



PUBLIC MEETING NOTES

Watkins Mill Road - Travis Avenue Stream Restoration

The following notes include questions and responses from both the virtual public meeting held on June 18, 2020, as well as those received after the meeting. This document is posted on the City's website under the [Projects in the City](#) webpage. The document will be updated as inquiries are received. Inquiries can be submitted to Stormwater@gaithersburgmd.gov or to 301-258-6370.

The following questions were received during the virtual public meeting.

Q 1. Will traffic be impacted? Where will the construction entrance be?

R: The construction entrance will be on Watkins Mill Road across from Windbrooke Drive. It is expected that most of the traffic will arrive and depart towards the recently opened I-270/Watkins Mill Road interchange. A Maintenance of Traffic plan is a part of the approved plan; it shows where traffic warning signage will be, where sidewalks will be closed, etc. All the construction will be within Blohm Park.

Q 2. Why are no trees shown to be planted in the area adjacent to the stream? The area proposed for riparian buffer establishment in the Whetstone Run portion of the project is inadequately sized and is located on the fringes of the project. There are many tree species that grow and thrive in hydric soils near streams---just as the existing 100+ trees are doing today adjacent to Whetstone Run in Blohm Park. I urge the City to replace a large portion of the area planned for 'emergent wetland plugs and wetland seed mix' with 1--2 inch caliber trees. This is critical for wildlife habitat, stream shading, and aesthetics. It will result in a superior project.

R: It is important to establish ground covers soon after construction is completed. The wetland plugs and seed mix in the project's planting schedule will stabilize the soil and keep invasive species such as phragmites from establishing in Blohm Park. Tree planting within the floodway in the early stages of revegetation may shade these ground covers and impede their growth and establishment.

Once the contracted project is complete and the groundcovers are established, the City intends a second phase to enhance the forestation in the project area. While there is no specific planting plan at this time, the City will select locations for, and species of, trees that will minimize the possibility of impeding the function of the floodway with a goal to create a diverse, complex forest. These tree plantings will be enhanced over time by natural regeneration.

The project meets the City's 1:1 replanting requirement. One hundred six trees with a diameter of 12 inches or greater will be removed. Native species will be used for the 140 trees to be planted. There will be a 2-year warranty on the plantings. Wetland plugs and seeds are not counted towards the forestation requirement.

Q 3. Will the pedestrian bridges remain in the park?

R: Three pedestrian bridges will be removed to restore the stream. The hydraulic modelling showed that the future condition of the stream would be unstable if the bridges were replaced. One bridge within the park that crosses a tributary to Whetstone Run will remain.

Q 4. Will it be possible to walk from Watkins Mill Road to the trail adjacent to Great Seneca Creek once construction is complete? It's a concern that the pedestrian access through the park will be changed.

R: The pedestrian access within the park will be impacted by this project. A pathway from Watkins Mill Road to the Great Seneca Trail exists, however, it would require using a shared-use path on private property.

Q 5. The upper section of Watkins Mill Run is very steep. There is a lot of trash that collects there, however, the area is hard to access for stream clean-ups. Can the contractor be asked to put in a trash-collection system?

R: The rock-step structures to be constructed along this segment of Watkins Mill Run should make it less difficult to access this area for stream clean-up activities.

The scope of the project was set on April 3 when the solicitation for construction was set. A trash collection system is outside the scope of the current project.

Q 6. I'm concerned about the use of algaecide in ponds. Does the use of algaecide impact the aquatic life in the stream?

R: The City uses algaecide in its ponds judiciously. It is used only when the benefits of the application outweigh the risks. The contractor applying the algaecide is permitted by the Maryland Department of the Environment.

The rock-step structures proposed for Watkins Mill Run and the riffles proposed for Whetstone Run are designed to introduce oxygen into the stream. This additional oxygen in the stream should reduce the need for algaecide in downstream water bodies.

Fertilizer use on upstream properties often exacerbates algae issues in ponds and lakes. For more information on fertilizer use and the Maryland Fertilizer Law, please see [Montgomery County DEP's webpage](#) on the topic.

Q 7. When will the construction take place?

R: Construction is expected to begin in mid-July and continue through early 2021. Tree planting is scheduled to begin on March 15, 2021. Activity at the site can be expected between the hours of 7 a.m. and 5 p.m. Mondays through Fridays. Please note that

Section 15-8 of the City's Code, Disturbing the Peace, allows construction activities as late as 9 p.m. on weekdays and between the hours of 9 a.m. and 9 p.m. on Saturdays, Sundays and federal holidays.

Q 8. Will there be any construction staging east of Watkins Mill Road?

R: All the construction and staging will be west of Watkins Mill Road within Blohm Park.

Q 9. What species of trees will be used in the woody debris in the banks? Will they be willows?

R: The trees removed as part of the project will be used to stabilize the banks of the restored stream. The number of trees to be removed and their diameters is known, however, information on the specific species is not available at this time.

Q 10. Can you explain how this project earns credits for the City's MS4 permit? Do the credits cover current imperviousness? Or will it handle new development as well?

R: The credits for this project are limited to the current impervious acreage upstream of the project.

Q 11. If constructed, the Mid-County Highway extension project's alignment would cross Blohm Park. If that roadway project happens, will this project have to be redone in the future?

R: If the roadway project is revived as currently designed, there would be overpass supports within the park, but the stream restoration would likely remain. Much of the Whetstone Run restoration in this project would have been required by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers had the roadway extension project proceeded into design.

The following questions were received after the virtual public meeting.

Q 12. Why does Whetstone Run need to be realigned? Will the stream be moved to a different location?

R. Whetstone Run will stay in the same general area, with some changes to the location and curvature of its meanders. The realignment will increase the stream's stability and decrease erosion of the channel with the goal of decreasing the amount of downstream sedimentation. The realignment will also reduce the velocity of stormflows through the channel as more runoff will enter the surrounding floodplain.

In addition to its ability to improve habitat and geomorphology, this project was selected since it could earn the City credits towards its stormwater permit requirements. In order to continue to be creditable, the City must inspect the restoration every 3 years and continue to show that the stream is stable. Leaving the tight meanders in place would increase the risk that the project would once again become unstable.

Q 13. Will the contractor or City staff be responsible for removing trash and debris from the prior to the start of the restoration?

R: The contractor will be required to remove trash and debris within the project's limits of disturbance (LOD) once the company is working at the site. The LOD is depicted on the plans.

Areas of Blohm Park that are outside of the LOD will continue to be maintained by the Department of Public Works.

Q 14. Please confirm that the existing trees along Watkins Mill Road and along Watkins Mill Run outside of the LOD will remain. These trees are critical for maintaining an attractive streetscape, buffering the houses on Knoll Mist Lane, and continuing carbon sequestration, especially with the increased traffic on Watkins Mill Road after the completion of the I-270 interchange.

R: No trees will be removed outside the LOD.

Q 15. When was the public hearing for this project?

R. This project is a part of the City's Stormwater Capital Improvements Program. As such, public comments specific to this project were heard during budget process hearings. There was not a separate public hearing.

Q 16. Why is this project being performed?

R. This project was selected since it will correct erosion, steep banks, invasive species, incised channels, and poor habitat for aquatic wildlife while earning credits towards the stormwater goals the State of Maryland has set for the City.

Q 17. How will this project benefit the wildlife and their habitat?

R. This project is designed to increase Blohm Park's wetland areas by about 1.5 acres. By increasing the extent of the wetlands, wildlife habitat will be improved. The substrate of the stream will also be enhanced to benefit macroinvertebrates' habitat.

Q 18. Which governmental entities are involved in this project?

R. The City of Gaithersburg is funding and managing this project. It has received permits for the project from the Maryland Department of the Environment, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission.

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