



Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting July 7th, 2022 – Virtual Meeting on Zoom

Committee Members: Christine Putnam, Peggy Cornett, Abigail Wilson, Dan Mahon, Kate Mallek, Michael Callahan, Lonnie Murray, Bruce Gatling-Austin

Absent: Leah Jung, Emma Andrews

Other Attendees: Neil Williamson

Staff: Margaret Maliszewski, Vivian Groeschel

- There was a quorum of eight members present, and Christine called the meeting to order at 5:33.
- Welcome to guests.
- Introductions with new member, Dan Mahon. Dan worked for the County in Community Development and then ACPR for many years, with a focus on greenway corridors, recreation, water resource protection, and training staff on natural resources stewardship.
- Michael moved approval of the agenda, Peggy seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.
- Michael moved approval of the June minutes, Lonnie seconded. Approved by a roll call vote.

Follow-Ups

- Important Site Updates
 - Lonnie searched for a *Prunus nigra* record and was unsuccessful in relocating it after extensive searching. Unclear if the paving of the road has impacted the habitat.
 - Abigail asked about process for visiting Important Sites.
 - **Action Items:** Christine will meet with Abigail and Dan to fill them in on procedures. Christine will coordinate a visit for the whole committee to an Important Site for discussion and training.
- Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine
 - The spotted lanternfly quarantine has been extended to include Albemarle County.

Staff Update

- Spotted Lanternfly Quarantine – Kim is working on an outreach campaign about the quarantine with Virginia Cooperative Extension. This will include a webpage, email, and social media outreach.
- The Stream Health Initiative project update will be on the Board agenda on 8/3.
- Staff are adding financial resource opportunities to the Environmental Stewardship Hub and welcome ideas of programs to highlight.

BAP Review of Goals & Recommendations (Goals 1, 2, & 3)

- Goal 2: Promote conservation easements for areas of important biological resources or physical landscape conditions.
 - Christine shared some information on the recent presentation to the BOS about ACE. Discussion about economic impacts, and benefits to biodiversity and climate.
 - Lonnie expressed support for the current recommendations under Goal 2 and suggested adding one about identifying greenways/greenspaces in the Rural Area, and having a comprehensive plan designation/zoning for them. Discussion of including language on climate, protecting natural cover, and stream health.
 - Christine discussed the Justice easement in Southern Albemarle that is going up for auction.
 - There is a need for staff for long-term stewardship and monitoring for the easement programs.
- Goal 3: Conduct outreach and educate the public and landowners on the importance of preserving habitat areas and managing land wisely. Provide more opportunities and incentives for landowners to conserve biodiversity and other resources.
 - Kim reported that reducing the acreage to qualify for open space cannot happen until there is a change to the state code, but there may be other opportunities for programmatic changes.



- Christine shared that she has shared her concern about large hay lots with the Board.
- Michael suggested education to the public on environmental services of more diverse habitats.
- Dan suggested in-service training and continuing education for staff on county lands.
- Abigail suggested outreach to developers and new homeowners.
- Lonnie suggested adding a recommendation to support ACAP, and to modify ACAP to allow qualification for enhancements beyond the stormwater requirements.
- Lonnie suggested a presentation to the Charlottesville Association of Realtors.
- Christine discussed the landowner letter and prior work contacting landowners of Important Sites.
- Agreement that Recommendation #2 is still important.
- Michael suggested a County led stewardship program. Lonnie mentioned promotion of existing programs (e.g. SWCD).
- Dan suggested that land use valuation could also consider other values (e.g. cultural and historic), as there are many different reasons and stories that bring people to the table.
- Peggy would like slides about land conservation/habitat to share in her presentations.
- **Action Item:** Christine will share a few slides with Peggy.
- Abigail suggested a concise version of the BAP for outreach given the full document is dense.
- Lonnie questioned if Recommendation #1 is done and should be removed. Christine shared that there are still opportunities. Decision to remove the second sentence.
- Lonnie suggested agricultural zoning to help differentiate areas in agricultural use that may have certain characteristics, like prime soils. This is very common in other localities. There may be an opportunity with the comprehensive plan update.
- Dan identified impacts of wineries in the Rural Area on land use and with heavy use of fungicides.
- Discussion of Recommendation #3 – education working group is moving that forward with events. Piedmont Master Gardeners are also contributing with the Healthy Landscapes program and farmers markets outreach. Bruce recommends removing 'landowner' to include the general public more. Michael suggested partnering with the Piedmont Master Gardeners on outreach.
- Lonnie suggested adding language on partner organizations. NHC should be a conduit, not the primary source of conservation information.

Working Group & Member Reports

- Education and Outreach
 - Work group did not meet this month.
 - Pollinator festival, outreach, PMG
 - Alb. Co. Historical Society – native plant installation. Christine working with Village school to add signage with medicinal, ecological value.
 - Bruce is working on ideas for adding biodiversity education to curriculum. Lonnie suggested including a connection to local biodiversity.
- There is no report on wildlife corridors for this month.
- The policy group did not meet this month.

Other Matters

- Christine shared an update on Woodridge Solar – Hexagon Energy is leasing the land for 640 acres of panels. There will be a lot of land disturbance involved and a lot of prime soils. Developer is open to the DCR pollinator smart program, but may also be exploring sheep grazing.
Action Item: Christine will keep the NHC up to date on upcoming community meetings.
- The Midway solar project was approved but the developer decided not to move ahead at this time.
- Discussion of ordinance or performance based standards for utility scale solar projects.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:17. Next meeting date is August 4th, 2022.