



Column: Relax, Exhale, Revel in Bigger Picture

Reston founder reflects on stream restoration debate.

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If ever there was an example of the saying, "You can't please all of the people all of the time," it is the \$70,000,000 Reston stream restoration project. As far as I know, no one has questioned the necessity to counter the serious erosion of these streams. And no one can possibly fail to be grateful for Chuck Veatch having arranged for the provision of those funds by a source outside of Reston.

The uproar on the subject by members of our community has stemmed from about how the work has been done to date and how it will be continued to be done in the future. The criticisms have ranged from worthy of attention to outlandish. I should like to deal briefly with some of these criticisms.

First, the outlandish ...

1. The project should not have been started and should not be allowed to continue until detailed designs for the entire project have been submitted and approved by appropriate authorities, the same procedure as was followed for the development of Reston. This is wrong. Detailed plans for Town Center never could have been prepared in 1963 when Reston's Master Plan was submitted for approval; Town Center plans were started over 20 years later. While concept plans for the entire project have been submitted and approved (analogous to Reston's Master Plan) detailed plans for the last phase of stream restoration will only come years from now, taking into account the then existing conditions that will undoubtedly differ from today's conditions.

2. The project should not have been started without objective, outside analysis and should not continue without responsible supervision. Not only has RA's staff been intimately involved every step of the way, but Federal, State and County representatives have reviewed the plans and the work with care and fulsome praise.

3. Each newly planted tree should be encircled by wire guards against foraging deer. Best information is that such guards do more harm than good. Some time ago, a Reston community objected to such guards that had been installed in neighboring woods. Accordingly they were removed and at considerable expense, since they could not be pulled out without uprooting the trees and therefore had to be clipped at ground level.

4. Comments that I actually heard at a meeting on Dec. 16: "Fire the RA staff!" "Fire the contractor!" "Follow the money!" Such hysteria is shameful, particularly in view of the contractor's exemplary credentials, meticulous preparation, and availability to concerned citizens, not to mention the years of dedicated service by RA staff.

As to the valid criticism: A stand of mature trees was clear cut. In order to get the heavy equipment in that would be needed to carry on the work at this particular location, either trees would need to be sacrificed or a section of paved pathway would need to be torn up. In retrospect, the wrong choice was made; the trees were cut down. It will take years for newly planted trees to replace those that were cut, whereas the pathway could have been restored when the equipment was removed. It is truly unfortunate, but now done. Nevertheless, with the work finished, the scene will be beautiful with the stream restored and the open area tastefully planted.

The RA staff's and the contractor's reaction to the expressed outrage could not have been more encouraging. Rather than going on the defensive, they have pledged to provide more interaction with those closest to the work on successive sections of the streams.

It is timely for us to relax, exhale, and revel in the bigger picture, our very good fortune in having our streams get the work essential to restore them at effectively no cost to us. We and future generations of Restonians are the beneficiaries of this arrangement.

By Bob Simon

Founder