

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting  
July 1, 2021 – Virtual Meeting on Zoom**

Committee Members: Christine Putnam, Peggy Cornett, Bruce Gatling-Austin, Leah Jung, Lonnie Murray, Emma Andrews, Kate Mallek, Nancy Weiss, Michael Rodemeyer, Kennon Williams

Absent: Emily Luebke

Other Attendees: Michael Callahan, Ruth Douglas

Staff: Scott Clark, Carolyn Schaffer

There was a quorum of ten members present, and Christine called the meeting to order at 5:33.

Welcome to guests. Introductions for potential new member, Michael Callahan.

Peggy moved approval of the agenda, Leah seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Peggy moved approval of the agenda, Leah seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Follow-Ups:

- Important Sites Updates
  - Tufton Farm – bobwhite quail heard and spotted. Peggy is following up with maintenance about mowing schedule. Virginia Working Landscapes (VWL) has done some surveys there. Discussion of getting a VWL presentation for Monticello staff.
- Important Sites Outreach
  - NHC members are encouraged to assume responsibility of stewardship of one or more Important Sites. **Action Item:** NHC members review Important Sites and let Christine know which sites they would like to steward.
  - Southern Albemarle Mountains – **Action Item:** Christine will follow up with manager of Bundoran Farms.
  - Lickinghole Bald Eagle Nest – Leah is stewarding that site and looking to visit that property to ensure the subdivision is not impacting the nesting site. **Action Item:** Scott will help Leah connect with the landowner.
  - Key West – Leah is getting an update from Ruth on the history of the site. Discussion of working with the landowners to help manage the trail and site.
  - Arrowwood – Bruce is stewarding this site and two others close by.
  - Red Hill Wetland – Bruce is stewarding this site. Landowner is amenable to visitors.
  - Sugar Hollow – Lonnie has volunteered to steward this site. Populations of uncommon plants (*Philadelphus inodorus* and *Orontium aquaticum*) are found there; some may be impacted by stream buffer clearing. Moormans River is a designated scenic river; new signs are posted. Discussion of interest in the plan for parking area and public use of site, as well as the roadway. **Action Item:** Kennon will follow up with the City to try to get an update on the plan.
- Subcommittee and Member Reports
  - *Education and Outreach*
    - Scottsville Pollinator Festival – Emma, Bruce, and Christine shared information with the public.
    - Conservation Mowing - flyer is at Darden Towe and available for sharing. Opportunities at other County Parks and public schools.
    - Christine met with Gabe Dayley, new Climate Protection Program Manager. Discussed opportunities for conservation mowing and education on school properties and alignment of other BAP and CAP goals.

- First ten new landowner packets have gone out.
- Christine has received feedback on the landowner resources document from County staff and will continue to update it.
- *Native Plant Database*
  - Coding for Charlottesville group is helping to develop version 2.0 of the database.
  - Piedmont Master Gardeners have an outreach campaign to nurseries, with brochures and stickers, in coordination with Plant Northern Piedmont Natives.
- *Wildlife Corridors*
  - Leah is working on a bobcat study in NW Albemarle.
  - Leah is looking at the interchange of 240/250 between Crozet and Ivy and opportunities for revegetating with native plants after construction of the roundabout. Leah is also looking land conservation opportunities in the corridor.
- Policy Subcommittee Meeting:
  - *Road paving/Conservation of gravel roads*
    - Easy to get road on the paving list, hard to get it off. Road paving should be considered as a rezoning. NHC has a 'do not pave' list.
  - *Comprehensive Plan Update*
    - Many of the items on the policy spreadsheet may be addressed through this work.
  - *Use-Value Assessment*
    - Properties enrolled in a conservation program are not disqualified from the ag category, according to the Assessor's office.
    - Desire for consistency on the County website with the language in the code. The code does state 'state or federal program' – is there a need to confirm and state that local programs (e.g. SWCD) would qualify?
    - Lakes and ponds are included as ag land according to website; discussion about removing recreational/residential lakes and ponds. WPO buffers should apply to them.
    - Question for the Assessor's office as to whether a habitat project under a contract makes less than the \$1000 minimum income, would it be disqualified?
    - Issue with residential properties claiming ag use– incentive to create hayfields.
    - Discussion of whether the language in the code suggests that the income requirement is not required for land enrolled in a conservation program (states 'meeting the requirements and qualifications for payments'). Could voluntary practices be certified instead?
    - Some localities require a conservation plan to qualify for ag land use.
    - Open space use has very limited qualifying standards, so if measures for removing 'fake ag' are taken, there is no good option for promoting habitat restoration as an alternative.
    - Concern about golf courses qualifying as open-space – change to state code would be required.
    - **Action Item:** Policy subcommittee members to research other counties that could serve as a model. Fauquier county allows a conservation plan as one option. Policy subcommittee members to create a list of requested changes/updates to the County program and/or state code, and unresolved questions.
  - *Climate Action*
    - County is moving next into implementation phase. Policy committee could help prioritize actions for implementation.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:34. Next meeting date is August 5th, 2021.