

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
October 7th, 2021 – Virtual Meeting on Zoom**

Committee Members: Christine Putnam, Peggy Cornett, Leah Jung, Emma Andrews, Kate Mallek, Michael Callahan, Bruce Gatlin-Austin, Nancy Weiss, Kennon Williams

Absent: Lonnie Murray

Other Attendees: Tom Olivier

Staff: Kim Biasioli, Carolyn Schaffer, Nicole Jones

There was a quorum of nine members present, and Christine called the meeting to order at 5:31.

Welcome to guests.

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

Michael moved approval of the minutes, Nancy seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Follow-Ups:

Important Site Updates

- Blenheim Grassland – Christine reported multiflora rose is being controlled after the prescribed burn and replaced with native flora.

Spotted Lanternfly Efforts

- Christine and Emma working with Rod to create an educational mailer with VCE logo to go out through USPS bulk mail.
- New sighting in Afton, reported and killed.
- Mike and Kim met with VCE and VDACS to help identify the best next steps in the County.
- Mike working with the Piedmont Master Gardeners and they have a presentation on SLF. Working to become a member of the speaker's bureau and be able to make the presentation. Suggestion to do a informational radio spot about SLF. He is also planning to share information at the Chamber of Commerce luncheon.
- Kim shared additional notes from meeting with VCE/VDACS. VCE is doing a lot of outreach, has materials to share. VCE has already done a lot of outreach to wineries, more is not really a priority at this time. The County would prefer to rely on the experts (VCE/VDACS) than recreate its own outreach materials. VCE working with volunteers to monitor traps. Coordination on outreach with VCE is important.

Conservation Mowing

- Darden Towe — Christine and the education group are working with Parks and Rec and looking at opportunities for expanding efforts there and also considering more active management techniques including planting with native plants and removing fescue. Milkweed seeds were dispersed there. Areas are mowed once a year in February. Additional opportunities in Walnut Creek.
- Kim is working on a future project to do a county-wide reduced mowing plan, which also ties into the goals of the Climate Action Plan.
- Kate expressed concern about use of herbicides.
- Kennon suggested experimentation with different management techniques.

Comprehensive Plan Update – guest Tom Olivier

- VA law requires local government to have a comprehensive plan. Focuses on different topics including land use, zoning, but more recently include things like housing, economic development, and environment.
- Important to pay attention to ensure conservation and biodiversity are included.
- Climate Action and Equity – two lenses for the new Comp Plan update.
- Natural Heritage Committee, Biodiversity Action Plan, Natural Resources Manager, and Natural Resources chapter are result of Citizens for Albemarle pushing to include those in the Comp Plan.
- Opportunity upcoming for collaboration, focus on joint interests (like climate).
- Other considerations may have unintended negative consequences for conservation/biodiversity.
- Cville100 will have a zoom meeting on November 9th– lead County planner will explain public engagement process. Cville 100 will have links to the recordings.
- League of Women Voters (LWV) has links to recorded comp plan chapter discussions.
- Tom has an email list to share alerts of important updates/opportunities.
- **Action Item:** NHC Members can join Tom’s group and stay informed and engaged.
- **Action Item:** Christine will send out links to the group about LWV and Cville 100 recordings.
- Discussion of inclusion of climate and invasive species issues.
- Tom suggests speaking up with feedback on any chapter, not just Natural Resources.
- Discussion of environmental sustainability as an umbrella concept and intersection/overlap of different plan goals.

Staff Update

- Kim met with Director of Botanical Garden of the Piedmont; good opportunity for collaboration.
- County is hiring a Parks Planner who will be managing volunteer programs; another good opportunity for collaboration on invasives, demonstration projects, and other BAP objectives.

Work Groups and Member Reports

- Christine proposed to dissolve Education and Outreach and Policy official subcommittees and have work groups instead. Leah moved, Nancy seconded. Approved by a roll call vote. Groups will be called Work Groups moving forward.
- Education and Outreach - Group met 10/7/21; discussed SLF, conservation mowing, exploring future projects at public schools (such as pollinator gardens and tree planting).
- Wildlife Corridors - Leah is learning more about predators; continuing work on wildlife corridors.
- Policy - Discussion of stream mitigation and nutrient banks, Chesapeake Bay Act, buffer regulations.
 - Important Sites discussion, including time for visiting and monitoring. Consideration of a categorization rather than ranking system. Group developed a list for designation criteria.
Action Items: Kate will share the list with the group. Christine to add follow up discussion for next month’s agenda.
 - Christine shared that part of the consideration of original ranking in the BAP was accessibility. Kim suggested that ranking can be important - size, quality, and rarity do matter. Kate suggests doing that ranking within categories.
- The meeting was adjourned at 7:19. Next meeting date is November 4, 2021.