

Common Citizen Concerns Shared with VDOT

VDOT thanks you for sending your comments, concerns, and questions. We will be addressing them to the best of our ability. But if we have not addressed your concern specifically within the generalized comments below, please feel free to contact the project managers Reed Pinkney (Reed.Pinkney@VDOT.Virignia.gov) for the VDOT NoVa District Emergency Old Telegraph Road Slope Repair project or Joe Parfitt (Joseph.Parfitt@VDOT.Virignia.gov) for the VDOT Central Office Pike Branch Stream Restoration project. The following is a list of responses to common concerns raised by community members to date.

1. Regulatory Compliance

The VDOT Pikes Branch Stream Restoration project is being funded with state funds only, and therefore the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) do not apply. However, the project has been reviewed and approved by all pertinent state and federal regulatory environmental agencies. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers has authorized the activity of the project under the *Nationwide Permit 27 – Aquatic Habitat Restoration, Enhancement, and Establishment Activities*. The Notice of Authorization letter with information regarding the regulatory authorization of this project is posted at the project site. VDOT is committed to compliance with all conditions and requirements of the permit.

2. Viewshed Impacts

Many of the residences immediately adjacent to the project will experience a temporary impact in their viewshed as result of the Emergency Old Telegraph Road Slope Repair and the VDOT Pike Branch Stream Restoration project. However, the change is necessary to accomplish one of the primary goals of the project which is providing a stabilized ecological uplift to an otherwise accelerated deteriorating stream and forest ecosystem heavily impacted by surrounding high density residential land-use.

VDOT is providing a robust reforestation plan that has been reviewed and approved by state and federal environmental regulatory agencies. The reforestation plan proposed by the project includes dense planting plan of a variety of fast growing native woody saplings, including black willow, sycamore and tulip poplar that will return the vegetative screening quickly post-construction.

Based on comments received during and following the October 11th, 2018 meeting, VDOT has reviewed its limits of disturbance and added to existing tree save areas where practicable. Plan sheets 12 & 13 entitled *Specimen Tree Save Plan* have been added to the final design plans to show the locations of the tree save areas and specimen trees within the project limits. These plan sheets also show the limits of disturbance, as well as the specimen trees that it will not be feasible to save due to project technical requirements. At the conclusion of the contractual and regulatory obligations for the stream restoration project, VDOT will meet with the community to discuss the feasibility of incorporating additional betterments to the area.

3. Traffic Noise and Air Pollution

In the long term, the proposed repairs will serve to preserve air, noise and water quality, and will also protect the roadway from stream encroachment. There may be a perceived increase in traffic noise in the areas immediately adjacent to the project as result of the loss of forested buffer, but this should be negligible. This will decrease over time as trees and shrubs planted with the project establish and grow. As mentioned above, VDOT is taking steps to mitigate this by evaluating opportunities to save additional trees and include fast growing native species in its planting plan. At the conclusion of the contractual and regulatory obligations for the stream restoration project, VDOT will meet with the community to discuss the feasibility of incorporating additional betterments to the area.

4. Extent & Limits of Clearing

As noted above, VDOT has evaluated opportunities to include additional tree save areas with the project between Telegraph Road and Old Telegraph Road. It is important to understand that these opportunities are limited by the site constraints and the technical requirements of the project design to ensure the establishment of a stable floodplain within the stream valley area between Old Telegraph Road and Telegraph Road. VDOT has scheduled a site walk-through with citizens and elected officials to review and discuss the limits of project clearing before construction begins. This will be held on Wednesday, December 12th at 3pm. A video tour of the project will be posted on the website for those unable to attend the walk-through in person. A meeting will also be held at the Franconia Governmental Center (6121 Franconia Road) on the evening of the walk-through (December 12) from 6:30 to 8:00 p.m. to review the project plans and address community questions or concerns.

5. Size and Number of Replacement Trees / Planting Plan

The reforestation plan includes dense plantings of a variety of fast growing native woody saplings, including black willow, sycamore and tulip poplar. The trees will be planted randomly six to eight feet on center throughout the entire restoration area. This plan has been reviewed and approved by state and federal environmental regulatory agencies. Younger trees are being used in the reforestation plan because they have the ability to better acclimate to the dynamic conditions of the floodplain and adjacent slope areas and therefore have a higher survival rate.

Large trees are more difficult to maintain and have a higher mortality rate. This is because they are usually grown at nurseries living under in optimal conditions. The longer they live under these optimal conditions, the harder it is to acclimate when planted in natural settings with low to no maintenance. These trees are at higher risk of becoming stressed and thus more susceptible to disease or fungus giving them a higher rate of mortality. We are attempting to address our inability to use larger trees in the overall stream restoration area by looking for opportunities to save existing trees. At the conclusion of the contractual and regulatory obligations for the stream restoration project, VDOT will meet with the community to discuss the feasibility of incorporating additional betterments to the area.

6. *Management for Invasive Species*

In accordance with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Nationwide 27 permit, invasive or non-native plant species are not permitted to be included with the reforestation plan. The presence of any volunteer invasive species will be assessed within the VDOT Pike Branch Stream Restoration limits of disturbance as part of the approved monitoring plan. The treatment of invasive plant species will be addressed in accordance with regulatory requirements noted within the permit.

7. *Sidewalks, Shared Use Path, Trail*

A number of citizens have expressed interest in seeing sidewalks, a shared use path (SUP), a stream valley trail, or a combination thereof constructed with the Pikes Branch Stream Restoration project. However, the construction of additional sidewalks or a SUP is outside the scope and intent of both the stream restoration project and the adjacent emergency slope repair project. Fairfax County has ongoing programs for the construction of bicycle and pedestrian facilities throughout the County, and if there is sufficient interest in and support for the construction of these amenities, one or more of these programs may provide a vehicle for obtaining them.

Several area residents have requested an unpaved path or trail for hiking through the stream valley of Pikes Branch. Unfortunately due to permit conditions as well as fiscal constraints with the Pike Branch Stream Restoration project, a trail cannot be included with the scope of the project. However at the conclusion of the contractual and regulatory obligations for the stream restoration project, VDOT will meet with the community to discuss the feasibility of incorporating additional betterments to the area.

8. *Timber or Re-use of Cut Trees*

Many of the trees cut down on site will remain on site and be incorporated into the stream design as in-stream grade logs, in-stream log toe protection, floodplain brush habitat structures, and mulch for erosion control.

9. *Impacts to Wildlife*

As a result of the construction activity, wildlife will temporarily be displaced from the Pikes Branch stream valley between Telegraph Road and Old Telegraph Road. However, the stream restoration project has been carefully planned and designed to avoid and minimize impacts on all environmental resources to the greatest extent practicable as well as produce a net ecological uplift to the Pikes Branch stream valley once construction is complete and the vegetation has reestablished.

Key goals of the Pike Branch Stream Restoration project include the removal of blockages that currently prevent fish from migrating upstream and initiating the establishment of a healthier riparian ecosystem. VDOT will minimize the impacts on wildlife by avoiding as many tree areas as possible and working on small sections of the project area at a time from the west to the east. Prior to construction, VDOT will hold a preconstruction meeting with its contractors where information regarding compliance with any

environmental permit conditions and any other general environmental awareness related to the project is conveyed to the contractors.

Similar stream restoration projects have demonstrated that once the construction activity is complete, the wildlife does make its way back to the area.

10. Repairs to Existing Pavement

The pavement removed to construct the emergency repairs to the road will be replaced by VDOT's contractor for that project (The Lane Construction Corp.). An assessment will be made of any additional pavement damaged during the emergency repairs to Old Telegraph Road, and further milling / overlay work will be considered on that basis.

11. Intersection of Old Telegraph Road & Telegraph Road

VDOT is evaluating concerns expressed by several citizens regarding the safety of the (southern) intersection of Old Telegraph Road and Telegraph Road in the vicinity of the project, and will respond appropriately. We are currently looking at the accident history at this location and the intersection sight lines. We will share our findings with Supervisor McKay's office when available and post them on this site (if still active). However, intersection improvements of any kind are outside of the scope of both the emergency slope repair and the stream restoration project.

12. Utilities

Overhead utilities have been temporarily relocated from the south side of Old Telegraph Road to the north side to facilitate the emergency repairs to the emergency slope repair project, and will be moved back to when the work is complete. Placing overhead lines underground is major effort, and well beyond the scope of VDOT's emergency Old Telegraph Road slope repair or Pike Branch Stream Restoration project.

13. Impacts to Property Values Due to the Loss of Trees

VDOT respects property owner's concerns regarding tree loss. As mentioned above, VDOT has taken measures to minimize to the greatest extent practicable tree removal within the VDOT right of way by saving as many forested areas along Old Telegraph Road and Telegraph Road as well as incorporating a robust urban reforestation plan. No physical impact to private property is proposed with this project. If any incidental physical damage to private property would occur as result of construction of the stream restoration or slope repair projects, it will be repaired to preexisting conditions or compensated in accordance with VDOT policy.