



County of Albemarle

Community Development Department - Planning Division

Meeting of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee

August 3, 2023

Virtual Meeting

Committee Members Present: Christine Putnam, Meghan Sobbott, Leah Jung, Lonnie Murray, Abigail Wilson, Peggy Cornett, Lily Engle

Absent: Mike Callahan, Dan Mahon, Mona El Kahfif

Other Attendees: Rob McGinnis, Peggy Gilges, Jessica Wingo, Rod Walker, Wyatt Burtschell, Diane Szaflarski

Staff: Scott Clark

1. **Call to Order.** Meghan called the meeting to order at 5:36pm.
2. **Establish a Quorum.** There was a quorum of seven members present.
3. **Welcome/Acknowledge Guests:** Brief introduction for the NHC member, Lily Engle. Lily is a Charlottesville Area Tree Steward and works as attorney for The Conservation Fund. Lily offered to give a tour of her restoration of her land in southern Albemarle.
4. **Approval of Agenda.** Lonnie motioned to approve the meeting Agenda and Christine seconded the motion. Committee members present voted unanimously to approve the Agenda.
5. **Approval of Minutes.** Christine motioned to approve the final July 2023 Minutes with an amendment concerning Dan's statement, he will be arranging a tour of Biscuit Run Park rather than a training. Lily seconded the motion. Committee members present voted unanimously to approve the July 2023 Minutes.
6. **Follow-Ups:**
 - Important Sites updates and outreach
 - Lonnie reported the sightings on the Rivanna Trail.... *Amorpha canescens* (Lead Plant) and *Commelina virginica*, commonly known as the Virginia dayflower
 - Christine recognized Jessie Wingo, ACPR who is leading volunteer invasive removal work days. This involves providing important education to the public on invasive plant management.
 - Christine reported seed collection for the Clifton Institute on Blenheim grasslands site
 - Follow about Sugar Hollow reservoir/Moormans River. Peggy Gilges from the Moormans Scenic River Advisory Committee reported the following:

- At a recent meeting with the Rivanna Water and Sewer Authority the group learned of a plan to pipe water from Sugar Hollow Reservoir (SHR) to the Ragged Mt Reservoir (RMR) during high rain events. The group remains concerned about the impact this will have on the natural flow of water in the Moormans River below the SHR dam. This will happen until the new pipeline between the Rivanna Reservoir and RMR is built scheduled for 2026 and perhaps not completed until 2030
- More direct flow measurements need to be made above and below the SHR dam.
- Community Water Plan- states that the water in the Moormans River should flow freely and mimic natural flow
- Need to prioritize water conservation to meet the community water needs

7. Staff update: Scott Clark - Review of the Draft Riparian Buffer Overlay District (RBOD).

- Prior to 2014 Albemarle had a strong Water Protection Ordinance (WPO), but no staff to enforce it
- In 2014 the WPO was rolled back so that protections only applied to certain development projects
- In an effort to provide better enforcement a buffer overlay district and zoning ordinance has been developed.
- This is part of the Stream Health Initiative
- First round of public feedback closes on August 13, 2023. Working on addressing questions/concerns from the public. The ordinance will be presented for a Planning Commission work session this fall.

Questions about the RBOD raised by NHC members:

- Concern that the ordinance is less restrictive than the County's earlier 2014 WPO, especially the absence of the requirement to establish a buffer if it does not already exist.
- Concern about the absence of the requirement to establish a buffer after construction of a road.
- Will private roads be allowed to be built through the buffer? This is a concern along with being able to extend pre-existing buildings into the buffer.
- Stream health has not improved since 2014, so we need to have a strong ordinance. Lonnie recommends that each of the NHC members read the [Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act](#)
- Will mowing/bush hogging be considered a disturbance of the buffer? Need to clarify.
- Lonnie shared the [one-page fact sheet - AC Stream Buffer Guide](#)
- How will the overlay district be adjusted when there are errors in the map? For example when streams that exist are not represented on the maps.
- There will be opportunities for providing additional feedback after the PC work session

8. Future budget proposals- NHC members will work in teams of two to take the lead in drafting letters to present to the committee for the September meeting

- Focusing on invasive plants; hiring employees in Parks & Recreation to manage invasive plants, public education and engagement with the end goal to recruit, train and support volunteers to help with invasive plant management. (Christine and Meghan, consulting with Peggy)
- Identify opportunities for wildlife crossings and associated management plans (Leah and Micheal)
- Support Stream Health Initiative specifically additional staff to enforce the RBOD. Also discussed the need for educational materials and how we can take advantage of materials which have already been designed and printed by Virginia state agencies(Lonnie....need a NHC member to help)

9. NHC Work Plan for 2023-2024- Christine will add action items as listed above

10. BAP Review of Goals & Recommendations. Goal 17: Protect the Rivanna River and adjacent ecosystems

- Need to limit outdoor lighting in the Rivanna River Corridor

- Need to keep development and paved paths away from the river where it is subject to erosion by removing the waiver or amending it.
- Add an Resource Protection Area (RPA) with low impact development standards

11. Working Group & Member Reports

Education and Outreach- Christine reported on the ACES goal to reduce mowing on ACPS land

Meghan reported that the meadow restoration project at Darden Towe Park received \$11,380 from the Albemarle County Climate Action Grant.

Wildlife Corridors- Leah will be giving a presentation at the library about the bobcat study and the importance of wildlife corridors.

11. Adjournment.

Meghan declared the meeting ended and adjourned at 7:08pm. The next meeting of the Natural Heritage Committee will be held on September 7, 2023, at 5:30pm, in room 250, at the Albemarle County Office Building, 1600 5th St., Charlottesville, VA 22902.

The draft minutes were prepared by Christine Putnam, Natural Heritage Committee.