

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
October 17, 2019 – Room 235**

Committee Members: Nancy Weiss, Christine Putnam, Michael Rodemeyer, Lonnie Murray, Peggy Cornett, Emily Luebke, Kennon Williams

Absent: Mary Tillman

Other Attendees: Andrea Terry, Susan Rigby, Sarah Bingham, Kim Swanson, David Hannah

Nancy called the meeting to order at 5:35. Visitors were welcomed and they introduced themselves.

Andrea Terry of Rivanna Water & Sewer Authority (RWSA) made a presentation about land that RWSA owns in Albemarle County. RWSA owns roughly 1,300 acres in the Buck Mountain Creek watershed in northwestern Albemarle. The property was acquired in the 1980's for use as a drinking water reservoir. Discovery of the James spiny mussel in the stream prevented construction of a reservoir. The property has been used as stream mitigation for the Ragged Mountain Reservoir expansion. About 2.2 miles of Buck Mountain Creek and adjacent buffers were enhanced or restored. RWSA is beginning a master planning process for long term management of the property. LPA and VHB are companies involved in the master planning, and Center for Urban Habitats may become involved as well.

Andrea also discussed a wetlands creation and restoration project by RWSA. The property is on Franklin Street, along Moores Creek and across from the wastewater treatment facility. The project was also part of the mitigation package for expanding the Ragged Mountain Reservoir.

ACTION ITEM:

- David will send Andrea's contact info to committee members.
- David will upload Andrea's powerpoint presentation to Google drive.

Minutes of the 8/28/19 meeting were approved.

Chair's Report. Nancy discussed the need to continue recruiting new members to the NHC. She attended the most recent Conservation Roundtable meeting hosted by PEC. PEC wants to learn more about light pollution and dark skies issues. Nancy is to meet tomorrow with Phil Ianna, professor of Astronomy at UVA. Lonnie noted that county schools are big offenders of using too much lighting. Lindsay Check-Snoddy is a good contact person for county schools. David noted that Objective 11 in Chapter 5 of the Comprehensive Plan addressed protecting dark sky resources.

ACTION ITEM:

- David will email Lonnie with contact info for county staff most familiar with the lighting ordinance.

Fill/waste issues have become a big priority in the county recently. The issue is on the Board agenda for their 11/6/19 meeting.

Peggy and Kennon both met recently (but separately) with Repp Glaettli about updating the county's approved plant list for site plans. David suggested a meeting with two county staff who work with the

list, to ensure everyone is informed about the process and that the appropriate types of revisions are being addressed.

ACTION ITEM:

- David will schedule a meeting between Peggy and Kennon and two county staff persons, Megan Nedostup and Margaret Maliszewski. He will provide their contact info to Peggy and Kennon.

Education subcommittee. Christine talked about the September 25 meeting of the education subcommittee. The committee still has approximately \$1,000 to use. Christine thinks developing small flyers for distribution at public events is something to consider for the funds. Michael mentioned that his spouse is a graphic artist/designer, so she may be able to help. Regular subcommittee meetings should probably be held. David reported that mailers to include with tax bill mailings will not be considered in the near future. There is not consensus at the county as to whether information not related to real estate taxes should be included with the mailings.

Biscuit Run. There has been no feedback to date from the Steering Committee in response to the letter that NHC sent on 9/12. Dan Mahon is leading a hike for interested Master Naturalists on 10/26. Nancy plans to participate. Albemarle County recently requested funding from the state to help implement the park master plan. David reported that everything is ready for treating eastern hemlocks next week (10/22 and 23) for hemlock woolly adelgids. Staff from Va DOF and county Parks & Recreation are prepared.

David passed around a Working Draft map of the Rivanna River project area for the City-County joint planning project. Devin Floyd provided some preliminary data on ecological features, from which the draft map was created. The draft map was handed out at the FLOW event on 9/28.

ACTION ITEM:

- David will upload the draft map to Google drive.

Emily reported on recent conversations with Devin. He suggests that formal data collection be a higher priority on visits to Important Sites. Vegetative sampling of 400 sq. meter plots will help quantify biodiversity and better identify, describe sites and resources county-wide. UVA students and other qualified people could help carry this out. Enhanced data collection sheets could help collect more physiographic and site-specific data. An exotic species index should also be used. Some committee members feel this is beyond the scope of the committee, while recognizing the importance of collecting this type of data. Establishing good landowner relationships should be the first priority, and more intense data collection could occur later. The committee could facilitate the process and help identify volunteers.

ACTION ITEM:

- Emily will upload an enhanced data collection sheet to Google drive.

Center for Urban Habitats (CUH) has done vegetative plots at Biscuit Run and Preddy Creek Park. Some data sheets from the sampling are in these folders under the Important Sites folder.

Nancy encouraged committee members to pick an Important Site to be an advocate for. Christine sent around a sign-up sheet in the past. Except for Emily's work on vegetative sampling with CUH at Biscuit Run, there have been no new site visits or landowner contacts.

ACTION ITEM:

- Christine will re-send the list of priority Important Sites to everyone.

Christine has provided site descriptions for Biscuit Run Park South and Blenheim Grasslands (Important Sites). Kennon and Emily are working on descriptions for other Important Sites. Matt Smith has added the current conservation easement layer to the website for Important Sites. Lonnie feels the committee should propose that Albemarle County be the site of a new state Wildlife Management Area (WMA). Providing input to the Va Outdoor Plan process would be helpful.

ACTION ITEM:

- Emily will develop descriptions for Brook Hill River Park and Wetlands Complex, and Polo Grounds Road Wetlands Complex.
- Kennon will develop descriptions for Preddy Creek Trail Park and Preddy Creek Trail Park Grasslands.
- Lonnie will send a website link to the current Va Outdoor Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30. Next meeting date is November 21. Committee members will discuss the agenda and logistics by email.