

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
July 20, 2017 – Room 235**

Committee Members: Ari Daniels (Vice Chair), Peggy Cornett, Lonnie Murray, Christine Putnam, Peter Hatch, Rochelle Garwood

Absent: Nancy Weiss (Chair), Manuel Lerdau

Other Attendees: David Hannah, Tom Olivier, Ruth Douglas, Wanda SanJule

Ari called the meeting to order at 5:35. The meeting agenda was reviewed and approved.

Minutes of the June 29, 2017 meeting were approved.

Ruth reported that Blue Ridge PRISM won Garden Club of VA Conservation Award earlier this year. She also reported that a local group is trying to arrange a showing of “Hometown Habitat” in Charlottesville next March. It is a 90 minute film that focuses on native plants for native animals, and includes Doug Tallamy. She will send a web link. There was a general discussion of native plants vs. non-natives in landscaping.

Christine used Google Maps and short field visits to review four Important Sites – Powerline at 618 Northeast of Woodridge, Rock Island, Warren Floodplain at Donegal Farm, and North Fork of Cunningham Creek. She reported poor conditions and questions whether some still qualify as Important Sites.

Biodiversity Action Plan. Tom began a discussion of the BAP. His goal for the August meeting – a “stem to stern” draft of the BAP, though not a polished draft. Tom lead a group review of the draft Habitat section. The issue of human population growth was discussed, and the committee will ruminate on if/how to handle the topic in the report. Urban areas and TDR’s were discussed. Lonnie reviewed his ideas. The county did not create report on TDRs circa 2007, even though staff committed to doing so. White-tailed deer issues and population levels were discussed, but needs more discussion.

Action Item:

- Committee members will continue reviewing draft sections of the report, and send comments on the Habitat section to Tom, preferably as a Word document using “track changes.”

Christine recently sent a draft chapter on Education to the committee, but not everyone had read it. Who will be responsible for implementing the recommendations in the BAP? This is important information to include, Tom has codes to assign or suggest responsibility for the recommendations we make. It is also important to know what resources (funding, staff time, etc.) will be necessary to implement recommendations. The idea of using land use revalidation notices for education purposes was brought up. Regarding public schools, educate the educators. There was general agreement that we should prioritize the recommendations we make in the BAP, and possibly list whether they are short, mid, or long term goals.

There was agreement on the need to have a thorough review by a variety of people of the BAP before it is completed. The schedule is to complete the BAP in calendar year 2017, and make presentation to the

Board during February 2018. There should be a polished, “stem to stern” draft report complete in September, ready for wide circulation to reviewers. Should we share draft of the BAP with BOS candidates this fall?

Important Site evaluations and visits. Lonnie – who did their homework and visited the areas near the Wooded River Bluffs sites? Peter walked the community trail for 20-25 minutes, did not get all the way to Mechums River. The area is great, wealthy neighborhood, no plant species of note, but lots of ferns, potential for great vegetation, is a moist, rich area. Ruth would like to encourage the Plant Team to visit. Lonnie suggested limiting group size to maybe 3 people, since the trail is on private property. Large groups could draw attention. Christine visited the area too, and noticed Japanese stilt grass, lots of other invasives. The area north of Garth Road had more farms and large properties, but the rivers and Important Sites are not near enough to the road to view them.

Lonnie posed the question – can the old Biodiversity Work Group report be pulled off the county’s website? The concern is that “Pinkerton Slash” still remains on the Important Sites list. Several people were hesitant to remove the report from the web. Redacting the site name would satisfy the concerns, if it can be done.

David reported a recent visit to a small great blue heron rookery and beaver pond. Seven nests were spotted, and the rookery has been active at least 3-4 years. The stream buffer review process continues, with the next public meeting scheduled for either August 9 or August 16, at 5:30pm in Room A of the 5th Street County Office Building. He also gave some information about UVA’s special use permit application for an indoor golf facility at Birdwood. The Birdwood parcel borders Ragged Mountain Natural Area, so it would be helpful to see a master plan for the property, including plans for redesigning the golf course.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:35.