watershed is 46% impervious³ with development driving a continuous degradation to pervious soils. Within Lubber Run watershed we have residents who are routinely flooded out near the Virginia Hospital Center.

Residents along Lubber Run may soon have their properties re-categorized as being within a 100-year flood plain – driving massive reduction in property value and requiring expensive flood insurance. Other citizens have routine basement flooding caused by uphill construction.

All these concerns are coming at a very high cost to private citizens, meanwhile the developers of large projects and outsized houses profit while downstream homeowners bear the financial burden of the increased runoff. We are not opposed to these projects per se, but fairness would seem to dictate that County government work to ensure that the developers fully mitigate the harm they cause.

Please remember: the West has their fires; we have our floods. For the reasons discussed above, Lubber Run watershed issues require your immediate attention and we are anxious to work with you and the County staff on solutions that should work for everyone.

Thank you for your consideration.

Ester Bowring, President, Arlington Forest CA
Henry Staples, President Ballston CA
Laura Kirkconnell, President – Bluemont CA
Wilma Jones Killgo, President JM Langston CA
Laura Johnson, President GlebeWood CA
Diane Kelly, President Waycroft-Woodlawn CA

¹

<https://www.arlingtonva.us/Government/Programs/Sustainability-and-Environment/Stormwater/Stormwater-Capacity-Improvements>

² <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d0bb906589d144e5939281b60160b583>

³

<http://arlingtonva.s3.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/31/2014/02/DES-Storm-Sewer-Capacity-Lubber-Run-Report.pdf>