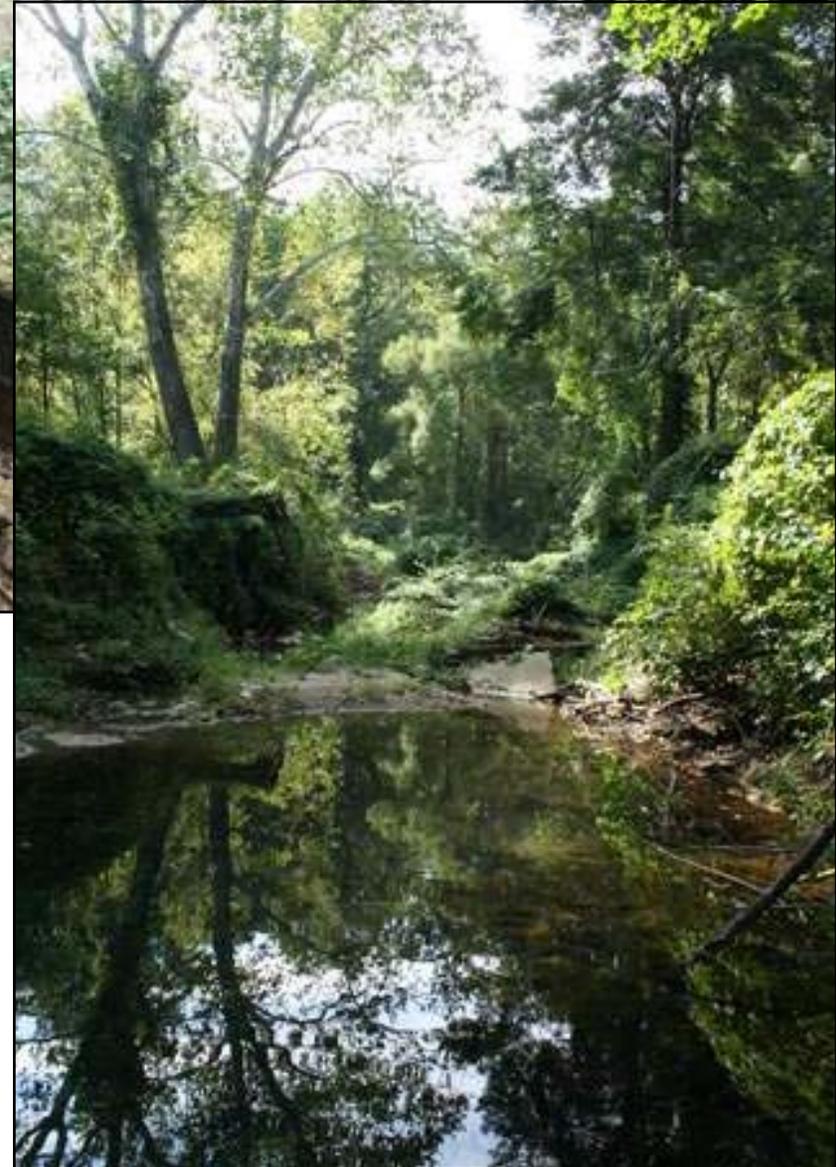




Little Falls Branch at Wisconsin Avenue. The inlet pipe on the right carries ground water pumped from Metro tunnels.



The Plight of an Urban Stream

A Walk Along Little Falls Branch Creek

The Little Falls creek starts in the Chevy Chase Country Club and travels through Chevy Chase Village an underground channel. It enters the Town of Somerset at Wisconsin Avenue and is naturalized until it departs Somerset at River Road. The creek is joined by the Jennifer Run which comes in from Willard Avenue below the Irene Apartments.



Non-native porcelain berry and honey suckle vines have taken over the bank, crowding out the native understory plants that once held the soil in place and kept the banks from eroding. Volunteers have been working to hand remove the vines and restore the native vegetation.



Storm water runoff causes a multitude of problems for the creek. The volume and velocity of water cause severe erosion as well as introducing pollutants. The picture on the left shows tree roots exposed by erosion. This type of undercutting puts the tree at risk of falling. When trees fall, we lose their roots as important bank stabilizers.

On the right, the landing for steps built in 2006 as an Eagle Scout project has already been washed out by erosion. The steps are also in danger of washing out as the volume and velocity of water coming from the Wisconsin Avenue inlet after a storm is too strong for the bank.





One of the three storm drains inlets from the Town of Somerset. Here you can see remnants of a past erosion control project. The black tarp was laid under rocks to slow the water emerging from the conduit. Unfortunately, the water moved the rocks leaving just the tarp!



Crossing the Stream on Stepping Stones: On the right bank, you see **scouring** - a typical form of erosion found in urban creeks. This bank was built up in the early 1900s for a trolley bridge. Its erosion has contributed to the heavy silting that threatens habitat of the macro-invertebrates living on the rocks covering the creek bed. When these rocks are buried, the critters lose their homes.



Here we have large rocks and netting to stabilize the stream bank. This replaced the old erosion control method of tarps and riprap. The rocks were first added in 2001. In 2008, another row of rocks was added to the bottom as the creek undercut the first set. You can also see another storm drain inlet. The inlet is being buried and filled in by dirt carried down the storm drain system.

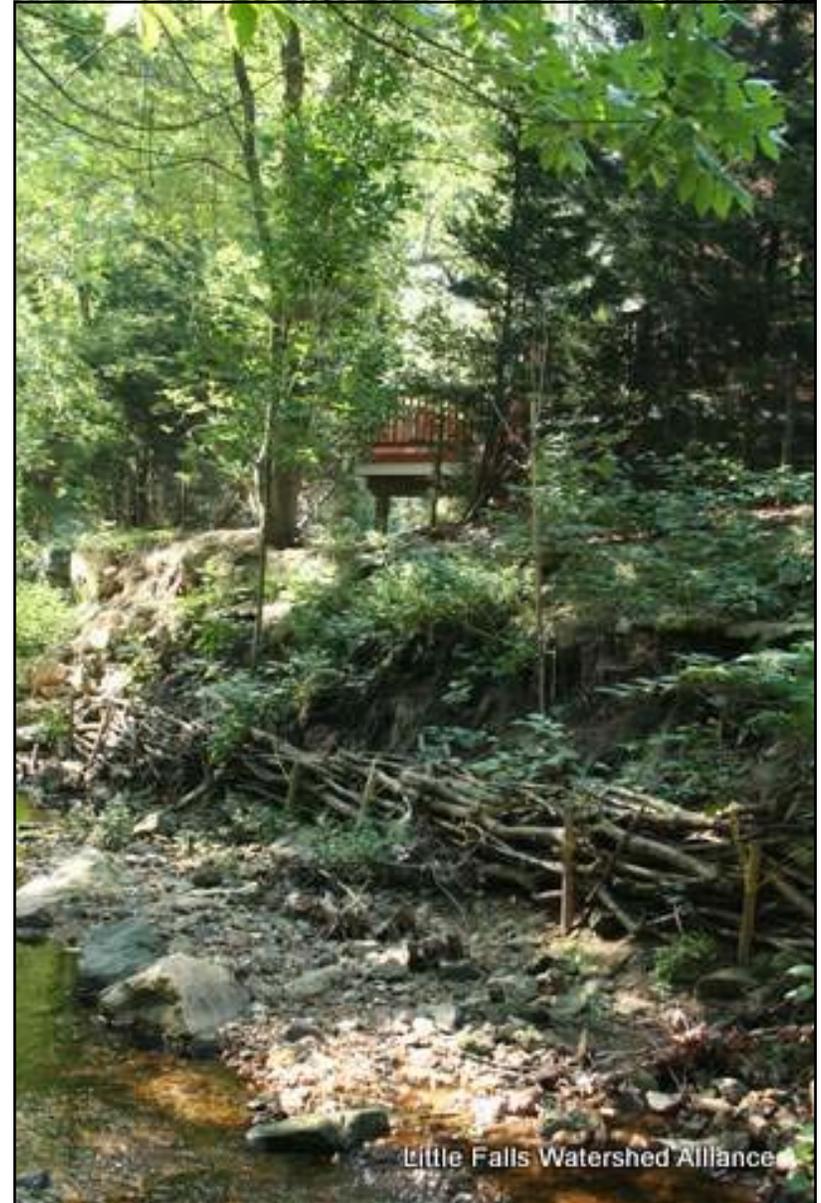


The old stream bed (left) passed too close to the North Park Apartments. A new channel (below) was dug in 2001. Rocks were placed to slow the water during storms.





Young tree just holding on. There was soil there when it first put down roots!



In 2008, bundles of sticks were added to the bank to try to stabilize it to save the property of this house built less than 50 feet from the creek. New regulations discourage building within a stream buffer.



This natural portion of the Little Falls creek ends at River Road. The creek goes under the road and comes out in a channel where it continues to Little Falls Parkway. At Little Falls Parkway, the creek joins with the Willett Branch where it is no longer in a concrete channel. The creek then runs through the Little Falls Stream Valley Park to the Potomac River.