



Friends of Herring Run Parks

Lower Herring Run Report

Overview of several issues threatening the Lower Herring Run Park

April 5, 2021



Prepared by Patricia Dowd, Coordinator,
Friends of Herring Run Parks, Inc. 2021

All images provided by Patricia Dowd.



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SCOTT JOHNSON
President

April 5, 2021

KEVIN CLEARY
Vice President

Attn: Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks
Baltimore City Department of Public Works

LAURA GILLIS
Secretary

Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development
Armistead Homes Corporation

AMANDA CUNNINGHAM
Treasurer

Dear Partners,

Directors

TAMI BUTLER
BESS KELLER
BARBARA JACKSON
KATE SCHERR-ADAMS

In response to pleas from the community of Armistead Gardens to curb illegal dumping and vehicle use in the Lower Herring Run, we submit the following documentation as an invitation to work together to solve the issues plaguing the Lower Herring Run.

Staff

PATRICIA DOWD

This portion of Herring Run Park is in critical need of protection from illegal dumping, illegal recreation activities such as ATV and 4WD off road riding, illegal hunting, abandoned stolen cars, water pollution, and numerous other challenges. Most of the challenges confronting the health and safety of the Lower Herring Run are a result of unsecured park boundaries.

Friends of Herring Run Parks (FHRP) has compiled an inventory of the access points onto park property in this report, including photos documenting the results of illegal access. We have also included images of solutions used in other parks to secure boundaries.

With this report, FHRP is officially requesting assistance through multi-agency and community collaboration. Let us work together to solve the problems that are threatening the health of the Lower Herring Run.

Sincerely,

Scott Johnson

I. Existing Conditions

a. Lower Herring Run Park is plagued by many issues:

- **Illegal dumping**
- Homeless encampments
- Non-native invasive plant species
- **Abandoned stolen vehicles**
- **Illegal 4WD activity**
- Polluted water
- Stream erosion
- Illegal hunting
- Zoning violation of Ordinance 99-415 at 4300 Shannon Drive

** Issues covered in this report*

b. Basis for these issues:

- Illegal dumping – challenges and restrictions re bulk trash disposal result in private haulers and homeowners illegally dumping. The Lower Herring Run has many vehicle access points, little to no surveillance and is not regularly patrolled or maintained by city forces.
- Homeless encampments – acres of unmonitored remote parkland make it an ideal location for homeless campsites and illegal drug activity.
- Non-native invasive plant species – Chinese elm, multiflora rose, ailanthus trees, and Japanese stilt grass are a few of the plants that flourish in the Lower Herring Run. This lack of plant species diversity and the proliferation of invasive species contributes to the degradation of this wetland ecosystem.
- Abandoned stolen vehicles – easy access leads to the dumping of stolen cars which are routinely set on fire. At the time of this writing, at least 10 vehicles are abandoned on the trails. This illicit and dangerous activity has taken place for many years.
- Illegal 4WD activity – ever increasing numbers of 4WD vehicles are rallying in Lower Herring Run particularly on weekends and holidays. The trails are being damaged, plants and wetlands are being destroyed, and piles of picnic type trash are being left behind by these observed group activities.
- Swimming in polluted water – At least two popular locations for swimming in the Herring Run in the Lower Herring Run have been observed. Both are accessed illegally by vehicle traffic. There are no adequate, bilingual signs to indicate access to the park from these locations is illegal or that the water is unhealthy for

swimming. Neither location is supervised or monitored by city officials. Aside from the very real health risk of swimming in water polluted by raw sewage, there are no lifeguards or facilities for safe aquatic recreation.

- Stream erosion – storm water runoff and flooding have wreaked havoc on the stream banks. Construction materials and old riprap is tangled up with storm debris along scoured banks. There are areas of significant erosion from high velocity storm water runoff resulting in trash-laden gullies and extensive soil erosion.
- Illegal hunting – because of the remoteness and the dense habitat, there is a large deer population in Lower Herring Run. Reports of illegal hunting have been shared with FHRP. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is known to dispatch staff to investigate reports of gunshots from hunting activity.

II. Geographic and Political Characterizations of Lower Herring Run:

a. Roadway Boundaries

North -- Sinclair Lane

South – I-895

East – Bowleys Lane, Moravia Road ramp to I-895

West – Shannon Drive Industrial Park, Orchard Ridge, Armistead Gardens

b. Property owners surrounding Lower Herring Run:

Baltimore City Department of Recreation and Parks

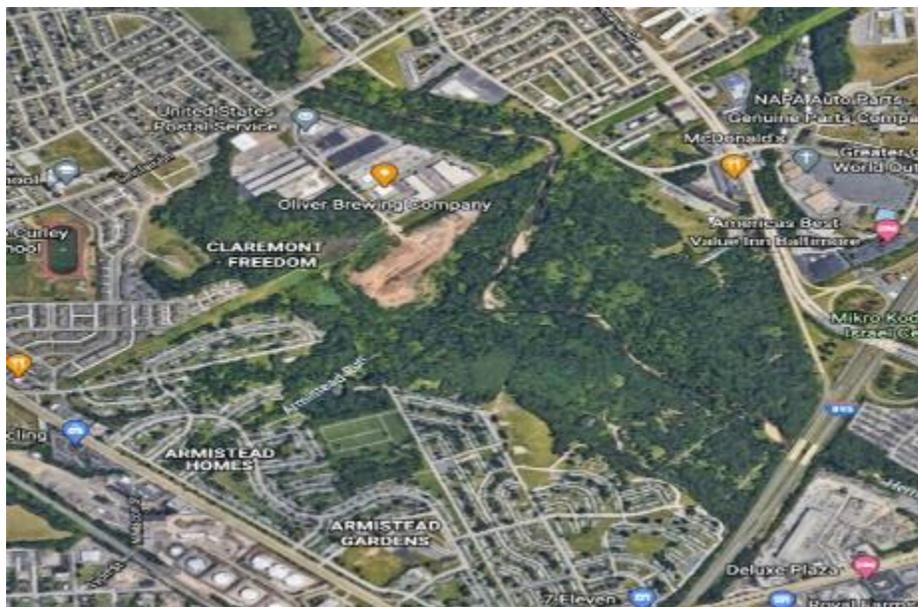
Baltimore City Department of Public Works

P&J Contracting, Inc.

Maryland State Highway Administration

Baltimore Gas & Electric

Armistead Homes Corporation



III. Points of Vehicle Access to Lower Herring Run:

1. Northern Access

a. Sinclair Lane Trailhead and BGE right-of-way



◀▲ *The Herring Run Greenway Trail crosses at Sinclair Lane but this entrance has no vehicle barrier. The paved trail section runs a third of a mile south into the Lower Herring Run ending at the BGE ROW.*

There is no vehicle barrier at this trailhead. Low roadway curbs make for easy vehicle access onto the trail directly or by riding along the sidewalk down onto the trail. Evidence includes numerous tire tracks have created ruts in the grass and forest edges. Some of the usage was likely from the contractors working under DPW SC965. Currently, this .75 miles of trail is a popular route for trucks hauling 4WD vehicles deeper into the park where no paving exists. It is also an easy route for illegal dumpers. The woods are dotted with dump piles of construction material.



◀ *Where the paved trail meets the BGE ROW, there is no vehicular barrier. A guard rail blocking vehicular traffic has been removed.*

▶ *The area where the trail crosses under the BGE ROW offers a wide access point into the woods.*



b. Shannon Drive at P&J Construction, Inc. and BGE ROW



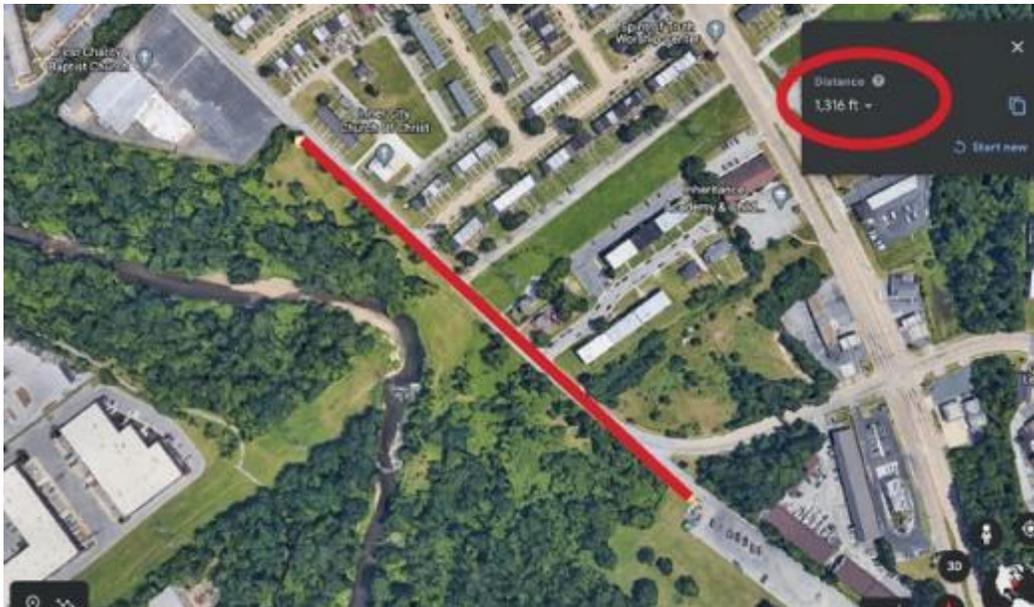
◀▼ Where Shannon Drive terminates at 4300 Shannon Drive, aka Mt. Dirt, BGE has recently installed a gated vehicular barrier on the east side to prevent vehicle access driving along the ROW. A guard rail installed on the west side has been compromised – peeled back for ATVs to run up and down the ROW.



c. Eastern access point – Bowley’s Lane



▲▼ This stretch of Bowley's Lane is a huge breach into Lower Herring Run. It is a hot spot for illegal dumping, "event" parking for swimming parties, and access for 4WD drivers to drive across the shallow Herring Run into the Lower Herring Run.

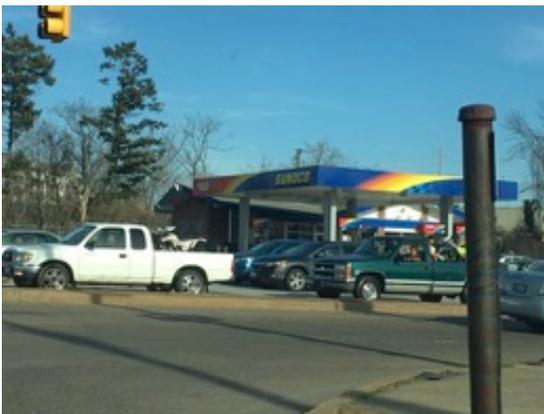




▲▲ *Illegal parking in field on Bowley's Lane. Swimming in polluted Herring Run.*



▲▲ *Curb cuts makes for easy access to field and you can see the damage done by driving on the grass.*



◀ *Trucks and trailers of ATVs turning from Moravia Road onto Bowley's Lane.*



◀▼ Two possible solutions for limiting access for vehicles to gain access to the field on Bowley's Lane for illegal dumping, parking, and driving across the Herring Run for 4-wheel driving or swimming.

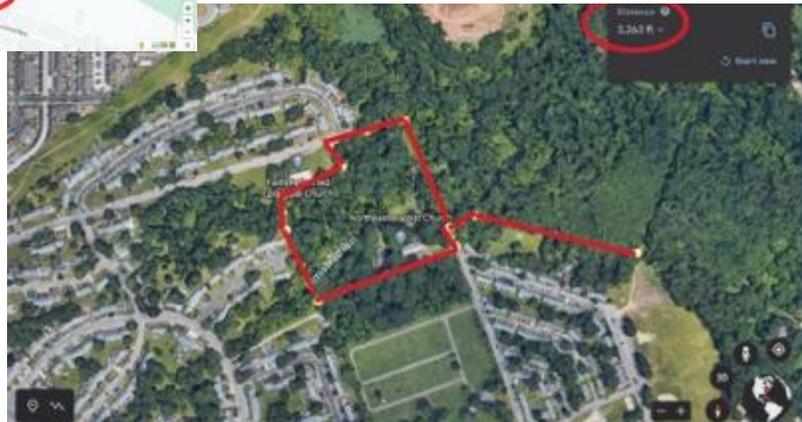


2. Western access points

a. Armistead Gardens at Horners Lane



◀▼ Horners Lane is big problem area for access to Lower Herring Run. It is an opening for trucks, 4WD and ATVs usage and for illegal dumping. Increased traffic in this area has resulted in loss of trees, damage to the trails, and erosion to the stream bank in areas where vehicles drive into and across the stream.





▲▼ *The park gate at the Horners Lane is useless. Most of the time it is open and even if it isn't, there is plenty of room to drive around it. The nearby church parking lot allows access to trucks, trailers, ATVs and 4WD vehicles. This access point is popular with illegal dumpers and car thieves who ditch stolen cars in the woods.*





▲ *Tire tracks in the grass, show how people drive off the church parking lot and into the park.*



▲ *The Horners Lane gated entrance has two trailheads into the park. This narrow trail is VERY popular with illegal dumpers. Would well-placed Jersey walls be a solution to prevent vehicular traffic on this trail?*

b. Armistead Gardens at Armistead Way

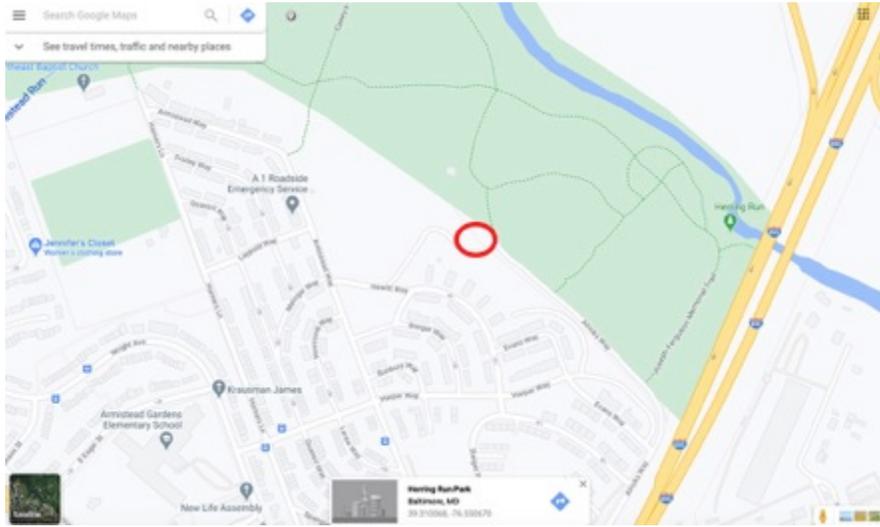


▲▲ The trailhead at this location has a locked gate that is repeatedly broken and replaced. It is a major access point to the Lower Herring Run. Flanking the gate are bollards that are spaced wide enough for a vehicle to pass between them.



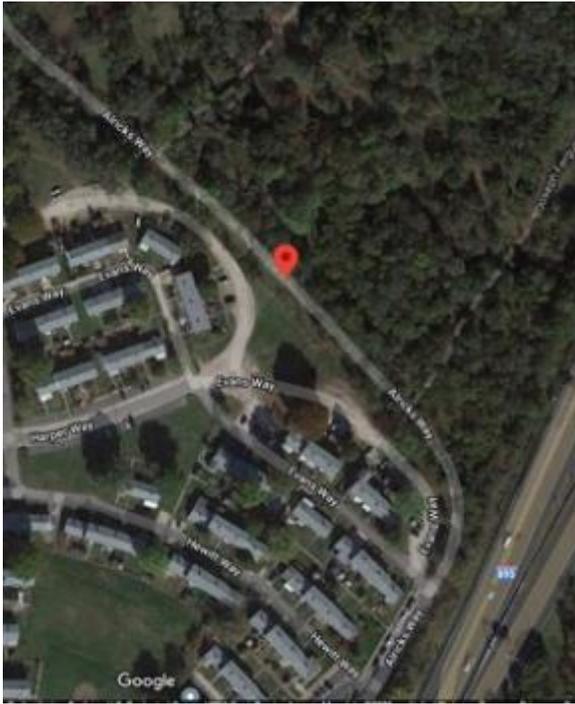
▲▲ This is a route that goes directly to the swimming hole. It is one of the least secured entrances into Lower Herring Run. This will require some creativity to secure it.

c. Armistead Gardens at Burma Road

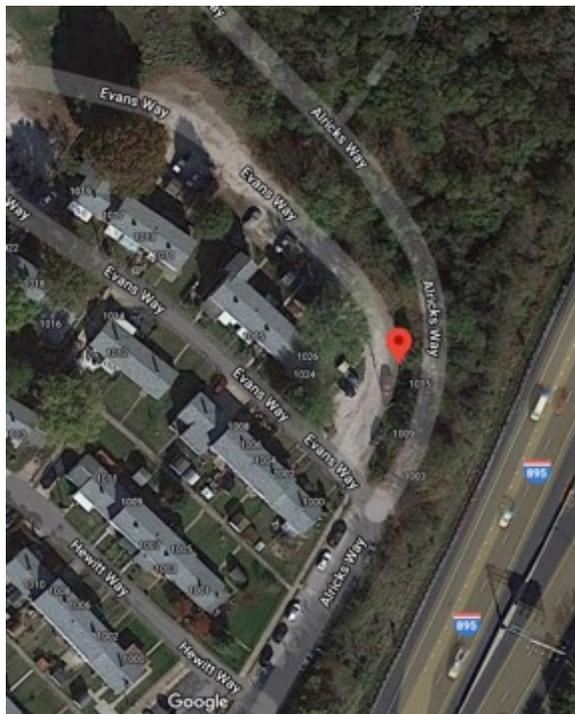


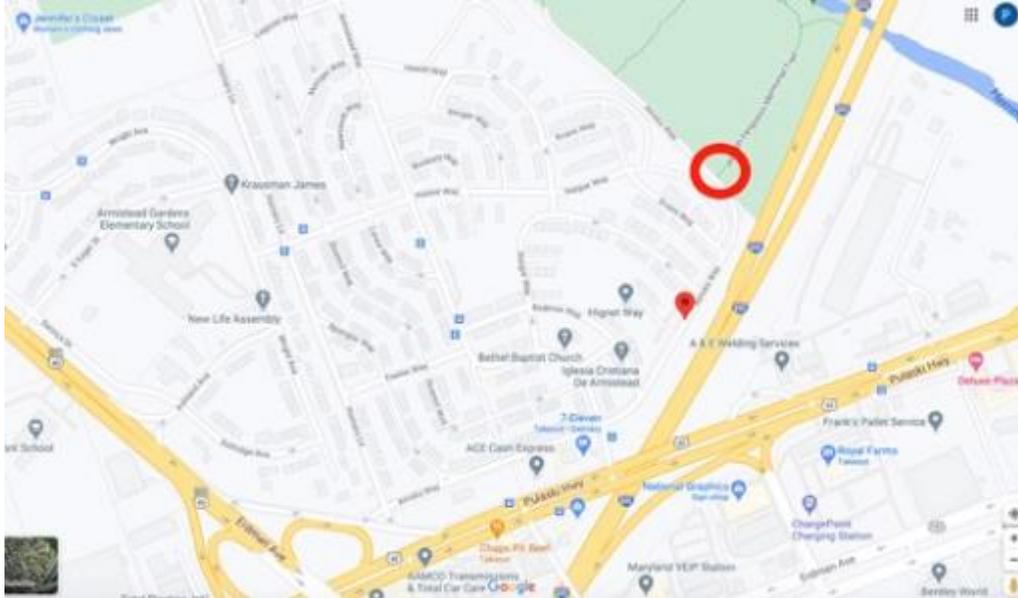
▲▲ This entry point is on a little alley way with no name but some residents refer to it as Burma Road. Buried under that ramp of soil are bollards that people have piled dirt on to gain access to the park. This is a MAJOR access point for illegal dumpers. Burma Road is also littered with illegal dumping. Taller bollards or Jersey walls are needed at this location.

c. Alricks Way



▲▼ Alricks Way has two access points between bollards spaced too far apart to prevent vehicle access.





▲▲ Alricks Way gate is relatively secure because an Armistead Garden homeowner nearby monitors the gate.

d. Federal Street



◀▼ Federal Street has two makeshift roadways into the park! Both need bollards, boulders or Jersey walls to reduce access into the park.



IV. Conclusion and Recommendations

The Friends of Herring Run Parks, Inc. prepared this report to document the issues of illegal activity in the Lower Herring Run. Occurrences of dumping bulk trash, stolen vehicles and trash have stymied attempts by FHRP and Armistead Gardens to conserve the area as a forest and wetland park feature. The significant increasing in illegal park access by trucks, trailers, ATVs and other 4-wheel type of vehicles is leading to an alarming degradation of this parkland. Illegal and unsafe swimming activity in the Lower Herring Run is cause for serious health concerns given the regular sewage overflows into the waters during storm events.

With this report, FHRP is requesting assistance through multi-agency and community collaboration to implement solutions. We witnessed such successful collaboration during our September 28, 2019 Big Time Cleanup of Lower Herring Run. At that time, the Departments of Public Works and Recreation and Parks provided staff and equipment and together with FHRP, Back River Restoration Committee, and Armistead Homes Corporation and over 100 volunteers removed three roll-off dumpsters of illegally dumped material.

Let's work together again to come up with long-term solutions to the problems that are threatening the health of the Lower Herring Run safety of the communities that live in and around this important natural resource.

The images below show low-cost vehicle barriers used at other Baltimore City park locations, e.g., wooden posts, concrete blocks, boulders and fencing. Could any of these or similar materials be used to prevent vehicle access?



Thank you!

