

**Minutes of Albemarle County Natural Heritage Committee (NHC) Meeting
December 16, 2017 – Room 235**

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

Absent: Nancy Weiss (Chair), Rochelle Garwood, Peter Hatch

Other Attendees: David Hannah, Ruth Douglas, Emily Luebke, Dorothy Tompkins

Ari called the meeting to order at 5:32. Everyone introduced themselves. Two prospective new committee members attended, Emily Luebke and Dorothy Tompkins. Each talked a few minutes about their interests. Emily is very interested in dragonflies and vernal pools. Dorothy is president of McIntire Botanical Garden, a Master Naturalist, and interested in the Important Site (Cactus Rock) at Bundoran Farm. Both have applied to the county to join the committee, and were warmly welcomed by the group.

The November minutes were approved. David reminded the group that Rochelle Garwood's term on the committee expired in September 2017, and she is resigning from the committee after serving many years. David also received an email from Peter Hatch, who has now resigned from the committee.

Biodiversity Action Plan. David reported on the status of the landscape/GIS analysis, that Andrew Walker and he have been working on. Several GIS maps were displayed. Nothing has changed regarding Important Sites. The scoring method for the biological value of forest blocks was revised since last month's meeting, with review from some county staff. The relative weights of the four factors - forest block size (based on the acreage of interior forest), connectivity (based on calculating a proximity index), shape/compactness (how far from a circle the shape of the forest block deviates), and number of Important Site and DCR element occurrences within the forest block – were adjusted. Calculating resilience factors has not changed, but the composite scores for both forest blocks and Important Sites will be adjusted. The importance of resilience will be reduced. It will now account for less than half the value of the composite scores, a change from earlier scoring methods.

There was good discussion and questioning about the analysis. The three focus areas in the county have not changed – northwest Albemarle (near Shenandoah NP), Southern Albemarle Mountains area, and the Rivanna River.

Much of the editing for the report, based on comments from the committee and county staff, has been done. There is still some editing to do, and a number of tasks to complete. The landscape/GIS analysis section needs to be written (for both the report and appendices), narrative about Important Sites and prioritizing them is to be written, maps need to be created, references need to be worked on, and all the Goals and Recommendations need to be reviewed.

We will not make our original deadline of Dec. 31 for having BAP completed. David hopes to send the next/final draft for review in early-mid January. It will include outside reviewers as well as committee members and some county staff. The content for BAP will hopefully be finalized by early-mid February. At that point, and Executive Summary can be developed and creating a "print ready" BAP can be started.

The informational presentation to the Board of Supervisors will need to be pushed back from the scheduled date of Feb. 14.

Notes from staff. The county's stream buffer review process will begin a new phase in Jan. 2018. David and other staff will begin working on proposals for the Development Areas, which will include public involvement. Work on the Rural Area will start after the Development Areas is complete. In reviewing BAP, Ches Goodall suggested looking into the Mid-Atlantic Early Detection Network app as a way for committee members and others to document where invasive species occur. Two UVA undergrad students of Manuel Lerdau may be interested in helping the NHC next year. David and Nancy have been in email contact with them. One area of help could be in scheduling site visits.

Ruth mentioned that the Pantops Citizen Advisory Committee has expressed interest in creating connections to the Old Mills Trail. Updating the Pantops Master Plan will begin in early 2018. The committee should stay informed and engaged in all greenway and related meetings.

Lonnie reported that county staff is beginning to work on a Native Plants Program for the county. Discussions about it are beginning. He also mentioned that an announcement of some sort will be made about Biscuit Run in February.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10.