

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
June 29, 2017 – Room 235**

Committee Members: Nancy Weiss (Chair), Peggy Cornett, Lonnie Murray, Christine Putnam, Peter Hatch

Absent: Ari Daniels, Manuel Lerda, Rochelle Garwood

Other Attendees: David Hannah, Tom Olivier, Wanda SanJule, Tom Wild

Nancy called the meeting to order at 5:35. The meeting agenda was reviewed and approved. Two visitors were welcomed, Wanda SanJule and Tom Wild. Both are considering applying to join the committee. Brief introductions were made by everyone attending. Minutes of the April 13, 2017 meeting were approved.

Chair's Report. Nancy talked about a presentation on 6/26 by Bridget Donaldson of VA Transportation Research Council. Bridget described her research about wildlife use of highway underpasses on I-64, the use of fencing, and possibilities for additional underpasses. She is also helping to form a state wide Road Ecology working group, with a first meeting on August 30. At the presentation, Lonnie brought up the idea of a road crossing on Route 29, connecting the Southern Albemarle Mountains that lie on both sides of the highway.

Lonnie mentioned working with a citizen group to help slow the traffic on Sugar Hollow Road, and educate the public about issues in that area. The group requested a meeting with VDOT, Albemarle County and City of Charlottesville. Charlottesville declined to meet until the issues about managing Ragged Mountain are resolved.

Ragged Mountain. There was no news to report. Everyone is awaiting a court decision about who has legal authority to control management there. David showed the hard copies he has of the Ecosystem Survey report of Ragged Mountain, written by Center for Urban Habitats.

Biodiversity Action Plan. Tom Olivier gave an update on the status of the plan. He has been working on the draft report, making good progress lately. He has talked recently with Phil Stokes (VA Native Plant Society) about grassland systems and Tom Dierauf about forest systems. He has also talked and/or received information recently from Lonnie, David and Christine. The Invasives/Climate Change subcommittee met on 6/21. Tom plans to send the next draft of the report to the committee before the July meeting. He intends to have a full draft completed and ready for review by the end of the summer.

Important Sites. Nancy led a discussion about the need to change the names of several Important Sites, and begin treating three sites individually. Henley's Pond, Lake Albemarle and Beaver Creek Reservoir were treated as one site in the 2004 biodiversity report.

Motion Approved: The committee approved treating these areas as three separate sites and changing site names as follows:

- "Pinkerton Slash" was renamed "Cove Garden Wetland"
- "Woolen Mills" was renamed "Old Mills Complex, Site 1"
- "Old Mills Trail Basic Outcrop Woodland Complex" was renamed "Old Mills Complex, Site 2"

- “Green Mountain near Estouteville” sites were renamed “Green Mountain”

Action Item:

- David will revise the summary document about Important Sites and send it to everyone.

Discussion followed about the need to conduct more site visits, and how best to contact and talk with landowners. Committee members should coordinate any visits, but members should feel free to invite outside experts (e.g., Plant Team members) on site visits when appropriate. Peter reminded everyone that having more than 2 committee members on a visit makes it a public meeting. More discussion followed on how to approach landowners.

Action Items:

- Nancy will send a list of non-committee members who may be willing to help with site visits.
- David will make a first effort at ranking the Important Sites, based on ecological significance, resilience, and threats/vulnerability (as discussed in earlier committee meetings). He will continue working with Christine and Nancy on this.

Lonnie described his recent exploration of the Decca Road and Ridge Road areas, where several Important Sites are located on the river bluffs. A community trail leads from Meriwether-Lewis School. This may be a more important area than the committee has realized. He encouraged everyone to explore the area before our next meeting – on foot, bike or car.

Mo Stevens data. Nancy described Mo’s data and how it is organized. She took a picture from a page of his field notes, when Tom Wieboldt spoke recently. She explained that simply getting pictures of Mo’s field notes of Albemarle sites could help us make use of his data. We should try to incorporate his data in committee work within the next 2-3 years.

There was brief discussion about the data from Green Infrastructure Center, some of which was projected on screen. There was discussion about the potential for the landscape classification data to identify areas in the county for future exploration and site visits. Potential restoration sites may also be identified.

Peter reviewed the email he sent describing the possible biological importance of future park land in Crozet, and the need to assess it and possibly prevent recreational development on parts of it. He will contact Ann Mallek about it.

David gave a brief update about the county’s review process of stream buffers. He also informed everyone that October 31 is the deadline for ACE applications, and encouraged finding applicants.

July 20 should work for the next committee meeting, though Nancy will be out of town.

Action Item:

- David will email committee members to see if there is interest in an afternoon meeting to review the GIC and other GIS data being used in the Biodiversity Action Plan.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:30.