

Prince William County Unveils new Floating Litter Trap on Neabsco Creek

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Heavy rains can swell area creeks with runoff that carries trash to the streams which then send the debris to major waterways including the Potomac and Occoquan rivers.

The Prince William County Department of Public Works recently installed a piece of equipment in the Neabsco Creek headwaters called a Bandalong Litter Trap. The Bandalong is designed to catch most floatable trash in the Neabsco Creek watershed and reduce the impact of trash on the county's major waterways.

During a recent ribbon-cutting ceremony to mark the installation of the Bandalong, Prince William Board of County Supervisors Chair-At-Large, Ann B. Wheeler said that tons of trash have been removed from the Neabsco Creek estuary in recent years. "It's estimated that between 2010 and 2020, about 70,000 pounds of trash were removed from this area."

Micron Technology donated \$300,000 for the Bandalong, a floating device that spans the creek with booms to collect floating trash. "I want to really say, 'Thank you' to Micron, because I'm sure they have facilities all over the world and they are still involved in their community locally. That takes

effort and commitment on the part of a corporate partner, so I'm really grateful Micron is like that," Wheeler said.

Wheeler also thanked the county's Public Works, Parks, Recreation and Tourism departments and the Prince William County Service Authority for working to get the Bandalong installed. "This really represents some of the wonderful things that are going on in Prince William County. It's obvious that the people that live here care about the county and want to clean it up."

Delbert Parks, the vice president and site executive of Micron Technology in Manassas, said donating the Bandalong fell within the company's philosophy. "At Micron, we recognize that we're part of this community and we have to – not just work here, not just make memories here – but also work on the environment. We're committed to really reaching out in this community and doing projects like the one we have now."

Parks went on to say that Micron, which manufactures computer memory products, partners with organizations worldwide to clean up the environment and that the company was happy to contribute to the project in their backyard. "Does it solve everything? No, but it does solve a piece that we need to go do and that's what we need to reflect on today. Partnering with Prince William County is perfect for what we want to do. The number of hours that we put into projects like this one to help us restore and sustain our operation is important. We will continue to reach out and help this community because this is what we do. We live here. We play here. We work here."

One of the places where litter is most apparent is where it collects near the Neabsco Creek Boardwalk. The Bandalong should help keep the area on one of the county's premiere destinations cleaner. "This Bandalong Litter Trap will help prevent substantial amounts of floating litter and debris in the Neabsco Creek from reaching the Neabsco Boardwalk, the Potomac River, the Chesapeake Bay and many other areas beyond," said Woodbridge District Supervisor Margaret Angela Franklin with the Prince William Board of County Supervisors. "As we celebrate the installation of the Bandalong Litter Trap, we must never forget our commitment to a clean and safe environment. We know that with education, outreach, support and environmental stewardship we can prevent trash from becoming litter in the first place."

Tim Hughes, an environmental specialist for the county's public works department's environmental services division said that 10,000 drainage acres in the Neabsco watershed feed into the creek. The Bandalong is situated on the creek at the best place to capture the trash that comes downstream from the Woodbridge and Dale City areas. "So much trash goes into the estuary and where the boardwalk is and it's unsightly. If we can capture most of that, that's the plan. You figure in one-, three-, five-inch storm events this thing will fill up with trash. It's predominantly coming from storm drains, roadside litter and ditches, Shopping center parking lots are a huge source of litter."

"This is a big deal for the county," said Veronica Tangiri, a water quality manager for the Prince William Soil and Water Conservation District, "It will not only trap trash that goes to the boardwalk but trash that goes to the wetland area."

Lynda Silverstrand, who has lived beside Neabsco Creek for 20 years, used to ride her all-terrain vehicle along the creek to clean it up. Sometimes she had help and sometimes she went out alone. "I would go wading in there and get all of the bottles and try to get other neighbors to help, but I didn't mind doing it all by myself. At least I was getting some of it."

Silverstrand, Franklin's appointee to the Prince William County Trails and Blueways Council, also wants to keep trash from getting to the boardwalk. "We've got such a beautiful place for the citizens in the county to go and we don't want this trash to go down there. It goes from the storm sewers and to the creek, into the river and into the Chesapeake and we don't want that. It's very important to me and I'm so glad it happened."

See a video of the Bandalong Litter Trap ribbon cutting ceremony [here](#).